

FAR AWAY BUT CLOSE TO HOME

Local People Remember
War and Peace

Civilians Stories

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This is a project of the Eastern Shore and Musquodoboit Valley Community Learning Initiative.

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FAR AWAY BUT CLOSE TO HOME

LOCAL PEOPLE REMEMBER WAR AND PEACE

Introduction

This is a project of the [National Literacy Secretariat](#), and the Eastern Shore-Musquodoboit Valley Community Learning Initiative. These stories are intended to assist **Level 1 and 2** adult literacy learners and their tutors. Each book of stories has a work book that goes with it. Copies may be made of any material in these books for the purpose of assisting literacy learners. Copyright is held by the Eastern Shore-Musquodoboit Valley Community Learning Initiative. Materials outside the ownership of the CLI and its contractors are used by permission.

These are stories from the Second World War, 1939-1945, and the years that followed. The story-tellers are from, or are now living along, the Eastern Shore and Musquodoboit Valley of Nova Scotia.

The stories reflect the attitudes of the story-tellers, and their times. It is not the intention of the [National Literacy Secretariat](#), or the Community Learning Initiative to give offence to anyone in the telling of these stories.

There are maps either with the stories or at the front of the book.

***CIVILIANS STORIES - WALTER - ELMO LOGAN - GERALD
STOUT- HILDA LOWE - GWEN WALLACE***

FAR AWAY BUT CLOSE TO HOME - CIVILIANS STORIES

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FAR AWAY BUT CLOSE TO HOME - CIVILIANS STORIES

MAPS

EUROPE



ENGLAND



THE WORLD



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Siren: Like the noise made at the Fire Station when there is a fire.



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Gas Mask Kit



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Remembrance

Gwen Wallace : East Chezzetcook

By the thousands
children go
To the country safe from
foe
Parents at the station
stand
Tears in eyes, waving
hands



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Sirens wailing all around
Like rats we seek shelter underground
This gets to be a regular flight
So we sleep underground each night

Bombs are falling from the sky
I'm nine years old - Will I die?
In the shelter there we sit
Holding fast our gas mask kit

London is aglow with flames
The sky is full of German planes
Everyone is filled with fear
And thinking that the end is near

Homes in ruin all 'round are seen
Then a visit from King & Queen
Refreshed we vow to do our part
And cheer the soldiers with all our hearts

Able men to war are sent
And married women to the factories went
Young ladies also gave their hand
In the services, and on the land



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FAR AWAY BUT CLOSE TO HOME - CIVILIANS STORIES

Shrapnel: Pieces of exploded bombs or shells.



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Telegram: A message sent by wires like a phone call, but printed out and delivered by hand.

Effigy: Like a dummy or "Pumpkin Person"

Medal: A special award



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Toys were scarce and hard to come
Collecting shrapnel was our fun
Not thinking of the hurt and pain
To own the largest piece our aim

The telegram boy goes next door
To tell them Jack won't be back from war
Neighbours try to comfort them
Hoping next it won't be them

War is over, War is won
Everyone is having fun
Effigies of Hitler burn
At every bomb site, at every turn



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No medals I wear for what I saw
In my way I helped win that war
Collecting books, waste paper too
Was all I was old enough to do

At the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month
each year
All this I remember as I stand here
And pray to God that peace may be
With our children eternally



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Wartime pay

Walter : Porters Lake

I started working in 1942 when I was fourteen years old. I helped to build ships in Halifax. When I first started work I got thirty-six cents an hour. In 1943 I got a raise to thirty-eight cents an hour. We used to work 44 hours a week straight time. If you worked on Saturday afternoon you would get time and a half. We used to work until ten o'clock every night. Sometimes you would work all night when you were working on the ships.

84 Words.



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Plate : A flat piece of metal used to build a ship.

Keel : The part of a ship that goes all the way along the bottom.

Frame : The part of something that gives it its shape. Your bones are the frame for your body.



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Rivet : A metal peg used to join plates to frames.

Sticker : To stick something in a hole is to push it in. The rivet sticker put (stuck) the rivets into the holes in the plates.

Passer boy : Passed rivets to the rivet sticker, who put them in the holes.

Rivet Sticker

Walter : Porters Lake

Years ago ships were all riveted together. You built the ship one plate at a time. You put one plate down that was called the keel plate. Then from there you put frames on and added plates on it. The plates and frames all had holes in them ready for the rivets. My job was to put the rivets in the holes. I was called a rivet sticker, or passer boy.

78 Words



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Weld : Join two pieces of metal by melting them together.

Washer : Round piece of metal with a hole in it.



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Washers, nuts, bolts and screws



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Tough work

Walter : Porters Lake

During the Second World War there used to be a lot of women working building ships in Halifax. They were working on the ships because the men were off fighting in the war. Men eighteen and older went in the war so the women took their jobs, replacing the men in their work. A lot of the women drilled holes in the plates. At that time everything was riveted and there had to be holes in the metal. A few women were welders, some were burners. One woman worked the crane. Then there were many women who worked outside of the ship, doing cleaning. Mostly the rivets, bolts, nuts and washers had to be picked up and cleaned as there was a lot of dirt and dust. This work was done out on the ship decks.

138 Words



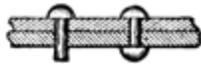
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Driver : Someone who makes a thing go. You drive a nail into a piece of wood with a hammer.



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How rivets work

Hot and Cold

Walter : Porters Lake

Men called rivet drivers worked the rivet guns, helping them were buckers. Rivet stickers, or passer boys like me, heated the rivets before putting them in the holes. The rivets would be white hot, not red, white like you see a flame that is a yellow-white colour. They had to be that hot so that the end was soft for the rivet gun to hammer it over joining the plates to the frames. In winter it would be so cold some times the rivet guns had to have alcohol poured in them to keep them from freezing up. The rivet guns worked by air, and frost built up where the air came out. It would be about an inch thick. The outside of the rivet gun was so cold that if you put your fingers on it, they would stick to the metal. At the driving end it was hitting on white-hot rivets! That is the way we used to work in the winter. In the summer it was the other way round, you would sweat because it was so hot.

189 Words

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Shovel : You clear snow away if it gets in front of your door. The thing you use is a shovel.



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Walter's shovel was metal, and looked like this. Snow sticks to metal shovels. That makes the work



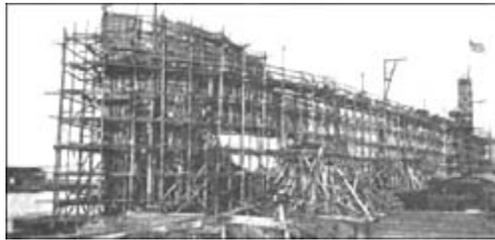
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Winter in the shipyard

Walter : Porters Lake

Ships are built in shipyards. When I started working in the shipyard it was a cold winter. We never used to have any heat and many times I would have to shovel the snow out from under me. All the work was outdoors, and where I was working got covered in snow. It snowed a lot, sometimes three or four feet. If snow got on the plates I had to shovel it out, and blow it out with an air hose before I could start working. That is the way I worked all winter.

103 Words



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FAR AWAY BUT CLOSE TO HOME - CIVILIANS STORIES

Convoy : A lot of ships all going along together.



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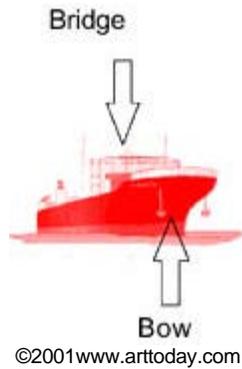
Chezzetcook wrecks

Walter : Porters Lake

Cargo ships used to sail out in convoys. A ship on its own was sure to be sunk. The Germans had submarines under the water and they would torpedo ships and blow them up. The navy ships would go with the convoy trying to keep submarines away. They would sail at night. The ships would start off from Halifax to go to England or Russia, and some would make it. Others only lasted a day or so at sea. A day or two later some would be towed back by tugboats. The naval ships would be hooked on to them. Sometimes only half of a ship would return, the bow having been blown off and sunk. Some of the ships only made it as far as Chezzetcook. There are still some wrecks of ships that sunk off Chezzetcook. I think there might be three or four of them.



FAR AWAY BUT CLOSE TO HOME - CIVILIANS STORIES



Stink : To smell
really bad



Repairs

Walter : Porters Lake

We worked on a lot of ships on repairs. Damaged ships would be brought back in to us. Was the damage too bad to fix? The government had to decide if they were going to get rid of the ship or repair it. Sometimes we could just put another bow on it and away it would go. The bridges on the ships would get blown up a lot. I remember one time working on a ship that was loaded with grain. A torpedo had gone through one side of the ship and out the other side. There was a hole about thirty feet square, the size of a house! The only thing that held the ship together was that the deck and the bottom stayed on! The ship stunk so bad, with the smell of grain and salt water, it would almost kill you.



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Re-fit : To change a ship so it can do more things than it was built to do.

Merchant : A trader.



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The merchant marine are all the ships used for trade.

Tie Dogs

Walter : Porters Lake

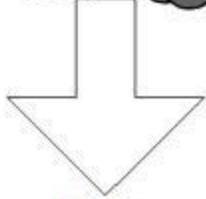
As well as building new ships, there was a lot of re-fitting work. The re-fitting work was mostly on ships that were taking stuff to the war in Europe. These were merchant marine ships. We worked on them putting on tie dog straps so that lumber or tanks or whatever they had to take with them could be fastened on. The Tie Dogs were metal pieces fixed to the ship so that straps fastened to them tied down the cargo placed on the deck. That way it would not get washed overboard. Those ships took a lot of cargo strapped to the deck.

104 Words



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Flat cars

Walter : Porters Lake

After the war, we would fix up ships that were coming to Halifax from overseas. The waves in storms would smash them up. One ship came in carrying brand new cars from England. It got a hole in it and the water came in the ship. The cars, when they arrived, were about the size of a stove. They got beat up so bad they were just flattened. The sea really damaged the ships. Cargo ships and oil ships, we saw a lot of them come in damaged from the sea.

92 Words



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Helmet : A metal hat to protect a soldier's head.



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Invade : Go where you haven't been asked to.



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Watch for helmets!

Gerald Stout : Sober Island.

I was a young teenager in Holland during the war. Many German soldiers invaded our country. The soldiers were told to shoot people who did not do what they wanted them to do, or who took their things. We were afraid of them when they were wearing their helmets, and had their guns. When they were wearing helmets they were ready to fight. When the soldiers had their guns, but were not wearing their helmets they were not so dangerous.

81 Words



Photo courtesy Department of National Defence

FAR AWAY BUT CLOSE TO HOME - CIVILIANS STORIES

Night listener

Gerald Stout : Sober Island

At the end of the war we had very little to eat. We moved to a farm owned by my uncle. One day some soldiers came. They asked to sleep in the barn. I was not afraid of them because they were not wearing helmets. That night I listened to them from outside the barn where they were staying. I knew what they were saying. I had learned to speak German by listening to the soldiers who had invaded Holland. They had been in our country for five years. Now they were leaving Holland, and going back to Germany.

99 Words



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Here's your gun

Gerald Stout : Sober Island

In the morning the soldiers left our farm and walked away. I went to the barn where they had slept, and found a gun they had left behind. It was exciting to find the gun, and I showed it to my family. They were excited too, but in another way. They said that if other soldiers came and found out that we had a gun we could be shot. My family told me to run after the soldiers, and give them back the gun.

I ran after the soldiers, and I said "Here's your gun, you left it behind!" They took the gun, but they did not seem happy that I had found it. I was puzzled about why they did not want their gun. My family thought that the soldiers were trying to get rid of it, and all the other weapons they had. They said the soldiers wanted to get back home to their own country as quickly as they could.

163 Words

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Stepmother : Your father's next wife if he re-marries after you are born. Her children are your step sisters and brothers.

Uniform : Looking the same as the next. Army clothes, uniforms, look very alike. You tell one unit from another by badges, one rank from another by stripes.



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War-time factories

Hilda Lowe : Moser River

I was sixteen when the war broke out. I was in high school and wanted to go to college, but my stepmother would not approve of women getting an education. So I could not go because I did not have any money. I did all kinds of jobs, I worked in a factory making shells, I worked in a factory making screws and bolts for tanks, I worked in a couple of general stores, then I worked in a factory making uniforms. As soon as I turned seventeen I joined the army.

92 Words



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Making shells

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Coupons : A small ticket with the rationed item printed on it. The "50 cents off" coupons in today's grocery store flyers are much larger.

Rationing

Hilda Lowe : Moser River

I stayed in England for a while after the war. That was after I got out of the army. Britain was in poor shape. There was no food and no clothes. What I mean is, you got the basics. You bought food and clothes, but they were rationed. You had a ration book with coupons for each week. Say you wanted to buy eggs. You could do so only if you had enough coupons for eggs. It didn't matter if you had enough money. It didn't matter if you had enough coupons for meat. You had to have the coupons for eggs to buy eggs. That's how it was all through the war. It stayed that way in peace-time too. The factories had been turned over to making war supplies. There was very little peace-time work right after the war.

146 Words

Ration book from 1943



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The Underground :
Trains running in
tunnels below the
ground in London.
You get on the trains
from platforms raised
above the tracks.



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These platforms were
used as bomb
shelters in the
Second World War.



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Tunnel used as a
hospital.

Underground shelter

Hilda Lowe : Moser River

When we went to London we were in danger from bombs. We used to sleep in the Underground. People slept down on the platforms where the trains were. This was very good shelter because the tunnels were deep underground. The people were so good to us. They would share their tea or their sandwiches with us, whatever they had. They would make room for you to sleep and everything. The people in London were marvellous. It was all row houses and there was no insurance or anything on their houses. The ones who were bombed ended up with nothing after the war. There were a lot of nice experiences and nice people.

113 Words



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Row Houses :

Houses built joined together side by side
along a street. The rows can be really long.

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Air Raid Shelter



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Bomb site : Where a bomb has fallen.



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Evacuate : Empty out like a vacuum. A city is evacuated when the people leave.

Gas Mask: Goes over your face so you don't breathe in poison gas. It was kept in a box with a carrying strap. The children in the photo have them.

"If you are going to get killed..."

Gwen Wallace : East Chezzetcook

I was eight when the Second World War started. I grew up in London, England. Everybody was evacuated. I was supposed to be going. Then Mom said, "No." There was me and my sister. Mom said "If you are going to get killed, we are all going to get killed together." We did not have any school. In the end when the bombing really started, we had to be evacuated. Most of the kids and women were evacuated. The women had to do war work also. At first, when there was no bombing, people started going back. Once people started coming back, the schools opened again. Most days we walked with Mom to the park or to visit friends, or to shop. We carried on much the same as we normally would. A big difference was you had to carry your gas mask everywhere you went.

146 Words



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FAR AWAY BUT CLOSE TO HOME - CIVILIANS STORIES

Channel: A path
between things.
A channel in the
ice on the sea
lets ships go
down that path.
TV Channels are
a sort of path
through which
we get the
programs.

CCGS: First
letters of the title
"Canadian Coast
Guard Ship"

Clear Channels

Elmo Logan : Sober Island

In 1961 I went to sea with the Canadian Coast Guard. I sailed in the CCGS Edward Cornwallis. I started off as a seaman, and worked about a year just as an ordinary seaman. Sometimes we were gone about a month, sometimes two. The Cornwallis was an ice breaker. The Coast Guard has the job of making channels through the ice in winter. Cargo ships need a way through the ice to get into the ports up north that get frozen in.

82 Words



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FAR AWAY BUT CLOSE TO HOME - CIVILIANS STORIES

Buoy : A floating marker fixed to the sea bed.



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Tender : A ship used to look after, or tend, other ships or equipment.

Tend the Buoys

Elmo Logan : Sober Island

Another job of the Coast Guard is to look after buoys. Buoys mark dangerous places, and the safe channels for ships. The ship that does the work on the buoys is called a buoy tender. The buoys are quite large and heavy. To lift them from the sea needs a heavy crane. I was used to working large machines, and so I moved up from ordinary seaman to working the heavy machines.

73 Words



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Buoys on the deck of the CCGS Cornwallis

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Newfoundland



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Winter Storms

Elmo Logan : Sober Island

On the Cornwallis in the winter-time we broke ice. We went to Newfoundland breaking ice. I enjoyed Newfoundland. There were a lot of storms in the winter. The ship was big, over 260 feet long, but the waves in a storm were big too. They lifted the whole ship up, and then sent it down. The bow would go right under the waves. On days like that if you wanted something to eat you had to fix it yourself as there were no cooks on duty. You had to tie a rope around your waist so you would not be thrown over board. The fridge and stove were tied down also.

112 Words



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FAR AWAY BUT CLOSE TO HOME - CIVILIANS STORIES

Laid-up : Out of use.
A ship may be laid-up
for repairs or re-
fitting.

Watch : To keep a
look out for
something.



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The watch on your
wrist that tells time
is called that because
the first ones were
used to tell the
division of time
(watches) on ships.



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Watches

Elmo Logan : Sober Island

The Ice-breaker Cornwallis was laid-up for three years. I went to another ship. I got new things to do on this ship. I was one of the people who steered the ship. I didn't much like that work. On a ship the day and night are cut up into four-hour bits called watches. You worked your watch for four hours, and then had eight hours off. On your watch there could be a lot of work. You could not get much sleep in the two watches off because there were always people doing their work and making noise on the deck above you.

116 Words



Photo Courtesy Transport Canada
Photo Credit Mary Breig 1983

FAR AWAY BUT CLOSE TO HOME - CIVILIANS STORIES

Carpenter : Someone who makes things using wood.



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Winch : A machine that winds a cable around a drum or spool. Anything attached to the end of the cable gets pulled up too. (The reel on a fishing pole is a kind of winch.)



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Not just wood-work Elmo Logan : Sober Island

The Coast Guard ship Cornwallis was ready for the sea again. I worked on it this time as ship's carpenter. Some of the things I did had nothing to do with wood. I got the job because I knew how to work the winches, and they did not have a winch operator. I trained people to use the heavy equipment. I looked after anchoring the ship, and the lights on the buoys. Each buoy flashed a light in a code that set it apart from all the others. That way the crews on ships knew where their ship was sailing. I had to know what the code was for each of the buoys. I had to set the right code when we had finished tending a buoy and put back into the sea.

134 Words

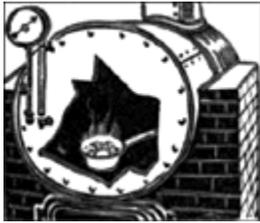


Photo Courtesy Transport Canada
Photo Credit Mary Breig

Elmo Logan works the winch

FAR AWAY BUT CLOSE TO HOME - CIVILIANS STORIES

Boiler : A strong tank for boiling water and keeping the steam so that it can be used for heating, or running machines. Elmo's winch was a steam winch.



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How much water?

Elmo Logan : Sober Island

As well as doing the work with wood that a carpenter has to do, I had to look after the water in the ship. The ship used a lot of steam for heating and such. Steam is made from water heated in boilers. When the steam has been used it turns back again from steam to water. The Cornwallis carried six hundred tons of water. The water for cooking and drinking was kept in separate tanks from the water used for everything else. Every morning I had to figure the amount of water in the tanks. How much water had been used for washing? How much water had been used for drinking water? How much was there for making steam, and how much had come back from being used as steam?

131 Words

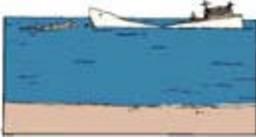


Photo Courtesy Transport Canada
CCGS Edward Cornwallis

FAR AWAY BUT CLOSE TO HOME - CIVILIANS STORIES

Lifeboat: A small boat on a ship, or on the shore, used to rescue people.

Aground: When the bottom of a ship is stuck on the sea bed.



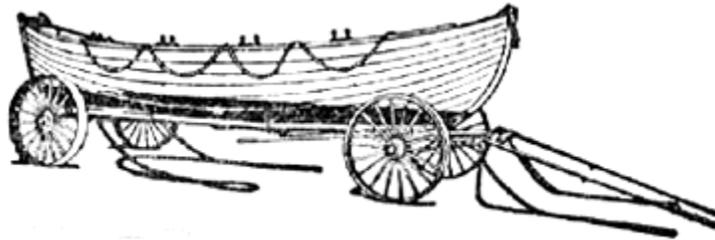
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The Sable Island Lifeboats

Elmo Logan : Sober Island

Years ago there used to be lifeboats on Sable Island. They were as big as a ship's lifeboat. A crew of eight men rowed the lifeboat. Each crew looked after their own part of the coast. Horses dragged the boat into the surf on a wagon. The crew would then row out to rescue people from ships. A rope was shot from the lifeboat to the ship by a rocket. Then the people would be carried across from the ship to the lifeboat. Ships often ran aground on Sable Island. The Cornwallis was used to bring one of the lifeboats from the island to Halifax. We carried it on our deck. You can see it at the museum in Halifax.

121 Words



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FAR AWAY BUT CLOSE TO HOME - CIVILIANS STORIES

Sea-sick: Throwing up because of the way the ship moves.



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Uncle Doug's cure

Elmo Logan : Sober Island

With the Coast Guard we used to go out and around Sable Island. Once we were out on Sable Island delivering supplies. We could not dock the boat because of the high waves. There was a bunch of men fishing for mackerel. I went up to look over the side of the ship and I got sea-sick. One engineer, I used to call him Uncle Doug, asked me if I wanted a cure for sea-sickness, I said yes. He said you will never get sea-sick again. He said, take one of the mackerel, still alive, and rip out the heart. Give it a little wash, put it in your mouth and swallow it, do not chew it. I could feel it moving all the way down into my stomach. I felt better so I took another one. I never got sick again. Even to this day, I never get sick.

169 Words



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View the workbook for these stories

OR

View other storybooks in this series :

- Reader 2
- Reader 3
- Reader 4
- Reader 5
- Reader 6
- Reader 7
- Reader 8

