



**SUPPLY
LINE**

Navy Rating's Cap

Enlisted members of the Royal Canadian Navy were often known as “ratings”. The rating’s cap was a distinctive part of the traditional uniform they wore during the Second World War. It was worn mostly ashore or for certain activities aboard ship.

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Navy Rating's Cap © Canadian War Museum

Part of a Traditional Uniform

Canada’s navy used many traditions and uniforms of Britain’s Royal Navy, including the rating’s cap. The cap was part of the traditional “square rig” uniform, which also

included the naval collar. It was worn by enlisted members, or “ratings,” from the 1920s until 1968, but never by higher-ranking naval personnel, including officers.

A Symbol of Naval Identity

The rating’s cap was a strong symbol of naval identity. By the Second World War, it was worn largely while sailors were ashore, especially when they were on **leave**. It was also worn for certain activities on board ship, including religious services and funerals.

The cap was not practical for warmth, or in heavy winds like those often encountered at sea. As a result, sailors frequently wore other headgear, including toques, hats or balaclavas, often knit by civilian volunteers.

The Cap and Its Ribbon

The rating's cap was made of wool and cotton, with a cotton chinstrap. In addition to the blue cap included in this Discovery Box, there was a white version.

The cap also had a silk ribbon, sometimes called a "tally." In peacetime, the ribbon usually carried the name of the sailor's ship, such as "H.M.C.S. *Niobe*." For many sailors, this was a source of pride. Cap ribbons were often kept as souvenirs of service.

During the war, security regulations limited ribbons to "H.M.C.S." only, like the example in the Discovery Box. This avoided revealing information about where Canadian warships were operating, which could be useful to the enemy.

Did You Know?

During the Second World War "H.M.C.S." stood for "His Majesty's Canadian Ship." This prefix was used for all Royal Canadian Navy ships. It was "His" because Britain's King George VI was monarch at the time.

Vocabulary

Leave: Permission to be away from a military unit, usually for a set period of time.