

NEW ICEBREAKER BEATS FREEZE-UP IN ATLANTIC

The Queen of the Canadian ice-braking fleet, the John A. Macdonald, patrols the Gulf of St. Lawrence waiting for such a call as this from Nova Scotian headquarters. "Two ~~kessles~~ ~~three~~ ~~hundred~~ miles northwest ice-bound. Bring them out." Strategy is mapped as the John A., with her seven powerful engines, smashes her way through the ice pack to the rescue. Fifteen thousand horsepower push the ship through ice as thick as five feet. There's the company of white whales in the occasional patches of open water as they speed to the rescue. As they near the scene a helicopter goes aloft to be the eyes of the operation. This newest of the icebreakers uses the last word in equipment to keep the Candian shipping lanes open. But they rely mostly on the brute force of the powerful ship to fight their way to the cie-bound victims. One freighter is bound for england with aluminum, the other to the U.S. with newsprint. Two of Canada's most important exports that will move on their way through these rescue efforts. A thrilling chapter in man's struggle against the icy sea.



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ATLANTIC ICE CONVOY

10/10THS ICEFIELDS IN GULF OF ST. LAWRENCE
TRAPS OCEAN FREIGHTERS

JOHN A. MACDONALD, CANADA'S NEWEST ICEBREAKER, IN GULF SERVICE

Gulf of St. Lawrence, March, 1961

"Seven, three, sir" --- "Seven, two, sir"

"Thank you. Mate, would you request the Baie Comeau to close in and try to stay in please. Keep us full power, there's a ridge ahead and a heavy pan. Can you see Granwood on your scope?"

"Yes sir. She's two and a half cables behind Comeau."

"Good, she's keeping up well. Ask the 'chopper' boys to have a look at the next 10 miles please as soon as this snow squall has stopped."

Situation - convoy duty of two ships on the Gulf of St. Lawrence in the Atlantic Ocean - the Granwood, outbound from Quebec City for England, laden with aluminum; and the Baie Comeau, outbound from Baie Comeau on the north shore of the St. Lawrence River for New York City, with a load of newsprint. Both are new ships. Two days earlier they had radioed the Department of Transport for assistance to get through the miles of 100% winter icefields in the windswept Gulf of St. Lawrence.

At North Sydney, Nova Scotia, the Queen of the Canadian icebreaking fleet, the John A. Macdonald - 315' in length, with 7 powerful engines to give her a thrust of 15,000 horsepower and a speed of 17 knots - had just arrived for bunkering. Almost immediately a call from the Sydney Office of the Department of Transport sent the largest icebreaker in North Atlantic waters out again 300 miles N.W. to rescue the two ships outbound from the St. Lawrence River. Although the River as far as Montreal has been fairly free of heavy ice this season and was opened the earliest in history, the Gulf of St. Lawrence has been solidly ice packed for weeks with 8 - 10'ths to 10 - 10'ths heavy winter ice. The westerly winds that helped clear the river have kept the Gulf in bad shape.

The "John A." is skippered by Captain James Cuthbert, a master who has seen service in every theatre of the icebreaking operation around Canada. The ship has a complement of 72, and she is by far the most beautiful ship of the fleet. Travelling at speeds up to 14 knots, she kept going day and night, charging through the open sea, young ice fields and fields of winter ice up to 5' in thickness, to reach the ice-locked vessels on the second night out.

The "John A." carries a helicopter. An ice observer and a helicopter pilot become the farseeing eyes of the ship, taking every opportunity to reconnaissance the area within a range of 25 miles and bring back the mapped results. Captain Cuthbert is fully aware of the ice situation for miles around. More important this information is radioed back to Nova Scotia's Ice Information Centres at Halifax and Sydney, and forms an important link in the daily air information service made of the Gulf and Atlantic Regions. A compilation of all information keeps ships at sea and fishermen aware of the current movement of the ice floes.

At 6:30 A.M. on the third day out the "John A." broke out the Baie Comeau and took the lead. Fifteen miles to the east she picked up the Granwood and the arduous and extremely dangerous job of convoying ships in ice began.

The two ships in line astern must follow close behind in the wake of the 'breaker and keep the ice which has been churned up by the 'breaker from forming a "mush-like" trail ahead of them. This crushed ice is like soft concrete and could very slowly stop the Baie Comeau and cause the Granwood to ram into her stern. The Granwood with less power than Comeau was on the alert every second and a few times stayed behind a bit too far and was not able to get through the ice-choked wake of the Comeau. At this point the "John A." would circle back and break loose the Granwood and within minutes the convoy was again underway.

The biggest danger, with the ships of necessity close together, was when the 'breaker ground to a stop in heavy ice. Whistles blew, the ships were informed to reverse engines to avoid the Baie Comeau ramming the "John A.". Ice convoy work is treacherous and the masters and crews of the three ships were on the alert every second from dawn 'til dusk to make the best time through the ice with a good safety margin.

The Baie Comeau has been specially constructed to do winter service on the St. Lawrence - New York run. She has a reinforced steel hull and seems the perfect prototype for vessels in winter trade in this region.

For two days the "John A." battled continuous snow, squalls, 40 mile an hour winds and mile after mile of solid ice to bring the ships the 350 miles to open water to continue their voyages to Europe and the United States with aluminum and newsprint -- two of Canada's most important exports.

The John A. Macdonald has convoyed 30 vessels so far this season. With the early opening of the St. Lawrence and the heavy ice in the Gulf it appears her work is just beginning. Calls for emergency assistance well into spring is an easy prophesy to make. The Department of Transport is beating the Atlantic freeze-up with several of her biggest icebreakers on the job in the Gulf of St. Lawrence area keeping Maritime harbours free of ice.

Shot list:

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1. LS icebreaker in harbour
2. MS head on → icebreaker at dock
3. CU name of icebreaker - John A. Macdonald
4. MS two men ashore casting off line and pan to men aboard ship hauling in ropes
5. LS icebreaker and harbour ice
6. H/A shot of ship in harbour
7. CU bow of icebreaker plowing through ice
8. CU interior of Sydney, N.S. Office, Department of Transport - officer with map
- X 9. MS Capt. Cuthbert of John A. aboard ship speaking with Sydney Office on ship to shore telephone
- X 10. MS Capt. Kelso, of Sydney Office, on 'phone
- X 11. MS Officer of Sydney Office noting route on map
12. MS Capt. Kelso and Officer at map and CU moving ship on map
13. aerial shot of ice field
14. shot over bow - ship going up stream
15. CS ice being broken along side of ship
16. LS ship through ice field
17. CU ice breaking
18. MS from stern - John A.
19. CS broken ice, pan up from stern of ship
20. aerial shot of ship
21. white whales
22. aerial shot of ship
23. CS waves
24. interior - diesel engine room of John A.
25. men working at controls in engine room
26. men at control panel in engine room
27. John A. plowing through ice
28. CU ice fields being broken up
29. helicopter being removed from hangar aboard John A. for reconnaissance of ice fields
30. ice breaking apart
31. helicopter being readied for use
32. helicopter taking off from deck of ship
33. shot of ship from helicopter
34. pilot of helicopter

35. view of ship from helicopter
36. CU ice observer aboard helicopter on reconnaissance
37. aerial shot of ship
38. CU chart being marked by ice surveyor
39. aerial of ice field
40. ice observer
41. icebreaker ramming ice
42. CU bow of icebreaker through solid ice
43. CS front of ship plowing through ice field
44. aerial of ice field
45. aerial of ship plowing through ice mass
46. shot from icebreaker - Granwood and Baie Comeau waiting to be convoyed
47. icebreaker making channel for ships
48. CS Capt. Cuthbert looking out side of icebreaker
49. freighter in ice
50. side angle shot of icebreaker freeing freighter and reverse shot as icebreaker passes freighter
51. interior shot - Capt. Cuthbert watching activity outside
52. water being churned up pan to ship astern
53. MCS interior of John A. with two crew members checking radar
54. MLS ship's crow's-nest and radar antenna in operation
55. John A. ramming ice with ship in background cut to CS of John A. plowing through
56. aerial of John A. with freighters astern.