

Canadian researchers find HMS Terror, British ship that attacked Stonington in War of 1812

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A British warship that attacked Stonington during the War of 1812 has been located by researchers in an Arctic bay.

A team from the Arctic Research Foundation found HMS Terror, last seen in 1845, in pristine condition in almost 80 feet of water in King William Island's Terror Bay, according to news reports. The ship was found Sept. 3, and a remotely operated vehicle has been inside and maneuvered around the mess hall, a few cabins and the food storage room, [according to the Guardian](#).

"The fact that it still exists is wonderful," said James Tertius de Kay of Stonington, author of the 1990 book "The Battle of Stonington."

"I hope they save it ... they've probably already got plans for that," de Kay added.

The Terror was one of four British warships that, for reasons that remain unclear, detached from the squadron blockading New London and sailed through Fishers Island Sound, stopping off Stonington Point around 3 p.m. on Aug. 9, 1814.

By 5 p.m., the famed Capt. Thomas Hardy had sent a written message, exchanged between two rowboats offshore, to notify residents that they had one hour to leave as he did not want to "destroy the unoffending inhabitants residing in the Town of Stonington."

The Terror was "overbuilt" to handle the weapons it was carrying, de Kay said.

"It was the one vessel that the British had that was really kind of scary for Stonington" because it was the most high-tech of the vessels, he said.

For four days, villagers armed only with two 18-pound cannons and a smaller piece fought back against the British, who, having accomplished little, sailed away on the morning of Aug. 13. Stonington sustained relatively little damage in the battle.

"America at the time was having trouble with the war. Things were not going well," de Kay [told The Day in 2012](#). "But suddenly this tiny little town of Stonington was victorious and sent the British Navy away with its tail between its legs."

The Battle of Stonington was the Terror's first. Its most famous battle happened a month later when the ship participated in the bombardment of Fort McHenry in Baltimore, which is the inspiration behind Francis Scott Key's "The Star-Spangled Banner."

Later on, the Terror and HMS Erebus were assigned to Sir John Franklin's 1845 expedition in search of the Northwest Passage. Both ships became icebound, were abandoned and sank. The 129 crew members attempted to survive on various islands as they made their way south. All of them died before they made it back to civilization.

The disappearance of the ships has largely remained a mystery for more than 160 years. [In September 2014](#), Canadian marine archeologists found the Erebus in about 36 feet of water in the eastern Queen Maud Gulf.

Day Staff Writers John Ruddy and Joe Wojtas contributed to this report.

Editor's Note: *This version corrects how the men aboard HMS Terror died.*