



RACP NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2016

ISSUE 13



Welcome to the Christmas newsletter

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News

Loch Ewe WWII Festival

RACP will be holding a WWII themed weekend festival on 6th & 7th May 2017. This will include re-enactments, period vehicles, a variety of attractions, music and dancing. For more information see page 5 or visit the website at theracproject.org/festival.

Inverasdale exhibition

This year we had over 1900 visitors at our exhibition in the former school at Inverasdale. We would like to thank all who visited us and helped make this year a great success. As for next years exhibition, keep reading for some exciting news.



Attendees at the memorial service

Project progress update

As this Newsletter goes live, contracts are about to be exchanged to secure a new permanent home for our collection in Aultbea. The venue, will provide us with an exciting new exhibition space and a much larger shop front for visitors. We will be working

tirelessly over Spring to prepare our new Arctic Convoy Exhibition and intend to open to the public on 1st May 2017. The official opening will take place during our Loch Ewe WWII Festival on the weekend of the 6th and 7th May. We are very happy to announce that we will be open 5 days a week, giving visitors greater opportunities to see our collection. More information and updates with pictures will be provided in the Spring.



Visitors at the gun emplacements

Highland Archaeological Festival

The Highland Archaeology Festival in October brought several visitors to view the WWII emplacements at the mouth of the loch. They were very enthusiastic about our multi-site visitor centre plans and we hope this event will help us spread the word.

Remembrance weekend

On the 12th of November RACP attended the remembrance service at the Russian Convoy Club memorial stone at Cove. The local ATC squadron provided the guard of honour as wreaths were laid. Following the service Bob Miller regaled us with tales from the march of the immortal regiment, keen readers will remember the article from our last newsletter. He outlined plans to form a UK contingent to march next year, it will require a great deal of planning and cooperation from local authorities, along with help and support from veterans families. If you would like to get involved with this then please let us know and we can put you in touch with Bob.

Reports

Operation Dervish 75th anniversary

This year marked the 75th anniversary of Operation

Dervish which was the first convoy to supply Russia with aid from the western allies. In celebration of this there was an event in Russia and on the Britannia in Edinburgh:

Royal Yacht Britannia

Over 250 guests including 42 Arctic Convoy veterans attended a reception on the evening of Tuesday 30th August arranged by the Consulate General of Russia, to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the first Russian Convoy during WWII. The event was also attended by the Presiding Officer of the Scottish Parliament Ken Mackintosh, Provosts of various Scottish cities, representatives of the Consular corps in Edinburgh in Leith, the British navy, Veterans' organizations, as well as museums and enthusiasts supporting the Arctic Convoys Legacy.



RACP Secretary Elizabeth Miles (right) pictured with Marion Osler (left), Daughter of convoy veteran the late Jim Osler.

A bus parade went on from the Consulate General on Melville Street to the Royal yacht "Britannia" on retro wartime double-deckers, accompanied by an honorary police escort. Buses were marked with the destination signs Murmansk and Archangel. On arriving, veterans were greeted by a guard of honour and a Scottish military band.

At the reception there was a presentation of exclusive commemorative gifts, a photo album, which includes stories of the Arctic Convoys veterans, based on interviews with them, as well as rare historical photographs and contemporary portraits of the heroes of the Convoys; a Russian Arctic tartan gift set and an exclusive limited Anniversary Edition of a Single Malt Whisky in honour of the first Arctic Convoy, "Operation Dervish".



The Captain's room aboard the Britannia

The Russian Consulate collaborated with several key Scottish companies, including Albert Bartlett and The Scottish Salmon Company to deliver the event and produce a commemorative photo book, alongside other gifts for the veterans.

Russian Consul General in Edinburgh Andrey A.Pritsepov said: "Holding the reception onboard the yacht 'Britannia' and other events within the framework of the celebration of the 75th anniversary of the " Dervish " is part of the long-term systematic work by the Russian Consulate General in Edinburgh to build the lasting legacy of the Convoys. We are planning to support the establishment of a charitable foundation in Edinburgh that will support veterans and collect funds for the construction of a museum dedicated to the Convoys".



Dervish 75 in Arkhangelsk

To commemorate the first Arctic Convoy which left Liverpool on 12 August and arrived in Arkhangelsk (Archangel) on 31 August 1941, a British group of 26 landed in Arkhangelsk on 28 August, 2016, eight of whom were Veterans. They included two members of 151 Wing from that first convoy, Vic Bashford and Tim Elkington. The latter had flown his Hawker Hurricane ashore to the Murmansk area 75 years ago. The others were two from Scotland (David Craig and Bob Stone) and two from England (Harry Grew and Bill Taylor), plus two others (Ted Cooling and Doug Davidson) who came across for the reunion from the States where they now live.



Veterans attending celebrations in St. Petersburg

The first of 70 convoys, Operation Dervish carried Hawker Hurricanes accompanied by RAF engineers and pilots who trained Russian airmen to service and fly them. From 1941 - 1945, vast quantities of tanks, fighter planes, trucks, fuel, ammunition, raw materials, and food were delivered helping, amongst other things, to sustain Leningrad through its 900 day siege.

There was a general recognition that this anniversary would probably be the last significant one to be attended by the dwindling band of Arctic Convoy Veterans



– now all in their 90s. The HMS BELFAST Association (the ship herself participated in the Convoys) took the lead in responding to invitations from the City Authorities in Arkhangelsk and from the Polar Convoy Club in St Petersburg. The group was led by Captain Mike Matthews RN(Rtd) – President of the Association. Also in the city for part of the proceedings were



Leona's tapestry, prior to its journey to Russia.

the Princess Royal and her husband Vice-Admiral Sir Timothy Laurence and the Royal Marine Band from HMS COLLINGWOOD.

War time photographs, a tapestry sewn by Leona Thomas, and a mounted photograph (by Mark Appleton) of Loch Ewe, were presented to the Maritime Museum on the first afternoon before departing



Presentation at Arkhangelsk Maritime Museum (L-R) Bob Stone, GM, Museum Director, CG Keith Allan

early the following morning for the access-restricted city of Severodvinsk. After watching a dance-inspired performance in Veterans Square, flowers were laid at the Eternal Flame memorial before a tour of the City Museum, including a 'Tea-Pause' in the recreated Northern House. The Mayor then hosted us for Lunch in the House of Engineers and Technical Workers: a plethora of narrative and speeches concluding with the reconstruction of a dancing evening at the historical International Friendship Club – an adroit way of getting us onto the dance floor! Before departing we visited Yagry Island to lay flowers on the 'Lamenting Mothers' memorial in memory of the crew of the 'Kursk' who perished when their submarine sank in 2000. Back in Arkhangelsk the University hosted some of us for a Cultural and Educational evening. Our hosts chose the 105 year old paddle-wheeler NV GOGOL as the venue for a River Tour and Reception the following day. A wreath took to the water near the Foundation Stone before we sat down to a lavish lunch in the fore and aft saloons. Musical entertainment, exchanges of gifts, many speeches and toasts and an lively press presence added colour. The next event



was a Parade of Military Bands amongst the highlights of which were the Navy Concert Orchestra playing the invasion theme from Shostakovich's 1941 Leningrad Symphony and the RM Band's virtuoso drumming display. This was followed by a Gala Concert inside the theatre.

The Princess Royal joined us for the wreath laying ceremony (including one from RACMP) in the British Military Cemetery the following morning. She and her husband met all our Veterans - a dialogue they continued after the main ceremony which followed in Peace Square when the rest of the group also met them. A Municipal Lunch for the Veteran Groups followed fraught with comradely speeches and song. The day and the visit were rounded off by a Fireworks Display on the River Dvina.



This was an immaculately orchestrated visit during which friendships were forged, most particularly with the nine young student volunteers from the university who were with us throughout as helping hands. The sheer warmth of our welcome overwhelmed all of us and will be our most lasting memory of Arkhangelsk.

And so on to St Petersburg. A visit to this city normally starts at the Piskaryovskoye Memorial Cemetery where nearly half a million dead from the Siege of Leningrad lie buried. We all laid carnations on the memorial. Many one-on-one press interviews were conducted with our veterans. Next, at the Naval Museum, Rear Admiral Nick Hyne, our accompanying MOD representative, presented the Director with a replica Arctic Star Medal. A light Lunch and quick tour of this impressive museum followed before our coach took us to the Artillery Museum for the unveiling of a Sherman



Arctic Convoy veterans Bob Owen and David Craig



LOCH EWE



WWII FESTIVAL

6-7 May 2017



Prizes for best 1940s outfit

POOLEWE & AULTBEA
Book tickets online

Music, dance, make-up, re-enactment, & more!

www.theracproject.org/festival/

Loch Ewe WWII Festival – May 6-7 2017



One of the most exciting announcements for 2017 is our [Loch Ewe WWII Festival](#), taking place on the 6th and 7th May. The attractions will be spread around the loch in the villages of Poolewe and Aultbea with a shuttle service between locations for festival goers. We are thrilled to announce that [The D-Day Darlings](#), [The Highland Swing Band](#), [The Northern 40s Re-Enactment Group](#), and [The Vintage Beauty Parlour](#) will be present, and we have a lot more to announce over the Spring so book your [tickets](#) soon to

avoid disappointment. Thanks also to [Inverewe Garden & Estate](#) and [Sealife Glass Bottom Boat](#) who have created a unique offer for Festival goers – admission to the world famous botanical garden, a tour of the recently restored Inverewe House and a 45-minute boat trip on Loch Ewe. This is a rare opportunity to see Loch Ewe as the sailors of the convoys would have done 75 years ago. Your Captain, Rick Holmes, will set the scene, and show you key points of interest relating to the Arctic Convoys.



The Festival promises to be an exciting weekend of music, dancing, re-enactment, film shows, 1940s makeovers, and much more. Fun for all the family. Get into the spirit of the 40s and dress for the occasion (prizes for the best dressed). Lots more to be announced on the [Festival Website](#) so watch this space for updates.

Tank. This had been lifted from the wreck of the SS Thomas Donaldson sunk in 1945 in the Barents Sea. It had been immaculately restored.

Keith Allan, the British Consul-General, hosted us for Supper. More warm words and gifts were exchanged. The following morning we converged on the spectacular monument to the memory of the Participants of the Arctic Convoys in front of the Maritime College. More speeches, more guards and bands, more wreath laying but this is an especially significant place for us. Four of us peeled off from the main group afterwards to visit School 600. The youngsters sang, recited and danced for us first then we were each invited to say a few words. A tour of their impressive Naval History room and Lunch followed.



We re-joined the main group at the Icebreaker KRASIN: the Russian equivalent of HMS BELFAST as their last surviving ship to have taken part in the Convoys. A short concert and a supper hosted by the Polar Convoy Club rounded off the day.

On our last day we were treated with a trip out to Kronstadt Island. Before we embarked on a Naval Tender Captain Yury Alexandrov, President of the Polar Convoy Club, presented 2 of us with pictures. On passage we stopped to lay a wreath in memory of all sailors lost at sea. Disembarkation was a challenge but fortunately there were enough helping hands (we had 3 delightful young sailors with us throughout this visit) to help our Veterans ashore. A coach tour around the town, built by Peter the Great in the first half of the 18th Century, ended up at St Nicholas Cathedral. Recently magnificently restored this is now



Veterans meet Princess Ann

the Naval Church (having been a cinema only 10 years ago!). There was a Wedding in progress with some traditional unaccompanied singing. We had loaves and fishes for Lunch in the crypt. A priest gave us a short talk on the history. It was all very compelling. We returned to the city in the coach arriving just in time for a Reception in the US Consulate: a final round of speeches and gift-giving before an excellent Supper.

Home we all headed the following day. High amongst abiding memories must be the vigour of our Veterans. They all rose to the occasion as the adrenaline kicked in and this rubbed off on the rest of us. Next comes the interaction we had with our young helpers both in Arkhangelsk and St Petersburg. They just could not do enough for us. And finally a measure of the prominence given to the British and Russian Veterans must be the privilege of jointly laying the first wreath in Peace Square ahead of the Princess Royal. A singular honour.

Mike Matthews
Captain Royal Navy
President of the HMS BELFAST Association

Collection update

Empire Snow – Donation of Coffee-cup and Saucer



The Cup and Saucer showing the Thomson and Cairn Line emblem

We are delighted to include a coffee-cup and saucer in our collection that was present on the Merchant ship, Empire Snow, during the Arctic Convoys. The items were taken from the vessel by Ian Hight, a radio operator who went to Murmansk in 1943. He gave them to his parents while on leave, and decades later they were handed over to Ian's daughter, Jeannie Hight. Jeannie conducted some research into the objects and discovered their fascinating history. With the help of an account Ian had written of his time in the convoys in 1975, "[Destination Murmansk](#)", she was able to make the connection between the objects and the Empire Snow. The cup and saucer bear the emblem of the Thomson and Cairn Lines, who managed the vessel for the Ministry of War



Ian Hight during his service

Transport in 1943. We are hugely grateful to Jeannie for donating these items to our collection. We strongly recommend you read Ian's account of war, which you can find by clicking the link above.



Cigarette Case from ORP Garland

We are thrilled to include a silver cigarette case in our collection that was presented to British Naval Liaison Officer Alan Hartley in 1945. The case bears the number H37, the number of ORP Garland, and is inscribed:

“From the Captain and Officers of ORP Garland to Alan Hartley - our good friend and BNLO 10-8-42 to 25-1-45 Plymouth 25.1.45”



Cigarette case showing inscription

Loaned to the Polish Navy in May 1940, the ORP Garland saw action in the Arctic in PQ16 and QP13. It was part of the close escort of PQ16 in May 1942, and sustained serious damage

from Ju88 dive bombers, including the loss of 25 crew and another 43 wounded. The ship proceeded independently to Murmansk for repairs and then joined the Ocean Escort for the returning convoy QP13.

We would like to express our gratitude to Cathy Honeybone for donating this item to our collection and highlighting the role of the Polish Navy in the convoys.

Get Involved



How else can I help?

Spread the word. Tell people about our project and help us find more people with stories to share. We are always looking for new stories, accounts and anecdotes to put on the “Convoys Remembered” page of our website, which you can see here: <http://www.russianarcticconvoymuseum.org>

Volunteer

We welcome any offers of help, particularly from those able to offer the odd afternoon in the summer to meet and greet at our Exhibition in Inverasdale. If you would like to be involved in our project in any way, no matter how small, please contact Elizabeth Miles at info@theracmproject.org

Donate/loan an item to the collection

Many fascinating items in our collection have been donated by veterans or their relatives. If you have an item relating to the convoys that you think may be of

interest to us, then please contact Bruce Hudson at vicechair@theracmproject.org

Make a donation

Help us make the project a reality. You can find our Just Giving page here: <https://www.justgiving.com/russianarcticconvoymuseum/Donate/> or, if you prefer to donate by cheque, please make it out to: “Russian Arctic Convoy Museum Project”

Address:
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Don't forget you can gift aid it too.

Follow us online

RACMP often post updates, news stories and event details on social networks. If you want to keep up to date with our progress then you can follow us on the following sites:



[Russian Arctic Convoy Museum](#)



[Arctic Convoy Museum @InfoRACM](#)



[RACMP +RacmpUkLochEwe](#)

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If you would like to contribute to future newsletters (or find any errors or omissions) please contact us at admin@theracmproject.org



Painted by Leonard Mobbs A.B. 1923-2014 (HMS Honeysuckle)

*"I witnessed this while on watch. Pity no-one else saw it. It passed too quickly."
Russian Convoy JW65 March 1945*

*Remembrance
and all good wishes
for Christmas
and the New Year*



*From all at the
Russian Arctic Convoy Project*

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