



RACP NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2017

ISSUE 15



Welcome to the Christmas newsletter

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News

Remembrance Service

A service was held at the Arctic Convoy Memorial at Cove on the 11th of November to commemorate all those who lost their lives during the perilous Arctic Convoys, and all those who have lost their lives in conflict. We would like to say thank you to the Minister Heather Widdows, the local Air Cadet Squadron for their assistance, and also to the piper, Fraser Wotherspoon. Thanks also to all the attendees. It was a lovely service.



Memorial Service at Cove

Markets

RACP has been keeping a stand at the local Poolewe Tuesday Market this season, spreading the word about our project to locals and visitors to the area.

We also attended the Christmas Market in Gairloch Community Centre, which was very busy, and were able to raise funds through our Christmas Hamper Raffle. We'd like to say a big thank you to everyone who purchased a raffle ticket or items from our table, and to everyone who came to say hello to our team. We hope to see all you lovely people at our Exhibition Centre next season.



RACP at the Gairloch Christmas Market

Exhibition Centre Success

This month we closed for the season following a great first year, we received around 5500 visitors which is very encouraging for the future. Thanks to everyone who visited us in our new home and everyone who volunteered throughout the year, you all made it a great place to be. We hope to see you all again when we re-open in the Spring.

Project update

Along side our move to Aultbea there has been a lot of hard work behind the scenes. We have been working with OSCR (The Scottish Charity Regulator) to change the charity into a SCIO (A charitable incorporation), this change in status will allow us to take ownership of the building, dependant on successful fundraising. To help with the fundraising we are applying to the Scottish Land Fund who help organisations purchase

land and buildings, so far we have successfully passed Phase 1 and have been invited into Phase 2.



Reports

Loch Ewe 75 Event – Remembering PQ18

RACP held a two day event on September 29th and 30th to mark the 75th anniversary of the convoy PQ18, which sailed from Loch Ewe on September 2nd 1942. Following the very heavy losses suffered by PQ17, much stronger escorting forces were provided for this convoy and, although 13 ships were lost, many more got through to Archangel. The Germans lost 3 U-boats and 40 aircraft, a loss of highly trained personnel they could ill afford.



Andrew Choong shows the ship's plans for HMS Ashanti

The two day event was well received by those attending and the weather was typically autumnal but, thankfully, not Arctic. We were very lucky to have a return guest speaker to Loch Ewe in Andrew Choong Han Lin of the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich. Several families attended who had relatives on these convoys and were delighted with the detail he included on the first Battle of the Barents Sea involving some 40 merchant ships and 70 warships giving close and distant cover. The original plans of the destroyer HMS Ashanti were also on show to shed light on its involvement in towing the stricken Tribal Class sister ship HMS Somali for over 400 miles. In spite of U-boat activity, the bad weather did for the Somali and she sank with a skeleton crew on board. He went away very impressed with the Exhibition Centre.



Guided tour at the Boom Defence site

Contacts such as Andrew Choong are vital for one of RACP's future objectives; museum accreditation. This can be a lengthy process and establishing relationships and seeking the help and guidance of such entities as the National Maritime Museum, the Imperial War Museum and others is part of this.



Guided tour of the Exhibition Centre

The event also coincided with the Highland Archaeological Festival, for which we organised a guided tour of our Exhibition and three guided walks to the Mellon Charles Boom Defence, one during the event and two in October. Sadly very little physical evidence remains but there is a good story to tell and visitors with little or no knowledge of the Arctic Convoy campaign are always very surprised by the scale of the operation around Loch Ewe during WWII. On October 6th those on the walk were also able to see a helicopter arrive at the base and Royal Navy personnel taking part in Operation Joint Warrior.



The Highland Archaeology Festival Conference

One of our team attended the Highland Archaeology Festival Conference at the Highland Council Headquarters in Inverness on October 14th. It was a fascinating conference, with speakers on a wide range of historical topics. We were proud to represent the WWII Arctic Convoys and had lots of positive feedback at our stand.



Outreach Programme

On Wednesday 28th of November RACP carried out short presentations at our two local care homes, Strathburn House in Gairloch, followed by Isle View in Aultbea. The purpose was to provide the residents, who are unable to visit the new Exhibition Centre, with an insight into what RACP have recently achieved and why Loch Ewe features so prominently in the Arctic Convoy story.



RACP Acting-chair Bruce Hudson presenting to care home residents

We took along a number of artefacts, one of our pictures and information posters from the collection. We then explained why the convoys were started in the first place and how Loch Ewe, and the surrounding areas, became so involved.

A number of the residents were children at the time and some reminiscences came to the fore, which will be followed up at a later date. At Strathburn there was some recall, by one of the ladies, of one of the few air raids on Loch Ewe when she was in Gairloch Primary school.

All appeared to enjoy the change involved in their daily routine.

Arctic Elf Extravaganza

On the 9th and 10th of December we held a Christmas event for children at our Exhibition Centre in Aultbea. It was a fun packed occasion with lots of activities,



A great turnout

although the undeniable star of the show was Pavel the Polar Bear, who delighted the children (and adults) with his endless supply of festive bear hugs. There were card making activities, Russian fairy tales told in our festive woodland grotto, a demonstration

of what to do in an air raid, for which the children had a go at sounding the warden's rattle and putting on gas masks, and there was a museum quiz with prizes.



Festive Bear hugs for all

Trying on a gas mask

The event was very well attended and we would like to say thank you to everyone that helped make the event possible: our wonderful RACP volunteers and shop staff; our wonderful bakers, Nicky Hayes, Anne Ella, and Mhairi Harrison; our magnificent Winter Fairy, Laura Ellakirk; our storyteller Rhona Mackenzie; our talented artist, Rachael Wood; and of course, Pavel the Polar Bear.



Pavel and the RACP team at the Arctic Elf Extravaganza

Collection update



A trio of model ships

At RACP we are very proud of our model ship collection, and not just because we don't have space for the real ships, but because they tell a story. The hours spent building them and the attention to detail show the passion of the model maker, whether it be to understand the ships, the sailors, the stories or to remember them. This connection with history is passed onto our visitors and is a vital part of what we seek to do, honour those who were involved.

Here we have three fine examples which have recently been donated to us.

HMS Wild Goose was made by Tom Andrews and was donated to us by Alan Blyth. This even won first place in a recent model competition.



HMS Wildgoose

The other two models of HMS Onslow & HMS Badsworth were both made by Derrick Westley and donated to us by his brother Peter who is associated with the RAF Lossiemouth Museum.



HMS Onslow & HMS Badsworth

Convoys Remembered

Arthur Albert Reed

Our latest addition to Convoys Remembered is Arthur Albert Reed, who served on HMS Palomares between October 1941 and April 1943 and was part of Convoy PQ-17 in 1942. After a very brief leave, he returned to HMS Palomares and saw action at Operation Torch in North Africa.

David Craig

As part of #LochEwe75 Merchant Seaman David Craig recounted his Arctic Convoy experiences for us. Our Honorary President, George Milne, conducted an interview, which is summarised below. The full interview will form part of our archives.

David's Story

2017 is the 75th anniversary of his lying at anchor in the loch in February 1943 while preparing for convoy JW53. After fiendish weather and failed



A A Reed aboard HMS Palomares attempts by Luftwaffe and U-boats to stop them, they arrived at the Kola Inlet (leading to Murmansk) on 27 February, 12 days later. David's ship SS Dover Hill, however, was hit by a bomb while at anchor there. It did not explode but penetrated the deck and submerged itself in the coal hold. During a nail-biting 48 hours, volunteers from the crew worked to bring the bomb up to the top where a Russian bomb disposal expert removed the detonator and chucked the bomb



David Craig during his interview



David (centre) with his Russian friend's daughter and veteran Capt. Rolfe Monteith (RCN) outside the Russian Navy's Cathedral in Kronstadt, north of St. Petersburg.

overboard. They stayed in Murmansk for several months waiting for instructions to return. David has kept in touch with the Russian and his family ever since.

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 man our Exhibition Centre.

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 Project"

Address:

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Don't forget you can gift aid it too.



Follow us online

RACP 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

JOIN THE POLAR CUBS



By joining the Polar Cubs, you can help support the work we do.

In return, you'll get:

- A Polar Cubs Pin Badge
- An ID Card
- A Polar Cubs Sticker Pack
- A Polar Cubs Newsletter with news, quizzes, and competitions
- Advance invitations to events we run for children
- A chance for your models and artworks to go on display in our exhibition
- A Thank You Message from Pavel the Polar Bear
- 10% off in our gift shop

The Polar Cubs constitutes junior membership of the Russian Arctic Convoy Project. Membership costs £8/year and helps us achieve our charitable mission whilst ensuring the Arctic Convoys are not forgotten by future generations.



"Convoy through Ice and Aurora"
Painting by Jim Rae - Maritime Artist

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



*From all at the
Russian Arctic Convoy Project*

WWW.THERACMPROJECT.ORG