



RACP NEWSLETTER

MAY 2018

ISSUE 16

In this issue:

- 1 News
- 1 Reports
- 3 Collection Update
- 3 Convoys Remembered Update
- 4 Get Involved
- 5 Special Appeal

News

IMPORTANT NOTICE RE: NEWSLETTER SUBSCRIPTION

On the 25th May the new General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) will come into force, replacing the 1998 Data Protection Act. To comply with the regulations we require all of our newsletter subscribers to confirm that they wish to continue receiving our newsletter. We have updated our Privacy Policy, which explains how we use and store your data. It can be viewed on our website: www.russianarcticconvoymuseum.org/privacy-policy

If you no longer wish to receive the newsletter, PLEASE SEND AN EMAIL to newsletter@theracmproject.org with the message "unsubscribe".

Funding Update



We are enormously grateful to the Foyle Foundation for their generous donation to assist us with the salary costs of a development officer, this will greatly assist the project this year.

New Stock Added to Our Shop

Our gift shop opened this Easter and is the perfect place to pick up some wonderful treats. We have a wide range of local crafts ranging from hand knitted jumpers, beautiful jewellery, artworks and pottery.



Red Ruby Rose bags and purses have graced the red carpet at the film awards in Hollywood and our stunning range of vintage aprons will bring glamour to the most mundane household tasks (they look good on ladies too). We have books galore and a fabulous selection of WWII

themed gifts. Our new range of "glow in the dark" Spitfire T-shirts for children are "flying" off the shelves. These are part of our collection commemorating the 100th anniversary of the RAF. There are mugs with slogans, cards, posters and ration bags of sweets. You are bound to find something ideal for yourself or someone deserving and every purchase brings our project nearer to achieving its goals. We look forward to seeing you.



Reports

HMS Westminster Visit

On the 6th of February HMS Westminster paid a brief visit to the area whilst on her way to the Arctic Circle and beyond. Her Captain, Commander Simon Kelly had contacted RACP to enquire if it would be possible to hold a brief service at the memorial stone at Cove. The vessel arrived at the mouth of Loch Ewe and the Captain, the First Lieutenant Matthew Cox and other members of her crew came ashore in a RIB and were met by Bruce Hudson, George Milne and Nicky Ellakirk, and taken to Cove.



HMS Westminster crew members at the Rubha-nan-Sasan memorial.

Following the short service they were taken to the Exhibition Centre for a very welcome warm drink and were shown round. The Captain presented George Milne with one of the ship's plaques and, in turn, the Captain was given a plaque of HMS Helicon, the WWII naval base in Aultbea.

The visitors were most impressed with the EC's collection and the visit provided some valuable publicity for RACP and also new contacts in the Royal Navy. It is hoped that other RN ships heading north will also call in for a visit. As mentioned above, HMS Westminster was



Plaques being exchanged

on her way into the Arctic Circle and was going to follow WWII convoy routes and later pay a courtesy visit to Norway. She has been in service for 24 years and recently completed a very extensive revamp, which took two years. She was mentioned in the press in January when she was called out to 'escort' some Russian naval units through the English Channel. HMS Westminster is no stranger to northern waters and Jeremy Clarkson was a guest on board when he made a documentary about the ill-fated convoy PQ-17.

The Snowdrop Memorial Garden



David Aris with George Milne in the EC garden.

On March 8/9th David Aris visited the Exhibition Centre (EC) bringing with him many hundreds of snowdrops, which he had brought up by car from his house near Kendal. He has also very kindly donated a bench to us which is dedicated to his late wife, June. The snowdrops were planted in the garden at the EC and form part of our memorial garden.



June's bench

David Aris is a keen supporter of our project and visits us regularly. He is an authority on Liberty Ships having worked for the shipyard in Sunderland which designed and built

them (they were also built in huge numbers by US and Canadian shipyards).

He has made appearances at our events to share his knowledge and has donated a Red Ensign from the Liberty Ship Jeremiah O'Brien in 2015.



The planted Snowdrops

HMS Belfast Birthday Celebrations

On 16-17 March this year HMS Belfast's 80th birthday celebration took place on board the ship. The Town-class light cruiser was laid down in the yards of Harland and Wolff in the City of Belfast in 1936 and launched on 17th March 1938. A year later, after completion she joined the Royal Navy in August 1939, a few weeks before War broke out.

For almost 2 years she served in the Arctic defending the convoys that bought aid and support to our hard-pressed allies in Russia. She



Crowds assembled for the celebrations.

touched their lives so much that every year in May we celebrate this relationship on Victory day.

Following a notable post-war career she was decommissioned in August 1963 and later permanently moored in the Thames, she is now a famous museum

ship and landmark. The anniversary was organised jointly by the Imperial War Museum and the President of the HMS Belfast Association, Capt. Mike Matthews and Vice-President, The Hon. Timothy Lewin, whose father Admiral Lewin served on the ship.



Participating veterans

Over 20 crew members attended, including the oldest survivor John Harrison (104). He was invited to share

a ceremonial sword with sea cadet Joshua Gois Baldajos (13), the youngest of the London Sea Cadet Unit that meets weekly on board the ship, to cut the large birthday cake.

Others in attendance were the Deputy Mayor of Belfast, an MP for Belfast, the Director General of the IWM, Diane Lees, a number of allied navy officers, several Russian navy and cultural personnel and about 70 invited guests including the Hon. Pres. of the RACP, George Milne.



The cutting of the birthday cake.

The Russians maintain their link with the ship acknowledging their gratitude to her and all the allies' in the Arctic Convoy campaign. They paid for the replacement of her two telecommunications/radar masts in 1999 and their installation by a Russian technical team, as documented in "Last Witness", available [from our shop](#).

Discussions are taking place to twin the ship with the KRASSIN, an ice-breaker in St. Petersburg (also a museum ship) which aided Arctic Convoy ships on arrival in frozen Russian waters between 1941 - 1945.

Collection Update

Kriegsmarine Officer's Dress Uniform

Dagger

Surgeon Lt. Douglas Johnston was aboard the destroyer HMS



The dagger

Offa in late April 1945. The ship formed part of the escort for Convoy RA66 returning from Murmansk, the Lieutenant's final round trip Russian convoy.

On the 4th May the German forces in North West Germany, Denmark and Holland surrendered unconditionally and HMS Offa was ordered to detach from the convoy and proceed initially to Scapa Flow. On the 8th May she departed for Copenhagen to assist with the Kriegsmarine surrender arrangements.



Acting-Chair, Bruce Hudson, receives the donation.

On 25th May HMS Offa transited the Keil Canal and while in Keil, and ashore, some of the crew visited the German officers mess in the town where the dagger was 'liberated' as a souvenir.

The dagger was passed down through the Johnston family and recently was donated to the RACP Exhibition Centre for eventual & suitable display.

Convoys Remembered

New veteran stories added to our website



John Hart (right)



Ernest Farr



Laurence Strong



Bill Carson

We have had several new additions to Convoys Remembered recently, including some fantastic images which are well worth a look. There is [Laurence Vezey Strong DSC MiD](#), who served as Navigating Officer on HMS Boudicea, and who wrote a detailed account of convoy PQ15. Then there is [Ernest Farr](#),

who joined the Royal Navy in 1943 aged 17, and who was an Asdic operator on HMS Obedient. There is also [Bill Carson](#), who served on HMS Trinidad, the ship that torpedoed itself, and finally [John Hart](#), who was a radio operator on HMS Cygnet. Huge thanks to everyone who has submitted a story to our veterans archive. It has grown into a truly valuable resource of memories and images of the Arctic Convoys. If you know any veterans who might like to share their story with us, then do please put them in contact. We are very keen to preserve as many memories as possible. You can read their stories on our Museum Website. If you would like to contribute a story to this site, please email Natasha at marketing@theracmproject.org

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:

RACP

C/O Pool House

Poolewe

Wester Ross

IV22 2LD

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](#)

Contact Us

By post:

RACMP

C/O Pool House

Poolewe

Wester Ross

IV22 2LD

By telephone:

01445 781272

By email:

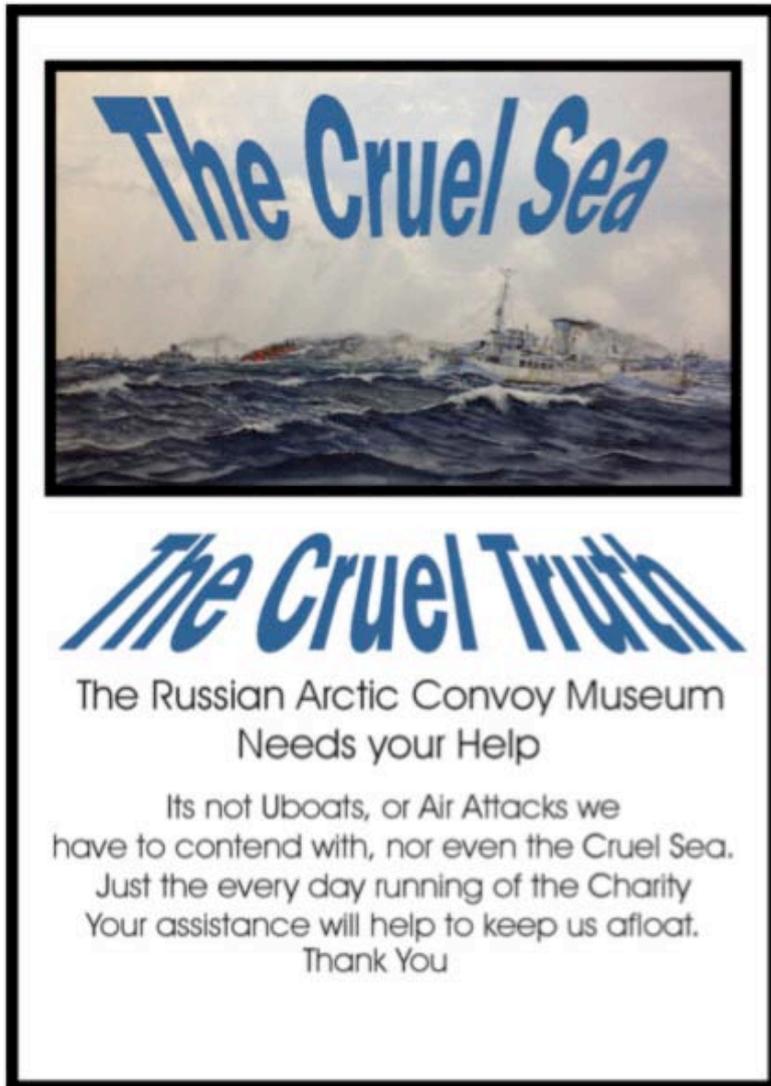
info@theracmproject.org

Newsletter produced by Nicky Ellakirk (RACP technical advisor) and Natasha Miles (RACP social media marketer).

Photos and articles contributed by Nicky Ellakirk, Natasha Miles, Elizabeth Miles, George Milne, Bruce Hudson and Francis Russel.

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

Special Appeal



Credit: Jim Rae, Marine artist

The Russian Arctic Convoy Project was set up formally some seven years ago, but some local members have been involved for 20 years. It was established to honour and remember all those that served on the WWII Arctic Convoys carrying vital supplies to Russia. Over half of these Convoys left from, and returned to, Loch Ewe.

The RACP Charity is run for and by its Members and a wider worldwide audience. A small, but diminishing, dedicated volunteer team over the years have contributed in excess of £50k in direct funding, time and effort. They have gathered together a unique collection, and put on notable events. These have both honoured the surviving Veterans (visit by Prince Michael of Kent in 2011, the 2013 Arctic Star medal presentation ceremony, Loch Ewe 75 in 2017), and a provided informative attraction for visitors to the area and the local communities alike.

This important and unique Arctic Convoy collection is now housed in our new Exhibition Centre in Aultbea, which opened in early May, 2017.

The story behind the Arctic Convoys is a big attraction for many of the visitors to the area, as the 5,500 visitors last year proves. Being on the North Coast 500 route it is hoped visitor numbers to the Exhibition will increase in the future, thereby bringing greater benefits to the local area. All that have shown interest in the Project have a

role to play in the ultimate success of this, if they choose to.

Thanks to many of our Members and others the successes achieved over the past five years have increased the profile of RACP locally, nationally and overseas. This success has made the work load that much heavier for the current team, especially as the number of active Members has fallen.

RACP now faces the following big challenges in 2018:

1. To raise some £150k to purchase and renovate our new Exhibition Centre,
2. Recruit additional active local Volunteer help to run the Centre and engage with our visitors,
3. Recruit Volunteers to continue the research of the stories and history of the Convoys, and other administrative tasks, from the wider interested community, and
4. Seek replacements for Committee members standing down at the next AGM

The Charity has recently (November 2017) become a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO) with a new Constitution. New Charity No.SC047909. At the next AGM, expected to be in June 2018, a number of the Committee will be standing down, leaving vacancies. All of the current Committee have served for many years. This is recognised not to be a healthy way to run the management of any organisation. Without a new Committee and a more active Membership and



Local Air Scout Troop visit February, 2018

volunteers the viability of the RACP charity will be called into doubt.

For those that live locally and have an interest in the Project, whether Members or not, we need more Volunteers urgently. At the Exhibition Centre they play an important role by engaging with the visitors. Normally they are there for a 3 hour shift (10am-1pm, or 1pm-4pm) and we now need a pool of Volunteers for the coming season, starting on 30 March. You'll meet people from all over the world. You can learn about the collection as you go along after a brief introductory session. There will always be someone to turn to for advice.

For those of you who live further afield this Special E-Newsletter is to inform you of the considerable challenges the charity now faces on the back of the previous successes and any assistance financial or otherwise would be appreciated

We are therefore taking this opportunity to make everyone who has shown an interest as a Members, or in the local communities or in receipt of the RACP E-Newsletter aware of the difficulties now faced by the Project if it is to be successfully maintained in some form or other. The Committee is urgently seeking a viable and sustainable way forward and any help you can make, or suggest, will allow us to recommend an effective outcome to the current challenges facing RACP.

Thank you.



“To the Rescue” Credit: Jim Rae, Marine artist