



# RACP NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 2021 ISSUE 19



## Welcome to the Christmas newsletter

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### News

#### New Shop Stock

Our Museum may be closed for the season, but you can still access our online shop for books, clothing, mugs, and gifts. We have the new book *The Skylark's secret* from author Fiona Valpy.

<https://shop.racmp.org/collections/books/products/the-skylarks-secret>

We also have a brilliant *Dictionary of Naval Slang* compiled by Veteran Sailor Gerald O'Driscoll.

<https://shop.racmp.org/collections/books/products/a-dictionary-of-naval-slang>

And finally don't forget that our latest Christmas card featuring the mosaic designed by the pupils of Poolewe Primary is available to buy here:

<https://shop.racmp.org/collections/cards/products/arctic-convoy-mosaic-christmas-card>

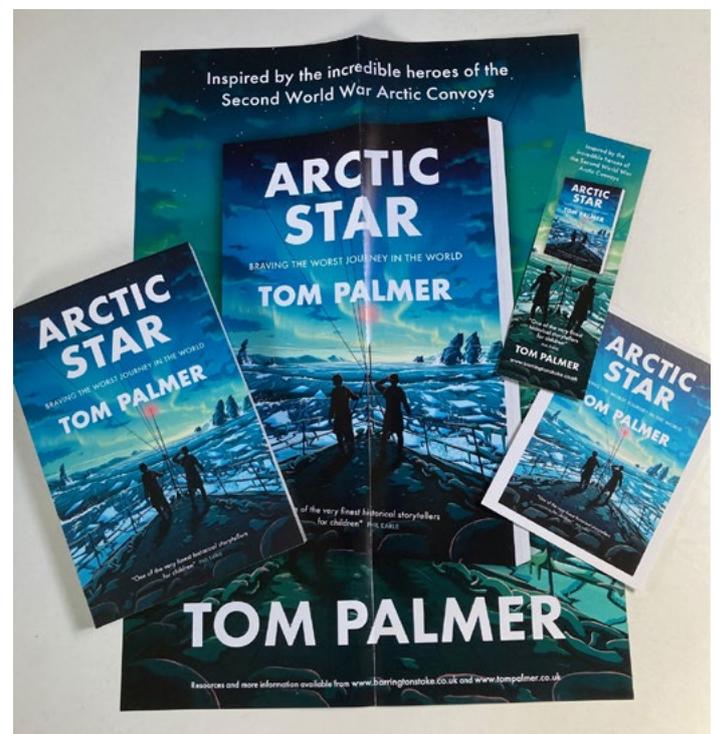
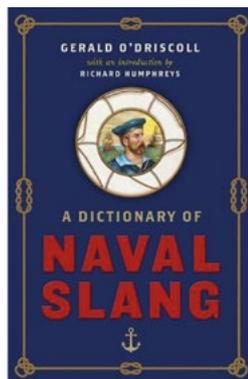
#### Children's Book Giveaway

On the week commencing 15th November we ran a very successful Twitter Giveaway of Tom Palmer's popular children's novel *Arctic Star*. The book follows the plight of three boys undergoing a convoy to Russia in Winter 1943, and Tom conducted some of his

research for the story at our museum. He very kindly donated 5 signed copies for us to offer in a Christmas giveaway and the response was enormous, with the Tweet being shared nearly 500 times. The winners were drawn on 22nd November and we are delighted to say that four of the five copies went to children's libraries. The 5th copy went to the great grandson of a veteran who served on HMS Bluebell, so all were very deserving winners. Huge thanks to Tom for giving us the opportunity to spread awareness of the Arctic Convoys amongst youngsters whilst promoting a love of reading, and making some lucky winners very happy this Christmas. And if anyone would like to get hold of their own copy of *Arctic Star*, we have some for sale in our online shop. Just visit:

<https://shop.racmp.org/collections/books/products/arctic-star-by-tom-palmer>

Find out more about Tom's work on his website: [tompalmer.co.uk](http://tompalmer.co.uk)



## Merchant Navy Day

On 3rd September our museum was just one of hundreds of locations across the UK observing Merchant Navy Day. A day to honour merchant sailors through the ages and their contribution to the country.



## Bertie The NAAFI Van Update

In the Summer of 2020 we ran a very successful fundraising campaign for Bertie the NAAFI Van to enable us to buy him a trailer to make transporting him around the country easier. After a long wait, mostly due to the Covid pandemic, his trailer, an Ifor Williams GX126, finally arrived at Bertie's garage in August 2021. Once again a huge thank you to all those who donated and made this possible.



In other Bertie news, a feature on this one-of-a-kind NAAFI Van is going to appear in *Classic Military Vehicle Magazine*. We will post more details on our website and Facebook page when we know the date of publication.

## Farewell to our Co-Chair

On the 7th October this year, RACP presented an inscribed quaiche to John Casson MBE in recognition of his hard work and many notable achievements whilst serving as our Co-chairman.



John, who has a wealth of experience working for charitable organisations and in the museum sector, had originally joined the project on a one year basis but extended his term to three highly productive years. His drive and determination to acquire the necessary funding to carry out extensive renovations, has resulted

in a building that offers both a greatly enhanced experience for visitors and a safe environment for the collection.

On the 9th May this year, RACP showed a virtual tribute to the men of the Convoys. John Casson oversaw the documentary working closely with a film production company. Interviews with key figures featured in the finished film; Prince Michael of Kent, Celia Sandy's (granddaughter of Sir Winston Churchill), Andrey Yakovlev the Russian Consul General in Edinburgh and five veterans of the Arctic Convoys.

A memorial brochure was produced together with commemorative lapel ribbons and more than 200 ship silhouettes were commissioned and feature on the film.

John was justly proud of the programme which was very well received. It can be viewed on <https://youtu.be/NzuSEJAopaM>

The team were very sorry to see him go but know that he will continue to keep a watchful eye on our progress and will always remain a dedicated supporter of the Museum.

## Francis Whittington

It is with great sadness we report that our good friend and colleague passed away on November 19th in Raigmore hospital. Francis had been part of the museum project from the start in 2011, both as a trustee for some years and a volunteer until last year.

With his knowledge of Russian and the history of the convoys he was very good engaging with visitors to the museum and helping them with their enquiries. He will be sorely missed.

## Ongoing Museum Expansion

Since we bought our building in 2017 we have been working on improving it and expanding our collection. The continued donations from veterans and their families have given us so much to display that we are looking at building an extension.

The fundraising is being undertaken by Alan Jones, who has been working with us for a few years now and has had great success to date. This latest project is in the planning stages and we really need your help to make our case. Please visit this link to fill out a very short survey:

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/8F2SXK5>

## Arctic Convoy Veteran visits the Museum



On the 18th of October we were delighted to be paid a visit by Jack Harris, aged 99. He travelled up with his daughter and her husband. Jack served on HMS Oakley, a destroyer escort on convoy PQ18.

## David Craig

We were saddened to hear of the passing of David Craig on 25th November 2021 at the age of 96. David was a long time supporter of the museum project and great friend to many of us. Many will be familiar with him as a regular visitor to Loch Ewe, especially for the annual memorial service each November. He last visited us



*David at the Wartime Trail opening*

at the end of August to take part in the opening of the War Time Trail and was a big hit with the children from Bualnaluib primary school who were present at the opening. Our thoughts are with his family.

## Reports

### Blazing a Wartime Trail

Our Wartime Trail was officially opened on the 31st August 2021. The new trail is made up of six new silhouette artworks including two benches at viewpoint locations with new interpretation panels at important wartime sites around the loch. The trail also includes three beautiful mosaic panels created by children from all three Loch Ewe primary schools. The trail project aims to preserve the incredible story of the Arctic Convoys and illuminate the vital



*The Lookout overlookign Loch Ewe*

role our local communities across Loch Ewe played. Launched in 2019, Covid interrupted our plans but as restrictions lifted this summer, we were able to resume the project and

officially open the trail on a sunny afternoon on the last day of August.

We were honoured to host a very special VIP at the launch, 96 year old Arctic Convoy veteran David Craig. David, who has sadly since passed away, served with his crewmates aboard the 'Dover Hill', and endured some of the most brutal conditions of any convoy journey.

His ship was part of Convoy JW53 also known as 'the forgotten convoy' which left Loch Ewe on 15th February 1943 bound for Murmansk. After battling severe weather, Luftwaffe attacks and pancake sea ice, David's ship was bombed while moored in the Kola Inlet in Russia. After a terrifying two-day battle to disarm the still 'live' bomb, all crew survived and received awards for bravery.

We were also joined by the pupils of Bualnaluib Primary School and their teachers. All three local primary schools worked with volunteers from RACM and mosaic artists Sally Purdy and Carola Martin-Smith to learn about the Arctic Convoy story and then create their own mosaic panels. These are now on permanent outdoor display at Poolewe Village Hall, Gairloch Primary School and MacLennan Park in Aultbea and form a central part of the trail.

Natalie White, Headteacher of Bualnaluib and Poolewe Primary Schools said, "Taking part in this project has been a wonderful

experience for our pupils. We are incredibly fortunate that they have been involved in the full process, designing, creating and sharing this lovely piece of art, a legacy which will be enjoyed by many in the future."



*Bench at Rubha nan Sasan, Cove*

We hope the new artworks and panels help visitors to the area and our local community explore more about the significance of Loch Ewe's wartime role and encourage everyone to preserve this important story and its legacy.

## Chairman's Report

Despite the Covid pandemic 2021 has been a busy one for RACP on various fronts and the project has made good progress.

### The Museum:

At the end of 2020 RACP received a grant of £99,561.60 from the Community Climate Asset Fund to refurbish the museum premises. The total cost of the refurbishment was £124,452.00, with the balance coming from RACP's reserves. The refurbishment, which consisted of cladding and harling the building, replacing the roof, new toilets and a new front door and windows, has transformed the building and made it much more environmentally efficient. The refurbishment, which was undertaken by Simpsons, commenced in March and was to have been completed by the end of April, but a combination of Covid, adverse weather and problems with sub-contractors, meant that it was not completed until late July. During the course of the work RACP received a grant of £26,041 from Museums and Galleries of Scotland for the purchase and installation of three air-source heat pumps, which will greatly improve the internal environment of the museum, particularly during the winter months.

### The War Time Trail:

In 2019 RACP received grants totalling £61,300.00

from the Heritage Lottery and the Highland Council to set up a War Time Trail around Loch Ewe. The trail was to have been completed in May 2020, but the Covid pandemic scuppered this and the project was not officially opened until 31st August this year. It has been a real community project involving children from the Bualnaluib, Gairloch and Poolewe primary schools who worked with an artist to produce three mosaics which are on display in Aultbea, Poolewe and Gairloch. RACP's Christmas cards will feature the mosaics this year. In addition, there are story boards, which inform about Loch Ewe's role during the war and some beautifully crafted sculptures alongside the story boards.

### 75th Anniversary Event:

As you know this was originally planned for May 2020, but was postponed in view of the pandemic and was again postponed until May 2022 because of the continuing uncertainties over the pandemic.

In its place a virtual event was prepared and a film was produced, which can be seen on our Facebook page and on YouTube. The film includes some wartime footage, interviews with veterans, an address by Prince Michael of Kent and Lady Sandys, Winston Churchill's granddaughter. The event has been a success and the film can be viewed on RACP's facebook page and on YouTube.



*The Museum during renovations*

Whilst the Covid situation has improved, we are clearly not out of the woods yet and the trustees recently decided to cancel the event. The reason for this continues to be the pandemic, but also we had to take into consideration the safety of the veterans, mostly in their late 90's or older, travelling up to Aultbea. Instead we are planning to hold much reduced, video-linked events in London, Edinburgh and in the museum, with the support of the Russian embassy and Consulate in Edinburgh. Sadly and inevitably there

# New Veterans added to Convoys Remembered

Over the past 12 months we have added a huge number of veterans to our Convoys Remembered archive. We are delighted that it is inspiring so many submissions of stories and superb images. Personal accounts really help those of us who weren't there to get a sense of what it was like. If your relative served on Arctic Convoys and shared any memories or anecdotes with you, please consider sharing them with us in our archive. It has grown into a wonderful resource for researchers and historians. In some instances we are able to link to scanned war diaries or other media, making it an ever more valuable source of information. Please help us grow it further if you can.

Contact [veterans@theracmproject.org](mailto:veterans@theracmproject.org) to have your relative included.

You can browse the entire archive at <https://racmp.co.uk/history-learning/convoys-remembered/>



A C Roche



Hugh McDonald



James Coghlan



Brian John Jayson



Henry John Wilson



Charles Edward Hopkins



Eric George Wilson



Claude Douglas Millard



Daniel Doherty



Alex Polowin



Frank Arnold Holdsworth



Dromonde Hussin



Albert Ernest Pinkney



Ernest Ulke



Arthur Leeson



Francis Teggarty



Enoch Robinson Bush Jr



Frederick Thomson



James Edwin Forbes



John Dinwoodie



Thomas Bigmore



John Mcmurtrie



Roger Whiting



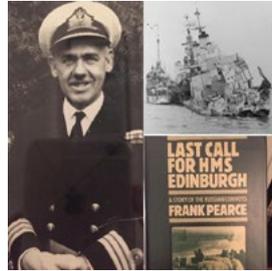
Michael Robinson



Owen Chaplin



Les Wilkinson



D C Lillie



William Black



Leslie Watts



Frederick Robert Phillips



Pamela Watson



Restituto Gimpaya



John Philip Shenton



Thomas Albert Hall



Konstantin Dzhagaryants



Rowland Purcell



Sidney Collins



John Mclees



Thomas Lawson



Walter Watkin



Thomas Iddon



Thomas Ivor Gray



Rodney Davies



William Henry Parker

are only a few veterans able to travel to London or Edinburgh and we have yet to receive confirmation that HMS Belfast would be available for the London Event. Updates on the proposed will be posted on our website.



*The Museum after renovations*

#### Museum Operations:

In 2020 the museum was only able to open from mid-August until the end of October when we had to work under Covid related restrictions, which hit visitor numbers. This year the museum was not able to open until 1st July and we lost valuable income from April to July. Since then, however, we have had a very good season and rather than compare it to 2020 it is worth comparing the figures to 2019 when we did not face any restrictions. Taking the same period (July to October) in 2019, visitor numbers were 1.9 times higher this year and, at 6401, exceeded the total for the full 2019 season. Museum income this year, excluding donations, totalled £46,790 compared to £21,015 for the same period in 2019.



Clearly RACP has benefitted from the increased number of people not travelling abroad, but, at the same time, we have not had the visitors to the UK, which, in previous years have made a significant contribution to the museum's income. Other factors which have helped have been our social media profile and our being mentioned in the NC500 guide book and on the Lonely Planet site. Word of mouth has proved to be equally important and we always encourage visitors to 'pass the word'. During the same period donations made in the museum totalled £ 795. The comments in our visitor book continue to be uniformly favourable and, in late July, three girls left their names in the book and one made the comment "Almost as good as riding a horse", which, in my view ranks as a tremendous compliment!

#### Looking Ahead:

We continue to receive artefacts, models and memorabilia and the museum is running out of exhibition and storage space. For some time now we have been discussing plans for an extension and the architects Simpson and Brown from Edinburgh prepared plans for a number of options, but these proved to be too expensive and we have since been looking at more realistic options. There is no doubt that the museum needs more space and room for parking. We recently put in an offer to buy the land immediately to the rear of the museum and to the east to be used for additional parking and to create a memorial garden. Our offer of £7,500 has been accepted, but we have put the seller's solicitors on notice that we will not go ahead until we have obtained funding for the purchase and we have made good progress with grant funding for the extension. We recently applied for a grant of £113,200 to the Community Renewal Fund to cover the cost of architects and project management fees and the cost of planning applications and building warrant. We expect to get a reply in the New Year. To date we have been very successful with grant applications, however, obtaining new funding is likely to become more difficult as a result of the pandemic and because there has been a huge increase in applications to fund Covid recovery programmes, which will rightly get priority.

The proposed extension will be a very significant step for RACP and one to which we are committed, but first of all we need to ensure that we are in a position to manage such a step and have sufficient manpower and systems in place for the extra work it will involve.



*The shop after the renovations*

This year three new volunteers have joined RACP and they have made a big difference to the manning of the exhibition area, where inter-acting with visitors and helping them with their enquiries is so important. If

you would like to help in the exhibition centre during the 2022 season commencing in April, or in another capacity, please contact us. We now have the names of well over 4,000 veterans on our data base and keeping this up-to-date is quite a task.

Trustees:

Following the resignation of John Casson from the board in August, RACP now has eight trustees. John joined the board in 2018 for one year but he stayed on for more than three and during this time his drive and enthusiasm has resulted in the project making very good progress and we are very grateful to him for this. Since the last AGM we have two new trustees, Kevin Ginty and Chris Connolly. Kevin is the editor of the Gairloch and District Times and Chris is a retired naval officer and was the UK's defence attaché in Moscow.

Finally, I would like to thank my fellow trustees, our band of volunteers and the shop staff for all their support over the past year.

*Francis Russell*  
Chairman



## Committee Update

Committee member, Chris Connolly, took part in two virtual conferences with Russia at the end of August and early September, both commemorating the 80th Anniversary of Dervish. Alongside the British Ambassador and Defence Attache, he spoke to a conference hosted by a dear friend of RACP, Valentina Golysheva of the Northern Arctic Federal University in Archangelsk. He provided an update of the work of the RACP through the Covid Lockdown and remembered those veterans we had lost recently. Two days later he attended a virtual conference hosted by the Northern Convoys International Centre (NCIC) in St Petersburg, with whom RACP have recently signed a Cooperation Agreement. RACP provided access to veteran stories and an introduction to Andrew Choong Han Lin, Curator (Historic Photographs and Ship Plans) at Royal Museums Greenwich, who gave a fascinating presentation on the Museum's Arctic Convoy related exhibits. In addition, the Wartime Trail mosaics were entered into the NCIC's 'We are the World' children's art competition and a copy of the 76th Anniversary Arctic Convoy Booklet has been included in NCIC's Peace Capsule, which is being buried to commemorate the Dervish anniversary.



# Reader Contributions

## Convoys PQ14 and QP11 revisited

By Hamish H Johnston, son of Surgeon-Lieutenant Douglas Johnston, RNVR

In June 1941 Nazi Germany turned on its ally and invaded Russia. Despite ideological differences and Britain's own needs Churchill decided that it was politically and militarily necessary to support Russia's campaign on the German eastern front. Supplies of armaments, fuel and materials - many of them from America - would be delivered to Murmansk and Archangel by convoys of merchant ships escorted by the Royal Navy. Convoy PQ14 and its return QP11 of April / May 1942 were among the earliest of the Russian convoys and two of the more noteworthy.

The merchant ships of PQ14 gathered in Hvalfjord, just north of Reykjavik on the west coast of Iceland at the beginning of April. Meanwhile fourteen ships of the escort gathered at Seidisfjord on the east coast of Iceland ready to link up with the cargo vessels. One of the first to arrive was the destroyer HMS Bulldog. She had left Reykjavik on 3rd April 1942 as one of the escorts for convoy RU17's return voyage to Loch Ewe, but was soon ordered to return to Iceland for Russian convoy escort duties. On board was Surgeon-Lieutenant Douglas Johnston, RNVR. It was his first sea-going posting since joining up in June 1940. The cruiser HMS Edinburgh left Scapa Flow and after a 36-hour passage joined the other escorts on the morning of 8th April.

With time to spare as the escorts waited, Johnston was able to go ashore. It was still winter in Iceland and there was thick snow right down to sea level. A keen skier, he managed to get hold of some skis, boots and poles and went exploring around the small settlement. A colleague borrowed his camera and photographed him outside the shop of Jon G Jonasson.

*Surg-Lieut. Douglas  
Johnston outside  
Jonasson's shop,  
Seidisfjord, April 1942*



Later, after the arrival of HMS Edinburgh, Johnston, on board HMS Bulldog, photographed the ships on the south side of the fjord with the stern of HMS Edinburgh prominent in the foreground.



*Escorts in Seidisfjord - stern of HMS Edinburgh from HMS Bulldog*

The detailed orders<sup>1</sup> for the escorts envisage an 11-day journey. They warned that submarine activity was to be expected and also aerial attack once the Germans had located the convoy. Three large German destroyers were known to be at Kirkenes, a Norwegian port only 125 miles WNW of Murmansk. HMS Bulldog was to encounter these ships on the return journey. The cruiser HMS Edinburgh, screened by two destroyers, was to deal with any surface ships but was ordered to keep clear of the Tirpitz and Scheer, both in Norwegian anchorages.



Adequate fuel was the factor that determined how much submarine hunting and other defensive activities the destroyers could do, so Force Q, consisting of an oil tanker and escorts, was to part company from the convoy and steam in an area midway between Iceland and North Cape. The destroyers could also fuel from HMS Edinburgh, which HMS Bulldog was to do on 13th April, taking on 86 tons. Johnston photographed this operation which lasted almost two hours, during

which the ships were attacked by a German aircraft. It was driven off by anti-aircraft fire from HMS Edinburgh, which in the process damaged HMS Bulldog's mast-top.<sup>2</sup>



*HMS Bulldog taking on oil from HMS Edinburgh 13 April 1942*

The twenty-six merchant ships of convoy PQ14 left Reykjavik on 8th April 1942 with a local escort of seven naval ships. The merchantmen were under a senior merchant navy officer, Commodore Rees of SS Empire Howard. A mixture of unseasonal ice and bad weather meant that a number of ships, including some of the original escorts, had to return due to ice damage. Some others got separated and eventually reached Iceland after joining the return convoy QP10. The main ocean escort of eight ships, including HMS Bulldog, left Seidisfjord on 11th April and made rendezvous on 12th April at a position SSW of Jan Mayen Island (approximately 400 miles north-east of Iceland) with eight remaining ships of the convoy which then continued the passage to Murmansk.

HMS Bulldog, under Commander Maxwell Richmond, was the Senior Officer's ship of the ocean close escort with HM destroyers Beagle, Beverley, Amazon, Eagle; HM corvettes Campanula, Oxlip, Saxifrage and Snowflake and three trawlers. Home Fleet distant cover was provided by seventeen ships, including two battleships. These were needed because the German battleship Tirpitz and other large surface ships were stationed in Norway. Also present but not strictly part of the convoy cover was HMS Edinburgh, screened by HM destroyers Forester and Foresight. She was on a secret mission to Murmansk to collect a cargo of gold bullion, this being payment from Russia for supplies received.

The first enemy contact - with aircraft - occurred on 15th April. By now the hours of daylight were long and the convoy was to suffer regular aerial observation and attacks. They shot down one aircraft on 17th April. The sea ice being much further south than expected, they had to follow a route further to the south of Bear Island than planned. This made life easier for the waiting U-boats, of which five were identified near the convoy on 16th April. While the escorts, including HMS Bulldog, spent the day seeking them out one U-boat managed to torpedo and sink a merchantman, the SS Empire Howard. Commodore Rees was among those killed, and his responsibilities were transferred to Commodore W. H. Lawrence of SS Briarwood.

On 17th April there was much anti-submarine activity. Commodore Lawrence reported that HMS Bulldog attacked and sank a submarine. She "made lightning turn and attack on submarine which fired two torpedoes at convoy, enemy craft sunk"<sup>3</sup>. Briarwood saw the submarine's stern surface before sinking, but curiously HMS Bulldog's own antisubmarine reports

do not record this or any kill from the three attacks made that morning<sup>4</sup>.



The same day HMS Edinburgh and HMS Bulldog went ahead to meet the Russian eastern local escort that joined the convoy. The seven remaining merchant ships reached Murmansk on 19th April. This had been one of the worst Russian convoy passages to date due to the appalling weather. All was not over, however, because Murmansk was only a short distance from the front line with German-occupied Norway, and unsurprisingly the town and its harbour facilities were subjected to continuous air attack. This assault was at its height when PQ14 arrived and during the ten days the allied ships were there.

The return convoy QP11 sailed from Murmansk on 28th April. Thirteen merchantmen had an ocean escort of eleven ships, including HMS Bulldog, and initially a local escort of six ships – British minesweepers and two Russian destroyers. Home Fleet distant cover of fourteen ships was similar to that of PQ14.

The next day, 29th April, the convoy came under threat of attack from four U-boats operating in the vicinity. On 30th April HMS Edinburgh joined the convoy having embarked the gold bullion at Murmansk. As evening approached she pulled ahead on her own without her screening destroyers which remained with the convoy. She came under attack from U88 and U456. She was hit by a torpedo from the latter, sustaining serious damage to her bows and stern, which was blown off, although her port propeller shafts remained intact. HM destroyers Forester and Foresight pulled out of the convoy to assist.

While this was happening the convoy and remainder of the escorts pressed on. They were squeezed southwards by the ice and had to pick their way through 'growlers'. The Kirkenes-based German destroyers Z24, Z25 and Hermann Schömann, knowing that HMS Edinburgh was badly damaged and returning to Murmansk, now put to sea hoping to sink the cruiser and take advantage of the convoy's weakened defences.

On the morning of 1st May the convoy was subjected to dive-bombing attacks. "They attacked the escorts and in particular Bulldog who had been giving the enemy great deal of trouble" wrote the Commodore. Around midday the three German destroyers' first contact was with the convoy. They were more heavily armed than the British ships but, led by HMS Bulldog, the destroyers Amazon, Beagle and Beverley drove

them off in five separate phases of action lasting four hours from 1345.

The convoy continued behind a smokescreen, finding its way through heavy drifting ice, but during the course of the first action a straggling Russian merchant ship was torpedoed and sunk. HMS Amazon was hit and suffered four dead and fourteen wounded. HMS Bulldog was straddled by shells and reported splinter damage above the waterline, also worn and damaged boilers, all of which would need repair. She suffered three injured casualties who Johnston would have patched up.

Having been chased from the convoy, the three German destroyers headed for HMS Edinburgh on 2nd May. She was shipping much water, was down at the head, and had lost her steering. Unsuccessful efforts were made to take her in tow. Progress towards Murmansk was painfully slow. She was now subjected to further attacks by the German destroyers but managed to damage and sink the Hermann Schömann before her list prevented her guns from taking aim. Once she was hit by a torpedo from Z25, however, HMS Edinburgh had to be abandoned. Finally a torpedo from HMS Foresight was used to sink her, taking the cargo of 465 gold ingots with her to the sea bed<sup>5</sup>.

For the convoy the action was not over. On 2nd May aerial and submarine attacks continued. HMS Bulldog attacked one submarine and the next day she and other ships sank floating mines. The worst of the attacks were over by 4th May and the convoy reached the safety of Reykjavik on 7th May. Commodore Lawrence of the SS Briarwood wrote in his report "I consider that the excellent work done by the escorts during the heavy attacks on May 1st undoubtedly saved the convoy from being completely wiped out. The way these vessels steamed out to attack better armed ships and their general efficiency throughout the whole voyage was in keeping with the finest traditions of the navy, and in common with the other shipmasters of the convoy, I feel honoured to have had the privilege of sailing with them".



Commander Richmond was later awarded the DSO for his defence of convoys PQ14 and QP11. He was also honoured by the Russians. In his report he recommended that future convoys should include some type of aircraft carrier to provide air cover. He also said that better refuelling arrangements were needed because fuel shortages limited anti-submarine activity. In due course both these recommendations

would be accepted.



The Commander-in-Chief of the Home Fleet, Admiral John Tovey, read the reports of convoys PQ14 and QP11 and instructed that publicity be given to the exploits of the Merchant and Royal Navies in this exceptionally dangerous and arduous duty. In due course, on 31st July 1942, the Daily Telegraph and Daily Express (and no doubt other newspapers) carried a morale-boosting report of the destroyer action, but only the Daily Telegraph mentioned the loss of HMS Edinburgh.

But this is not the end of the story. In August 2021 Surgeon-Lieutenant Douglas Johnston's son Hamish and his wife went on a cruise round Iceland with Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines. The last port of call was Seidisfjord. Hamish had done his homework and knew that Jon G Jonasson's shop still exists, although it is now a hotel. With the help of the tour guide he was able to have his photograph taken on the exact spot where his father had stood in 1942. It was a moving experience, and one he shared with fellow passengers present, and also with the wider Icelandic community through the newspaper Frettabladdid which published the story a few weeks later.



*Hamish Johnston outside Jonasson's shop (Hotel Aldan) August 2021*

<sup>1</sup> See ADM199/721 (National Archives)

<sup>2</sup> Evidence of seaman John Jenkins, HMS Edinburgh (IWM)

<sup>3</sup> ADM199/1709 (National Archives)

<sup>4</sup> ADM237/177(National Archives)

<sup>5</sup> 431 ingots were salvaged in 1981, and then 29 in 1986. 5 were not accounted for.



## Collection update

### Seaman's Boots

Earlier this year we were contacted by the Daughter of a veteran about a pair of boots with a rather interesting back story.

Her father, R. C. Reed served aboard the Henry Bacon during the daring mission to evacuate Norwegian refugees from Soroy. While returning to the UK the Henry Bacon was sunk and HMS Opportune was one of the ships to rescue survivors. Once aboard, Reed was given a pair of boots by Len Philips, a crewman on Opportune. Upon his return to the US Reed took them with him, but wished that they be used to help keep the story and memories alive.



*The boots are now on display in our museum*

*Len Philips reunites with one of the Soroy evacuees*

### Midshipman's Journal

We were donated a Midshipman's Journal of M/S Yorke who served aboard the cruiser HMS Cumberland in 1943. It was written carefully and gives great insight into the daily life aboard a ship on the convoys. Several large extracts from this have been published in our local newspaper the *Gairloch & District Times* recently, this is a small sample of what can be found:

"We steamed up the Minches and in the evening the Captain broadcast to the ship that we were bound for Seydisfjord. There was a stiff breeze and moving at 20 knots the pitching and occasional shuddering of the ship caused most of the RAF guests to be violently sick. We remained at A.A. cruising stations throughout the night.

Tuesday, February 16th

As we left the Scottish islands behind and gained the open sea the weather became rougher. Most of the RAF were reduced to so many corpses and many of the ship's company were also sick. I spent most of

my time trying to find my way about the ship. She is a larger and more comfortable ship to live in than my last ship H.M.S Manchester. The mess decks for example are much more spacious and the distance between the decks seems considerably greater, making the vessel as a whole very high out of the water.

Wednesday, February 17th  
When we altered course in the small hours of the morning the weather came out on our beam and the ship started rolling to some 10m or 15 degrees."

"The fleet formed single line ahead, Belfast leading. We had been steaming for about 10 minutes when C.S.10 signalled that the ship, which we had never seen, was no longer visible so we reverted to defence stations.

He then made the signal 'Macbeth Act 4, Scene 1, lines 110-111'. I was sent down to the commander's cabin to fetch a volume of Shakespeare. This done the passage was looked up and found to be:

*Show his eyes, grieve his heart;  
Come like shadows so depart*

To which Norfolk promptly replied 'Julius Caesar, Act 4, Scene 3, 275-276.', which was identified as:

*I think it is the weakness of mine eyes  
That shapes this monstrous apparition.*

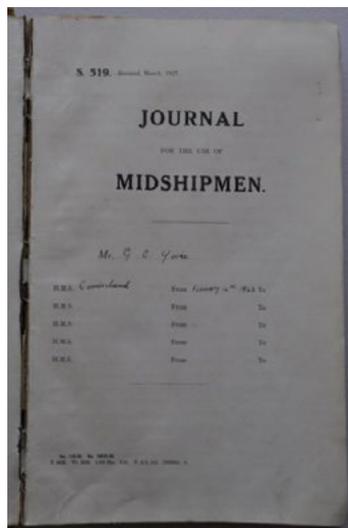
We thought of contributing Hamlet Act 4 Scene 1, 1-4, but eventually decided to store it up for another occasion.

During this Shakespearian interlude we had executed a turn incorrectly and in reply to Belfast's disapproval we signalled 'very sorry we turned incorrectly, were using Shakespearian signal book'."

## 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: <https://racmp.co.uk/history-learning/convoys-remembered/>



## 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](mailto: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 [bruce@theracmproject.org](mailto:bruce@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 online. 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](#)

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

Photos and articles contributed by Nicky Ellakirk, Natasha Ellakirk, Bruce Hudson, Francis Russell, Kyle Mathieson, Hamish H Johnston, and HMS Echo.

Special thanks to Tom Palmer for arranging the wonderful giveaway with us, and to the crew of HMS Echo, who can be found on Twitter [@HMS\\_Echo](#).

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

# HMS Echo Arctic Exploration

## Overview of the wreck investigation on HMS EDINBURGH

1. The investigation of HMS EDINBURGH was conducted over a period of approximately 6 hrs using ECHO's hull-mounted Multi-beam Echo Sounder (MBES), and towed Side Scan Sonar (SSS).
2. The MBES uses two way travel time of sound in order to generate a depiction of the seabed. The EDINBURGH wreck was found at a depth of 245m, which meant that although the wreck was clearly identifiable, details of the structure could not be clearly distinguished.
3. The SSS works by a similar principle to the MBES, but is able to generate a much higher resolution image of the wreck. This is by virtue of towing the sonar at depth, so that it is much closer to the seabed or wreck itself. It also operates at a higher frequency and higher the frequency, the higher the level of detail. From the SSS image generated, features of both the hull and superstructure can be identified (these are tentatively identified and arrowed within the PowerPoint). When the SSS image is compared to the model produced from diver's reports of the wreck, and the photo of EDINBURGH at sea, the correlation is clear.

## Difficulties encountered during the wreck investigation of HMS EDINBURGH

4. There is virtually no shelter available in the Barents Sea, with the region subject to the full force of the bitterly cold Arctic northerly winds. This results in long periods of poor weather, including high sea states and significant swell. This can significantly reduce the habitability of the ship, and detract from the quality of the data when the ship is pitching and rolling.
5. The depth of water (245m) made it challenging for the MBES to distinguish much detail of the hull and superstructure of the wreck.

## HMS ECHO's heritage with HMS EDINBURGH and the Arctic Convoys

6. HMS ECHO (H23) was an E-class destroyer of the Royal Navy that saw service in the Atlantic, Arctic and Mediterranean theatres during World War Two, before being transferred to the Royal Hellenic Navy in 1944 and renamed NAVARINON, until scrapped in 1956.
7. From 8 Dec 1941, ECHO along with HMS ESCAPADE provided a screen for the cruiser EDINBURGH, who was escorting the Arctic Convoy PQ6 to Kola Inlet. On arrival 19 Dec 1941, ECHO was detached to escort a Russian merchant ship to Murmansk. She came under air attack from two German JU88 bombers and whilst avoiding action at high speed, two men were swept overboard from the foc'sle. The enemy bombers were driven off by the arrival of Russian Hurricane fighters and the arrival of EDINBURGH in the area. ECHO then escorted the return convoy QP4, arriving back at Scapa Flow 10 Jan 1942. For this, and several other Arctic Convoy escorting duties, ECHO was awarded the Battle Honour 'Arctic 1940-43', which she proudly carries to this day.

## Quotes from the ECHO's Ship's Company:

'The wreck investigation on HMS EDINBURGH proved a chance to gain valuable data for the UKHO, as well as to remember an important part of the Royal Navy's heritage, including commemorating the many people who lost their lives during the Arctic Convoys. Whilst the search for TRINIDAD was ultimately unsuccessful, it was still a good chance to utilise ECHO's survey equipment in the conduct of a wreck search.'

Cdr Coles  
(Commanding Officer)

'To sail in the wake of the brave men of the Arctic Convoys has been a real honour. Their selfless commitment to the Allied effort through untold conditions provides inspiration to us all as we continue our work during the modern day.'

Lt Jamie O'Reilly  
(Engineer Officer 2)

## Attachments

1. British and German Warship Losses Arctic 1939-1945
2. HMS Edinburgh Wreck Investigation

# British and German Warship Losses Arctic 1939-1945



**HMS ACHATES**, A-class destroyer. Sunk 31 Dec 1942.  
Sunk during the famous Battle of the Barents Sea while on escort duty, protecting convoy JW158 on route to Murmansk. She was hit by gunfire from the German battleship ADMIRAL HIPPER. 132 of the Ship's Company were killed.



**HMS BRAMBLE**, Halcyon-class minesweeper. Sunk 31 Dec 1942.  
HMS BRAMBLE was sunk during the Battle of the Barents Sea while on escort duty protecting the convoy JW158 on route to Murmansk. She was engaged by the German battleship ADMIRAL HIPPER and the destroyer FREIDRICH SCHLITZ. All 121 hands were lost.



**HERMANN-SCHOEMANN**, German destroyer. Sunk 02 May 1942.  
Engaged by the crippled HMS EDINBURGH and later scuttled. 8 killed and 36 wounded.



**HMS EDINBURGH**, Town-class light cruiser. Sunk 02 May 1942.  
While escorting convoy OP11, EDINBURGH was hit by two torpedoes from the L456. Despite being 'Not Under Command' she engaged and critically damaged the German destroyer HERMANN-SCHOEMANN. Her bowsprit was struck by a torpedo from one of the remaining German ships. Mortally wounded, she was scuttled by a torpedo from HMS FORESGATE. 58 men died in the attacks.



**SCHARNHORST**, German battleship. Sunk 26 Dec 1942.  
Sunk during the famous Battle of the North Cape, after being lured into a trap and engaged by a superior British force including the battleship HMS DUKE OF YORK. There were only 36 survivors from the crew of 1968.



**HMS GOODALL**, Flower-class corvette. Sunk 30 Apr 1942.  
On 29 April 1942, HMS GOODALL was escorting convoy RMA, near the entrance to the Kola Inlet when the Lookout ECHO (HMS ECHO) was damaged. While returning to the former port of the ship with a towed net, she was struck by a torpedo from the German submarine U-2009. She was sunk on 30 Apr 1942 by gunfire from the U-boat.



**HMS TUNSBURG CASTLE**, Castle-class corvette. Sunk 12 Dec 1942.  
The former HMS SHREWSBURY CASTLE, she was loaned to the Norwegian Navy 1944. She sunk after hitting a mine, with 16 of the crew killed.



**HMS MATABELE**, Tribal-class destroyer. Sunk 17 Jan 1942.  
She formed part of the screen for convoy PQ8 from Iceland to Murmansk. On 17 Jan the convoy came under attack by U-664. While escorting a damaged merchant vessel, she was struck by a torpedo which destroyed a magazine, causing the ship to sink in less than 2 minutes. Only two of the 238 crew survived.



**HMS BLUEBELL**, Flower-class corvette. Sunk 17 Feb 1942.  
She was attached to the escort for convoy PQ8A, which was assembling off Murmansk. She was torpedoed and sunk by an acoustic homing torpedo fired by U-771 in the Kola Inlet. Her depth charges exploded, causing the ship to sink in less than 30 seconds. There was only one survivor from the crew of 68.



**HMS DENBIGH CASTLE**, Castle-class corvette. Sunk 14 Feb 1942.  
Attached as escort to convoy JW64 to Murmansk. Torpedoed by U-992 near the Barents Sea. The ship was abandoned in an effort to save lives but she was struck off by the ebbing tide and capsized. The wreck was declared a total loss. Diving teams were required to later destroy the safer documents and equipment. Eleven members of the crew were killed.



**HMS TRINIDAD**, Colony-class light cruiser. Sunk 02 May 1942.  
While escorting convoy PQ13 in Mar 1942 HMS TRINIDAD was engaged by several German destroyers. She was damaged and forced to stop. She was then attacked by a German submarine. The ship limped back to Murmansk for temporary repairs and became infamous as the ship that limped back to Murmansk for temporary repairs. She set out to return home to the UK on 13 May 1942. On board, she was attacked by a squadron of U-88 bombers. A serious fire was started from a direct hit, and the decision was taken to scuttle her. HMS TRINIDAD was scuttled 15 May 1942 by a torpedo from HMS MATCHLESS. 63 died in the attacks, including 20 survivors from HMS EDINBURGH.



**HMS MAHRATTA**, M-class destroyer. Sunk 25 Feb 1942.  
While escorting convoy PQ17 from Loch Ewe to the Kola Inlet. The torpedo struck the engine room, and the ship was taken under tow by HMS ADMIRALTY. While under tow, HMS SOMALI sank 25 Feb after heavy weather broke her back. Of 102 crewed at the time, only 35 were rescued.



**HMS SOMALI**, Tribal-class destroyer. Sunk 25 Feb 1942.  
On 20 Feb 1942 HMS SOMALI was torpedoed by U-703 while escorting convoy OP14. The torpedo struck the engine room, and the ship was taken under tow by HMS ADMIRALTY. While under tow, HMS SOMALI sank 25 Feb after heavy weather broke her back. Of 102 crewed at the time, only 35 were rescued.



**HMS HARDY**, H-class destroyer. Sunk 10 Apr 1942.  
Sunk during an attack on German shipping in Narvik on 9 Apr 1940. Badly damaged, HMS HARDY was run aground off Victoria. The ship was lifted off the beach at high tide and sunk near the head of Skjervefjord. Of the crew, 159 managed to make it to shore, 26 of which were seriously wounded. Captain Warburton-Lee was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross.



**HMS ECHO H23**, 1944-44



**HMS ECHO H23**, 1944-44



**HMS ECHO H87**, 2002 - present

**HMS ECHO H23**, an E-class destroyer of the Royal Navy that saw service in the Atlantic, Arctic and Mediterranean Theaters during World War Two, before being transferred to the Royal Hellenic Navy in 1944 and renamed MIAIRONON, until equipped in 1958. From 8 Dec 1941, ECHO and ESCARPEL provided the screen for the cruise EDINBURGH escorting the Arctic Convoy PQ8 to Kola Inlet. On arrival 19 Dec 1941, ECHO was detached to escort a Russian merchant ship to Murmansk. She came under air attack from four German Ju-88 bombers and during a dogfight was severely damaged. The enemy bombs were driven off by the arrival of Russian Hurricane fighters and the arrival of EDINBURGH in the area. ECHO then escorted the return convoy QP4, arriving back at Scapa Flow 10 Jan 1942. For this, and several other Arctic Convoy escorting duties, ECHO was awarded the Battle Honour 'Arctic 1941-43' which she proudly carries to this day.



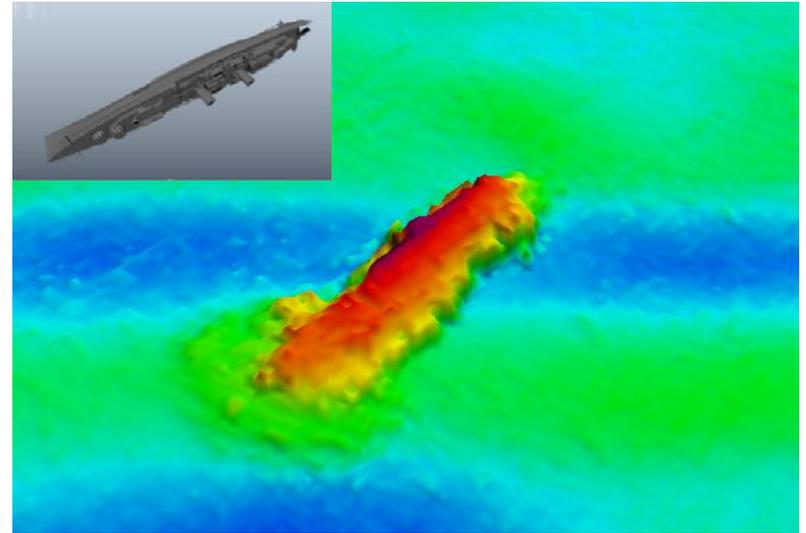
# HMS EDINBURGH WRECK INVESTIGATION



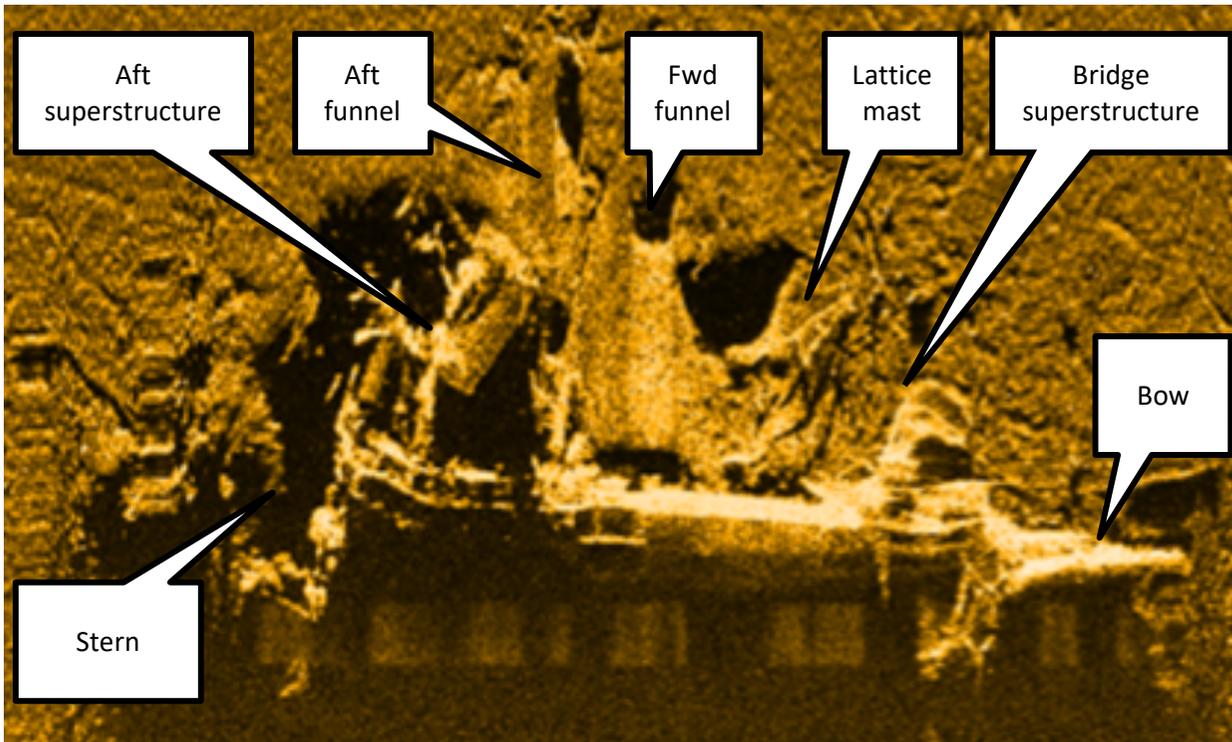
**Figure 1.** HMS EDINBURGH Town-Class Light Cruiser. Commissioned 1939. Sunk in the Barents Sea 02 May 1942.



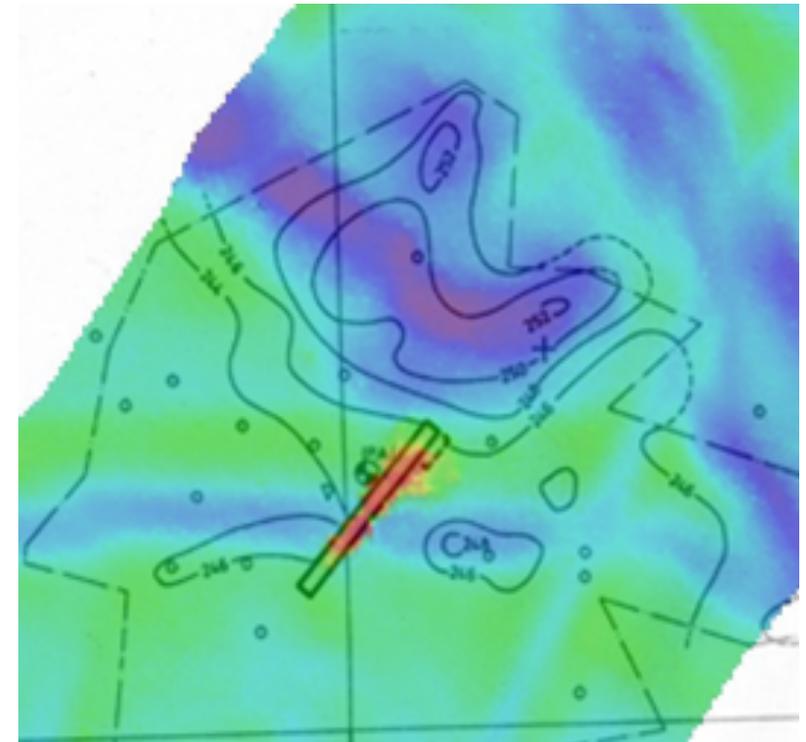
**Figure 2.** 3D model of wreck, depicting EDINBURGH on her side, with bridge super-structure destroyed and stern partially missing. Reconstruction based on divers reports of the wreck. ©Historic Diving Society.



**Figure 4.** MBES imagery of wreck from ECHO. Inset image depicts a 3D digital reconstruction of the wreck in corresponding aspect based on divers reports.



**Figure 3.** Side Scan Sonar imagery obtained by HMS ECHO, with possible structural interpretations.



**Figure 5.** 2D plan of wreck site, depicting EDINBURGH and surrounding seascape. MBES imagery superimposed with contours from EDINBURGH SITE SURVEY May 1981 © Historic Diving Society.



"Arctic Convoy Mosaic"

*Designed with the pupils at Poolewe Primary, realised by Sally Purdy & Carola Martin-Smith*

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

*From all at the*

*Russian Arctic Convoy Project*

