

105-ft Admiralty-type motor minesweepers



MMS90 1942

HM MMS 90

Built by John Morris, Gosport. Launched, 25/11/1941 Completed June, 1942.
Deployed on Arctic Convoy PQ18, October 1942. (T-108?)



RNR Skipper Lieutenant John Dinwoodie

967
John K. 1942

SERVICE RECORD.
(For the Duration of the War)

ATTESTATION OF *Duplicate*
No. *1007* Name *John Dinwoodie*

Questions to be put to the Record before enlistment.

First Name	John
Surname	DINWOODIE
Rank	Skipper Lieutenant
Service Number	2971WS
Nationality	Royal Naval Reserve
Regiment	HM MMS 90
Awarded	DSC
Date of gazette	8/12/1942
Theatre/Reason for award	Brave or skillful conduct whilst escorting or protecting a convoy
Page	5346
Campaign Medals	<u>1939-45 War Medal</u> <u>1939-45 Star</u>

[The opening of the Appendix, when it is added to the progress of the Record, shall be for "Copy" to which the Record is now added.]

If on the Record is to be used the publication of his former service and to provide, if possible, the Certificate of Discharge and Details of Character, copies should be retained in the appropriate column in the "Notes" column of the Appendix.

Halcyon Class Ships

Convoy PQ18

SECRET

From: The Senior Officer, Sixth Minesweeping Flotilla, HMS Harrier

Date 1st October 1942

To: The Senior British Naval Officer, Archangel

Copies to: The Rear Admiral (Destroyers), Home Fleet, The Director of Minesweeping, Admiralty.

Report of Proceedings of HMS Harrier as Close Escort to PQ18

At 0830 on Monday 8th September, HMS Harrier weighed and proceeded out of Hvalfjord as part of escort for local portion of PQ18 sailing from Iceland, and was in station on the port side of the combined convoy by 1900. During the night it was appreciated that the three trawlers detailed were experiencing difficulty in towing the three **Motor Minesweepers** although weather conditions were favourable.

During the night the weather deteriorated and by daylight four of the convoy was found to have straggled considerably.

At 1100 on 8th September 4 merchant ships, 5 trawlers and **3 motor minesweepers** were sighted well astern of the convoy and about 4 miles to the west of the route. The merchant ships had to be repeatedly chased closer to the North Cape, as they appeared to be in danger of running into the minefield, the existence of which they seemed unaware.

The **Motor Minesweepers** were now proceeding independently and were clearly much happier than when in tow. They remained with the convoy throughout, having ample fuel for the voyage. They withstood some severe weather but no ice was encountered, which would undoubtedly have hampered them severely.

At 1100 on 14th September HMS Harrier was ordered alongside HMS Scylla to transfer survivors. HMS Scylla reduced speed to 8 knots with sea 25 astern and HMS Harrier was secured with a spring and a breast as for oiling at sea. Unfortunately HMS Harrier's starboard .5 inch gun came exactly abreast HMS Scylla's Oerlikon platform which caused some damage to former. This might have been avoided if the spring could have been veered quickly. It is suggested that it is advisable to load the spring to the cruiser's capstan rather than a bollard.

At 0035 on 15th September, **Motor Minesweeper No. 90** who had reported that she was very short of coal for cooking and of drinking water, came alongside and 5 cwt of coal was transferred and 3 tons of drinking water were then pumped across comfortably with both ships under way steaming at 9 knots: sea, calm.

A detailed list of aircraft seen to have crashed astern of the convoy is as follows:-

Sunday 15th September: 15.15 approximately, one HE111 torpedo bomber which had passed through the convoy crashed into the sea about $\frac{3}{4}$ mile on HMS Harrier's starboard beam. 2038 Aircraft, probably HE115 torpedo bomber seen to crash in flames about three miles on starboard quarter.

Monday 14th September: 1416 HE111 torpedo bomber which had passed through convoy crashed into the sea $\frac{1}{2}$ mile on the starboard beam. Motor Minesweeper No 212 states definitely that this was the aircraft which torpedoed SS Mary Luckenbach.

Friday 18th September. One Ju88 torpedo bomber which had passed through the convoy crashed into the sea and blew up about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile on port beam.

No survivors were rescued from any of these aircraft which crashed. In all cases but the second, HMS Harrier's Oerlikons were hitting, but as these aircraft had already passed through a hail of fire from the convoy and the other escorts, it is considered that they represented victories shared by a large number of ships.

At 1830 on 18th September, HM Ships Halcyon, Britomart, Salamander and Hazard were sighted off Cape Gorodetski and the following signals were exchanged:-

TO Halcyon FROM Harrier

Do you consider it necessary for convoy to be swept through channel?

TO Harrier FROM Halcyon

Do not consider it necessary as we have been sweeping for past seven days. Propose going ahead now or early morning to sweep Dvina approaches for ground mines. Enemy air minelaying active recently.

TO Malcolm FROM Harrier

Halcyon reports channel clear. In view of this and unsuitable weather propose cancelling tonight's sweep. 1844

TO Harrier FROM Malcolm

Concur. 1848

TO Malcolm FROM Harrier

Halcyon reports ground minelaying in Dvina approach channel. If you can spare us from AA duties propose parting company at Pori and proceeding with all available sweepers to search approach channel before arrival of convoy. Alternatively detach local sweepers now for this purpose.

TO Halcyon FROM Harrier

When detached proceed as you propose. Have the sweeper marking edge of swept channel for convoy.

After heading the convoy into the searched channel off Cape Gorodetski, the four local minesweepers were detached at 1740 in accordance with my previous message.

On being asked whether the Group 1A lights had been requested, HMS Halcyon replied that the SBNO Archangel had arranged for the lights to conform with the convoys NTA signal. Out of respect to Russian wishes, however, these lights were not shown. It is submitted that it is impossible to keep the convoy within the searched channel without shore lights under the conditions which were found to prevail, namely, unfamiliarity with the coast, a dark night, low visibility and strong tides. Radio beacons alone are not considered sufficient for such accurate navigation. In this connection it may be useful to recall that Group 1A lights were instituted for use by heavy ships and convoys at the suggestion of Rear Admiral Wake –Walker after he had had personal experience with QP2 in October 1941.

In addition to the arrangements of the SBNO Archangel, the following provisions were made for the arrival of the convoy at the Fairway buoy.

TO: S.O. Escort & Commodore

FROM: M.S.6

Have told Halcyon to have one ship marking outer end Dvina approach channel on convoy's approach. Anticipate convoy will need to anchor in this channel leading ships near Fairway Buoy. A/S patrol required. Distribution of pilots will probably be expected if escort at head of convoy has up to date list of names and positions of merchant ships. Use of MMS would also expedite pilot distribution.

Four minesweepers were anchored at three mile intervals to mark the swept channel and to act as V/S links. HMS Harrier anchored close to Fairway Buoy as a leading mark for the convoy.

At 1850 on 19th September, HMS Harrier was forced by a strong westerly gale to weigh and steam to seaward. At 0205 on 20th the steering engine failed and the ship was hove to in hand steering. The after ballast tank (32 tons) was already full to reduce racing. The forepeak (7 tons) and the double bottom compartments (15 tons) between 57 and 65 stations port and starboard were now flooded and this made steering appreciably easier. Repairs to the steering engine were effected by 1250 on 20th and HMS Harrier returned to the convoy in time to organise A/S patrol of Minesweepers.

At 0845 on 21st HMS Harrier proceeded up river piloted by the Master of S.S. Stalingrad and landed 24 Russian survivors at Krasny quay.

Commander A D H Jay

RESCUE OPERATIONS DURING PQ18

ENCLOSURE 1 to the Senior Officer, Sixth Minesweeping Flotilla's Letter 26th September 1942

NARRATIVE

The Rear Admiral Destroyers, Home Fleet, in his orders for the operation detailed as rescue ships 'Minesweepers and Trawlers in rear of Convoy'. This was intended to comprise only HM Ships Harrier (Senior Officer), Sharpshooter, St Kenan, Daneman, Cape Mariato. **Motor Minesweepers 90, 203 and 212, however, considered themselves to be included and played a part in the Rescue Operations, which reflects the greatest credit upon their Commanding Officers and Ship's Companies. They were responsible for saving 229 lives. The Senior Officer Minesweepers (The Senior Officer, Sixth Minesweeping Flotilla in HMS Harrier) was ordered to take charge of rescue operations.**

At 0858 on Sunday 13th September SS Stalingrad (Russian) and SS Oliver Ellsworth (USA) were torpedoed by a U-boat. Survivors were picked up by HM Ships Harrier, Sharpshooter and St. Kenan and the **three motor minesweepers**. At 0945 HMS Harrier set on fire SS Oliver Ellsworth by gunfire, after which 15 survivors (Russian) were transferred from MMS 203 to HMS Harrier. All the rescue ships rejoined the convoy by about 1100 and **survivors from HMS St Kenan and MMS's 90 and 212 were transferred to HMRS Copeland.**

At 1515 eight ships were torpedoed by aircraft. All rescue ships and at least one destroyer proceeded to pick up survivors. While this work was in progress six HE115 torpedo planes attempted unsuccessfully to save us the trouble of sinking the disabled ships. HMS Sharpshooter was ordered to rejoin the convoy at about 1600 in case of further attack. By 1645, no more survivors could be found and the trawlers and **motor minesweepers** were ordered to rejoin. Three ships, SS John Penn, SS Macbeth and SS Empire Beaumont were still afloat and a fourth, SS Sukhona, had been lost to sight in snow storms without being seen to sink. Fire was opened by HMS Harrier upon SS John Penn and SS Macbeth but was apparently ineffective. I did not consider it advisable to use depth charges – of which ships were already getting short – for sinking ships. The convoy was by now nine miles ahead, out of sight in snowstorms, and I decided to abandon the attempt to ensure that all ships sank in order to escort the trawlers and **Motor Minesweepers** back to the convoy. At about 1815 SS John Penn could be seen settling by the stern but no other ships were visible.

At 1845 HMRS Copeland was ordered to stop and 107 survivors were transferred to her from the **Motor Minesweepers**. This was completed by 1935 and all ships rejoined the convoy just in time for a further attack at 2035. On this occasion there were no calls on the services of the rescue team.

Survivors Part 1 – Minesweepers

Rescue Ship	Date (Sept)	Time	No. Survivors	Ship of origin	Disposal
Harrier	13 th	0900	25	Stalingrad (15 transferred from MMS 203)	1 died 24 Archangel
Harrier	13 th	0900).....	Oliver Ellsworthy	Scylla
Harrier	13 th	1515-1645)126	Waicosta. John Penn	Scylla Scylla
Harrier	14 th	0400).....	Athel Templar	1 died, remainder Scylla
Sharpshooter	13 th	0900	30	Oliver Ellsworthy	Scylla
Sharpshooter	13 th	1530	33	Empire Beaumont	30 Scylla 5 Archangel for Empire Bard
Sharpshooter	14 th	0345	35	Athel Templar	Scylla
Sharpshooter	14 th	1430	1	Nathaniel Green	Archangel
Sharpshooter	15 th	1500	1	Toilisi (from Fury)	Archangel
MMS 90	13 th	0822	37	Stalingrad	Copeland
MMS 90	13 th	0900	6	Oliver Ellsworthy	Copeland
MMS 90	13 th	1530	46	Sukhona and Macbeth	Copeland
MMS 90	18 th	1110	21	Kentucky	Archangel
MMS 203	13 th	0900	15	Stalingrad	Harrier
MMS 203	13 th	1530	47	Afrikander	46 Copeland 1 Archangel
MMS 203	18 th	1110	33	Kentucky	Archangel
MMS 212	13 th	0900	10	Stalingrad	Copeland
MMS 212	13 th	1500	14	Oregonian	Copeland

Attack	Ship	Fate
Submarine Attack – 0858, 13 th September	Stalingrad	Sank in four minutes
	Oliver Ellsworthy	Forecastle awash. Harrier fired 8 4" rounds. On fire at 0950. Sank at 1115 (seen from Harrier)
Torpedo Aircraft attack – 1515 13 th September	Empire Stevenson	Blew up
	Empire Beaumont	Left on fire and forecandle head awash. Believed to have sunk by 1830.
	Waicosta	Sank (seen by Harrier)
	Oregonian	Sank (seen by Sharpshooter and MMS 212)
	Afrikander	Sank (seen by Sharpshooter and MMS 203)
	Sukhona	Abandoned while still under way. Crew picked up by MMS 90. Lost to sight in snow storms. Doubtful whether she sank.
	Macbeth	Sinking slowly by the head. Fire opened by Harrier. Uncertain whether she sank, but probable.
	John Penn	May not have been seriously damaged. 5 rounds 4" fired by Harrier. Last seen settling aft. Doubtful whether she sank.
Submarine attack - 0325 14 th September	Athel Templar	Hit in Engine Room. Not sinking but could not steam. Set on fire by Tartar.
Torpedo Aircraft attack – 1415 14 th September	Mary Luckenbach	Blew up
Torpedo and bombing attack – 1028 15 th September	Kentucky	Bombed in No.2 hold. Abandoned. Hit by further bombs and left heavily on fire.

(0358)



At 0325 on Monday 14th September, SS Athel Templar was torpedoed in the engine room. Two boatloads of her crew were picked up by HMS Sharpshooter while HMS Harrier went alongside and embarked the remainder, including two seriously injured. It was evident that this ship was not sinking. The Rear Admiral (Destroyers) signalled that if she could steam HMS Sharpshooter was to tow her to Lowe Sound. I considered the possibility of doing this even though she could not steam, but decided that if this were attempted without an adequate escort (which would not be available) there was little chance of success since a further attack was almost certain and there would be an unjustified risk of losing the towing ship and also both ship's companies. I therefore very reluctantly signalled my intention to sink her and was ordered to do so. At this point HMS Tartar arrived from a hunt and at my request undertook the destruction of HMS Athel Templar.

At 1530 on Wednesday 16th, on the departure of the Rear Admiral Destroyers and the covering force, HMS Harrier was ordered by the senior officer of the Escort to take up position M and act as guide of the screen. The duties of Senior Officer, Rescue Force were turned over to the Commanding Officer, HMS Sharpshooter with instructions that damaged ships should, if possible, be brought into Iokana.

At 1745 on 17th the Russian destroyer on the starboard quarter lost a man overboard and HMS Sharpshooter assisted her in an unsuccessful search.

At about 1030 on Friday 18th SS Kentucky (USA) was hit by a bomb in No. 2 hold. The crew promptly abandoned ship. As she appeared to be in no danger of sinking and capable of steaming, HMS Sharpshooter stood by with the intention of placing a Naval Salvage Party onboard and of inducing the crew to return as soon as the air attack was over. Before this could be done, however, SS Kentucky was again hit and set on fire, and HMS Sharpshooter sustained several near misses, which caused a slight leak in her port oil fuel tanks. HM Ships Sharpshooter and Cape Mariato and **Motor Minesweepers 90** and 203 then rejoined the Convoy with the complete ship's company of SS Kentucky; the Russian destroyer Uritsky, who was on her way to join the rescue party, also returned.

HMS Sharpshooter 1942

At 0358 on Sunday 13th September SS Stalingrad (Russian) and SS Oliver Ellsworth (USA) , carrying a full cargo of aircraft and munitions, were torpedoed by a U-boat. Survivors were picked up by HM Ships Harrier, SHARPSHOOTER and St. Kenan and the **three motor minesweepers**. At 0945 HMS Harrier set on fire SS Oliver Ellsworth by gunfire, after which 15 survivors (Russian) were transferred from MMS 203 to HMS Harrier. All the rescue ships rejoined the convoy by about 1100 and survivors from HMS St Kenan and MMS's 90 and 212 were transferred to HMRS Copeland.

Source: Report of Senior Officer MS6

At 1131 a further submarine contact was obtained and a hunt developed. After the first pattern of Depth Charges, the submarine's conning tower broke surface and then submerged. MMS Tartar who had returned to assist confirmed contact and delivered two attacks. SHARPSHOOTER delivered three more attacks with a further sighting of conning tower as before, and air bubbles. Contact was lost at 1219 and the ship was ordered to rejoin the convoy. [CLICK HERE for Report](#)

Source: ADM 1/ 12427 Convoy PQ18 to North Russia

At this time we got a good contact on a U-boat which we attacked with a three patterned depth charge run. The conning tower broke surface with much oil and bubbles coming with her, and then she sank to the depths, but it wasn't confirmed as a kill. As the days went by, the U-boats continued to get inside the screen among the convoy, making it awkward to carry out depth charge attacks against them, with air attacks from dawn to dusk thrown in as well. We were dead lucky or something as we steamed on, nice and steady.

Source: Edmund (Sam) Crook, Stoker, HMS Sharpshooter - A Matelot at Heart

At 1500 hours the first air attack was made by a force of Ju 88 bombers from high altitude. This was unsuccessful but seemed to be diversionary. It was immediately followed by a force of 40 He111 and Ju88 torpedo bombers on the starboard bow. The aircraft approached in line abreast, 100 to 150 yards apart and maintaining their positions in the face of intense barrage put up by the escorts, and dropped their torpedoes within 2,000 yards. Surgeon Lt-Cdr J L S Coulter RN, HMS Scylla's medical officer watched the attacks from the back of the ship's bridge:

‘They approached the convoy in line ahead from the starboard horizon. When level with the convoy they all turned towards it and attacked in line abreast. Each aircraft flew low over the water, and as the torpedoes were launched, each flew down the whole length of the convoy firing its armament. There is no doubt that the attack was carried out with magnificent courage and precision, and in the face of tremendous gunfire from the whole convoy and its escort. The tanker in the next line abreast of us was hit early on by a torpedo which finished its run-in just above the tanker's funnel. At that second the whole tanker and aircraft were enveloped in a crimson wall of flame which seemed to roll over

and over up into the sky until it dissolved into a vast cloud of black smoke. When I looked down at the sea again, apart from a small occasional flicker of flame on the water, there was no sign of either the tanker or the aircraft and I realised that they had both blown up.’

Source: Convoy! Paul Kemp

The attack had been extremely successful and had decimated the starboard side of the convoy, sinking six of the seven remaining ships and two from the middle of the convoy. The Empire Beaumont was hit and set on fire, her crew abandoning ship in the lifeboats. SHARPSHOOTER rescued 35 survivors from one boat. The Macbeth, carrying a cargo of foodstuffs, explosives and tanks, was attacked by a Heinkel 111 which at a range of only some feet released two torpedoes and banked away unscathed. The crew abandoned ship and the Macbeth was found sinking by SHARPSHOOTER soon after.

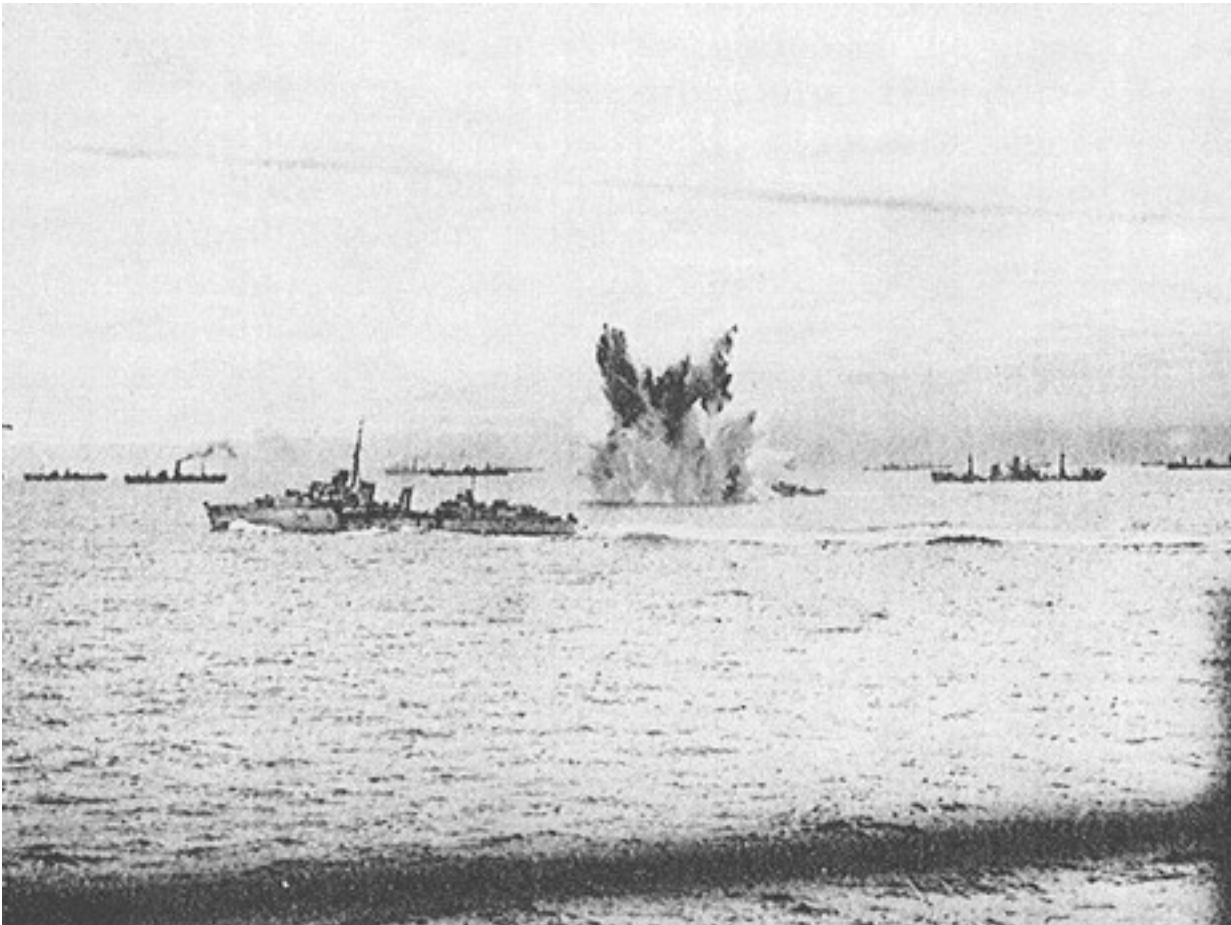
There were two more attacks on the 13th that were driven off. The Germans lost eight aircraft.

At 1515 eight ships were torpedoed by aircraft. All rescue ships and at least one destroyer proceeded to pick up survivors. While this work was in progress six HE115 torpedo planes attempted unsuccessfully to save us the trouble of sinking the disabled ships. HMS SHARPSHOOTER was ordered to rejoin the convoy at about 1600 in case of further attack. By 1645, no more survivors could be found and the trawlers and motor minesweepers were ordered to rejoin. Three ships, SS John Penn, SS Macbeth and SS Empire Beaumont were still afloat and a fourth, SS Sukhona, had been lost to sight in snow storms without being seen to sink. Fire was opened by HMS Harrier upon SS John Penn and SS Macbeth but was apparently ineffective. I did not consider it advisable to use depth charges – of which ships were already getting short – for sinking ships. The convoy was by now nine miles ahead, out of sight in snowstorms, and I decided to abandon the attempt to ensure that all ships sunk in order to escort the trawlers and **Motor Minesweepers** back to the convoy. At about 1815 SS John Penn could be seen settling by the stern but no other ships were visible.

Source: Report of Senior Officer MS6

Convoy PQ 18

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia



Convoy PQ-18 under attack

Convoy PQ-18 was one of the [Arctic convoys](#) sent from [Britain](#) to aid the [Soviet Union](#) in the war against [Nazi Germany](#). The convoy departed [Loch Ewe, Scotland](#) on 2 September 1942 and arrived in [Arkhangelsk](#) on 21 September 1942.

Following [the disastrous losses](#) to [PQ-17](#), the British were determined to provide the convoy with air cover. The new [escort carrier HMS Avenger](#) had arrived from the [United States](#) and formed the core of the escorting force. The convoy was postponed because a large part of the [Royal Navy](#) was engaged in [Operation Pedestal](#), protecting a vital convoy to [Malta](#) in August.

Ships

See also: [Order of battle for Convoy PQ 18](#)

The convoy consisted of forty merchant ships (11 British, 20 US, six Soviet and three [Panamanian](#)) and four Fleet auxiliaries; two [oilers](#), a [rescue ship](#) and a [CAM ship](#).

Close escort was provided by a force led by Cdr.AB Russell, in the destroyer [Malcolm](#). The force comprised two other destroyers [Achates](#) and [Amazon](#), two anti-aircraft "gunships", four [Flower class corvettes](#), four A/S trawlers and three minesweepers. The escort was supported by a [Carrier group](#) (the escort carrier [Avenger](#) and her accompanying destroyers), and a "Fighting Destroyer Escort" of 16 Fleet destroyers commanded by Rear Adm. [Robert Burnett](#) in the cruiser [Scylla](#). The escort was augmented by local escort forces from Britain to Iceland ([Campbell](#) and six other destroyers, and 5 trawlers) and from Murmansk (four Soviet destroyers and three minesweepers).

Distant cover was provided by a Heavy Cover Force (the battleships [Anson](#) and [Duke of York](#), a cruiser and six destroyers under the command of [V Adm. Bruce Fraser](#)) and a Cruiser Cover Force of three cruisers and their destroyer escort commanded by [V Adm. Bonham-Carter](#).

Concurrent with PQ 18 the Royal Navy sent two forces to [Spitzbergen](#), a Cruiser force with reinforcements for the garrison there and a Replenishment group for the convoy; these would also be available to support PQ 18. To guard against a sortie by the German surface fleet in Norway a submarine patrol force was sent to keep watch on the main Norwegian ports, nine submarines in all.

Opposing this armada the [German Navy](#) had established a [U-boat](#) patrol group of 12 U-boats in the [Norwegian Sea](#) and a surface force comprising the pocket battleship [Scheer](#), the cruisers [Hipper](#) and [Köln](#) and four destroyers. Since [Operation Rosselsprung](#) in the summer the battleships [Tirpitz](#) and [Lutzow](#) were in dock for repairs, as were three destroyers, leaving the surface force depleted in numbers and strength.

Air forces

This convoy was notable for being the first Russian Convoy to use an escort carrier, *HMS Avenger* carried 10 [Hawker Hurricane fighter planes](#) and three [Fairey Swordfish torpedo bombers](#).

A combined [Royal Air Force-Royal Australian Air Force](#) detachment, made up of 32 [Hampden torpedo bombers](#) from [144 Squadron](#) and [455 Squadron](#), nine [Catalina](#) maritime patrol aircraft from [210 Squadron](#) and three photo reconnaissance [Spitfires](#), was sent to air bases in the Soviet Union, to fend an attack by the [German battleship Tirpitz](#), if it should eventuate. Nine Hampdens were lost on route, including one which crash landed in German-occupied [Norway](#); plans for the operation fell into the hands of the Germans as a result.^[1] The RAF-RAAF force regrouped at [Vaenga](#) air base, 40 km north of Murmansk.

The [Luftwaffe](#) fielded a force of 42 [Heinkel He 111](#) torpedo bombers of [KG 26](#) and 35 [Junkers Ju 88](#) dive bombers of [KG 30](#). Tactics consisted of simultaneous attack by torpedo bombers and dive bombers swamping the defenders, while III/KG 26 group was trained in an anti-convoy measure involving a massed torpedo attack, known as the "[Golden Comb](#)".

Battle



A merchant ship blows up

PQ 18 left [Loch Ewe](#) on 2 September 1942, in the charge of its Local Escort force. On 7 September it was joined by the Close Escort, with eight merchantmen from [Reykjavik](#), while the local escort, with 3 merchantmen, detached to there. On 9 September they were joined by Adm. Burnett in *Scylla*, with the Fighting Destroyer escort forces, accompanied by the carrier *Avenger* and her group, which would take the convoy on to Murmansk. The Distant Cover and Cruiser cover forces had sailed independently, as had the two groups bound for Spitzbergen.

On 8 September the convoy was sighted by a German reconnaissance aircraft, but lost shortly after. Contact was also made by U-boats from the "Ice Palace" group, which commenced shadowing. These were chased by the destroyers, in order to shake off pursuit, and on 12 September [U-88](#) was detected, attacked and destroyed by the escorting destroyer *Faulknor*. By 13 September there were eight U-boats in contact, and that morning two ships were torpedoed and sunk. At this stage PQ 18 was 150 miles north west of [Bear island](#), about to turn into the [Barents Sea](#). On this day the escort force was rejoined by *Scylla* and a number of destroyers that had detached to refuel at [Lowe Sound](#). This brought the escort up to full strength for the next leg of the voyage.

Also on 13 September the convoy was again sighted by a reconnaissance aircraft, a [BV 138](#) from [Banak](#). The air forces at Banak mounted a full assault on the convoy, using a new anti-convoy tactic, called the "[Golden Comb](#)". This involved a mass torpedo attack by full group of torpedo bombers, and resulted in the sinking of eight ships from the convoy. Two more air attacks followed, but failed to score any hits. In all eight aircraft were shot down on this day.

The following day, 14 September, the attack was repeated; on this occasion, however, the escort force had developed counter-measures to the form of attack, and the massed AA fire from the convoy and fighter attacks, the result of aggressive handling by the carrier *Avenger* and the AA cruiser *Ulster Queen*, saw the attack broken up. Three air attacks saw one ship hit and sunk, while

21 aircraft were shot down. The 14th also saw further U-boat attacks. The tanker [Atheltemplar](#) was torpedoed by [U-457](#); she was abandoned and sank later. In counter-attacks [U-589](#) was destroyed by [Onslow](#).

On 15 September there were further air attacks but these were again beaten off, without loss. After this there was a pause in the air offensive, as the official despatch states:

"During the whole period, just over two days, of concentrated air attack, the enemy lost at least forty aircraft: there can be little doubt that these heavy casualties, especially among his limited supply of really skilled torpedo pilots, was largely responsible for the steady decline in the size and vigour of his attacks." [\[2\]](#)

On 15 September there were still three U-boats still in contact, and another twelve in the area. These made several attempts to attack but had no success.

On 16 September [U-457](#) was destroyed by [Offa](#) and [Opportune](#), and that afternoon all further U-boat attacks were called off. Later the same day Burnett with [Scylla](#) and the destroyer escort, with [Avenger's](#) group, detached to meet and escort the returning convoy QP 14, while PQ 18 continued with its close escort. The following day it met the western local escort, a group of Soviet destroyers from Murmansk.

During this period the German surface force had no impact on the convoy operation. It had been alerted when the convoy was first sighted, and on 10 September had moved north to Altenfjord, in preparation for a sortie. This move had been sighted by the British submarine patrol, and the submarine [Tigris](#) made a torpedo attack on [Scheer](#), though without success. The force concentrated at Altenfjord, but Hitler, reluctant to risk the loss of any of his capital ships, refused to authorize it, and on 13th the sortie was cancelled.

PQ 18 was not out of the woods, however; on 18 September it was attacked again by German aircraft; one ship was sunk, while three aircraft were shot down. Another air attack the following day scored no hits, and later on 19 September PQ 18 entered the [Kola Inlet](#).

Two more merchantmen were sunk by air attack in [Murmansk](#) harbour. In total, 13 merchants were lost from the convoy.

The [Tirpitz](#) did not attack the convoy and the RAF-RAAF Hampden force undertook one patrol, on September 14. They left their 23 aircraft in the USSR before returning to bases in the UK.

Assessment

PQ 18 was seen as a success by the [Allies](#). Thirteen ships had been lost, but 28 had arrived safely, and the Arctic convoy route, which had been suspended since the loss of [PQ 17](#), had been re-established. Furthermore, three U-boats had been destroyed, and 40 German aircraft had been shot down.

Whilst the Germans could be pleased with the losses inflicted, they had failed to stop the convoy getting through, and their own losses, particularly in trained pilots, were severe, denting the ability of the [Luftwaffe](#) to hinder future convoys. The German surface force had also been powerless to interfere, and its next venture, against [JW 51B](#) would be [a debacle](#).

