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OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE NORTH RUSSIA CLUB

12/92



" I'M DREAMING OF A WHI-----(!) "

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

FROM THE PRESIDENT: To you all, the members of what has become, our "Unique Club". The wives, fortunately still with you, the stalwarts who listen to our incessant stories and "Lamp Swinging". Some I have had the pleasure of meeting, others I look forward to doing so. Our colleagues and shipmates overseas in U.S.A., Canada, Australia, Russia and the nearer European countries, and those who have joined us since last December to whom we say "Welcome Aboard".

"A Very Happy and Enjoyable Christmas,
A Guid New Year to Een an' All and Menny May Ye See,
Lang May Yer Lum Reek!"

Each Christmas edition of Northern Light refers to the past year and it's highlights, this one must surely be the most fantastic, with our International Reunion tour of 10 days duration. When we were joined by veterans from U.S.A., Canada and Russia, from Glasgow, to Liverpool, to Portsmouth we will never forget the many functions with magic and poignant moments.

I am confident our hard working committee will continue to ensure that we go from strength to strength in the coming year for continued success, comradeship and enjoyment for the "Veterans of World War II Arctic Campaign" - our one and only "North Russia Club". May God Bless Her and all who Sail in Her". My sincere good wishes to you all, good health and happiness as we nail into the New Year 1993. Always remember:-

"Tomorrow is the first day of the rest of your life"

Sincerely,

Robus B. Jye

FROM THE CHAIRMAN/EDITOR: As chairman it gives me the greatest pleasure to wish you and your families a Very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. Peg joins me with her seasonal greetings too. I would like to thank you all for your support - it makes the work of the officers and committee so very worthwhile.

As editor, I must thank all for their efforts during the past year - the contributors who supply the wonderful stories and reports those who put the magazines in the envelope, the stamp licker and our computer wizz-kid who produces the address labels. What a wonderful team, all doing a labour of love. Merry Xmas, Happy New Year & Many of 'em!!

Dick Squires



FROM THE TREASURER: I would like to take this opportunity of thanking all members for their support during the year. And to all those who have kindly made donations to the the General Fund also the Welfare Fund which is there to help our distressed members.

Wishing you all a Very Happy Christmas and a Healthy 1993

Eric Rackbone

FROM THE HON. SECRETARY:

Three months have elapsed since I was elected Secretary of the North Russia Club, and I have had a very easy "working-up trial. Taking over from Dick will be a gradual process, as some things that he has started he will finish, thus ensuring that the hand over will go smoothly.

This slow start has made this task - that of writing notes for Northern Light - the most difficult so far. What do I write about? First of all, I would like to thank those of you who have telephoned and written to me, to wish me well in my new job. Words of encouragement are always welcome, and instill a sense of confidence when undertaking a task such as this. I will do my best to carry on in the tradition set by my predecessors, and wish to thank them for the help and advice that they have given me so far.

Finally, a big thank you to all who have written to me, letters of appreciation following the International Reunion which took place in July-August. For me it was a lot of work carried out over a period of some 20 months, but to know that so many enjoyed the final outcome made it all worth while. Thank you also for the many wonderful photographs that you have sent me, they will be a lasting souvenir of the event.

My wife Nina and I, wish you all a very Happy Christmas and many Happy Reunions in 1993.

*Chris
Pete*

A MESSAGE FROM THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY appears on Page 43 following the "WELCOME ABOARD" list of new members.

"A BIKE FOR CHRISTMAS"

A SMALL BOY WAS KILLED WHILST RIDING HIS CHRISTMAS BIKE BY A YOUNG MAN WHO WAS PROBABLY DRIVING HIS CAR TOO FAST OR WITHOUT DUE CARE AND ATTENTION. THIS YOUNG MAN WHO NOW HAS A SMALL SON WHO WANTS A BIKE FOR CHRISTMAS, MOST PROBABLY HAS THOUGHTS SIMILAR TO MINE WHEN MY MIND TURNS TO THE "ARCTIC CAMPAIGN" AND THOSE SHIPMATES AND COMRADES ON LAND AND IN THE AIR WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES, WHILST WE WERE SPARED.

HOW GRATEFUL I AM THAT I HAVE SURVIVED TO LIVE MY LIFE TO THE FULL, TO MARRY A SPECIAL WOMAN AND HAVE LOVELY DAUGHTERS AND GRANDCHILDREN, AND THERE IS THIS OTHER VERY SPECIAL THING, THE PRIVILEGE OF LEADING ON YOUR BEHALF THIS PROJECT TO DEVELOP MEMORIALS TO THOSE WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES SO THAT WE COULD LIVE OURS TO THE FULL, THEY WILL NEVER BE FORGOTTEN NOW.

WE WILL ALWAYS REMEMBER THEM.

THE TRUSTEES AND COMMITTEE OF THE A.C.M.T. WISH YOU A HAPPY CHRISTMAS.

Ron Wilkin

REUNIONS AND SOCIAL EVENTS

SOUTH WALES: A Buffet Social Evening was held at Neath Club, South Wales on Saturday 29 August. The Mayor and Mayoress of Neath, Mr & Mrs Davies, were welcomed by NRC President Chris Tye and by the reunion organiser Mervyn Williams and Welfare Officer Ron Phelps. Other committee members of NRC and Neath Club were in attendance.

A North Russia Club wall plaque was presented to the local club and a set of "Rugby Captain" medals was presented by Mervyn Williams with the request that they were handed to the local Young Rugby Club.

Our members received an excellent welcome, the buffet was superb as was the entertainment which followed. Our members formed their own Male Voice Choir to round off the evening. We were invited to make a return visit and a provisional date has been made for 1993.

A suitable letter of thanks has been sent on behalf of our members.

R.A.F. MURMANSK/VAENGA: Following a successful reunion last year at Hendon, former members of 151 Wing, and 81 and 134 Squadrons held a very interesting get-together with Lunchtime Buffet at the Masonic Hall, Rugby, on Thursday 10 September. Our President and Chairman were invited to attend, as was the ACMI representative. The main feature of the meeting was an impressive display of wartime photographs and memorabilia, very professionally displayed on panels.

So many North Russia Club badges and ties were in evidence that it proves that we are one big happy family. A big "Well Done" to the organisers.

Merseyside & North West: Despite difficulties with access to HMS Eaglet, another successful Sunday Lunchtime Buffet was held in the Senior Rates Mess on 20 September. Forty-six members and twenty-three ladies attended and the mess was bursting at the seams - the buffet tables had to be placed on the Drill Deck. Members from Welwyn Garden City and Wolverhampton were welcomed by the Chairman as were local members who were attending their first "Lamp Swinging" event at Eaglet. At the request of those present it was agreed that another gathering, with an Xmas flavour will be held on 13 December.

Kent & South East: Our President Chris Tye, following the recent encouraging increase in membership in that area, arranged a Reunion Buffet Lunch at the Gibraltar House Hotel, Chatham, on 23 September. Approximately 50 of the Kent membership attended and included several who had not previously been to a "Swing the Lamp" gathering.

Don Allen, our Vice Chairman also attended and related a few words of wisdom. Also in attendance was 92 year old Tom Tilbury who is resident at Pembroke House in Chatham. Tom impressed everyone with his agility, jokes, etc. and related his experiences of when, as a 19 year old matelot he went to Archangel in 1919 - quite a different story!

It was an excellent day when members from Medway and Thanet as the "Men of Kent" joined the "Kentish Men" from the opposite side of the Medway.

Annual Dinner Dance at Swallow Hotel, Northampton: Many participants considered this reunion to have been "the best yet". Certainly, it was an excellent event and great praise must go to Les Jones and his small team of helpers. There were 160 members and ladies at the dinner in 'The Squires Suite'. Principal guests were Captain W.M. Caswell MVO, RN and Mrs S. Caswell who have recently returned from a two year tour of duty at our embassy in Moscow. Other guests included Lieut. Cmdr. R. Davies RN and Dr. Lindsey Davies (also ex-Embassy), Mr. David Watkin, Head of Royal Mail Public Relations (NW) and Mrs Helene Watkin. Also welcomed was Miss Veronica Zykova from Murmansk who asked that greetings from the citizens of Murmansk be conveyed to you all.

LOOK OUT FOR THE ANNOUNCEMENT REGARDING THE NEXT ANNUAL DINNER IN THE NEXT EDITION.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS & SOCIAL CALENDAR

- 6 March: **H.M.S. BELLONA REUNION** at Victory Services Club, Marble Arch, London. (NRC members welcome). Details from Arthur Willis, 83 Briar Road, Shepperton, Middlesex TW17 0JB.
 - 24 March: **WEST COUNTRY REUNION** Keyford Arms, Frome, Somerset. Details from E.(Curly) Morris, 54 Green Lane, Frome, Somerset, BA11 4JU.
 - 27 March: **NORTHERN REUNION** at Stretton Hotel, North Promenade, Blackpool. Details from Les Jones, 35 Neargates, Charnock Richard, Chorley, Lancashire.
 - 3 April: **"A PHOENIX ARISES"** Reopening of the Western Approaches H.Q. in Liverpool. (See press release on pages 24 and 25.)
 - 9/16 May: **NATIONAL REUNION** at Westhill Hotel, St.Hellier, Jersey, C.I. Details from Ray Sharrett, Bonnes Vacances, Ltd., 9 Charing Cross Street, St Hellier, Jersey, C.I.
 - 22 May: **SOUTHERN REUNION** at Victory Club, H.M.S.Nelson, Queen Street, Portsmouth. Details from Mervyn Williams, 87 Olive Road, Coxford, Southampton SO1 6FT.
 - 26 May) **OFFICIAL BATTLE OF THE ATLANTIC 50TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS** at
to 1 June) Liverpool, Birkenhead and Moelfre. Further details in Stop Press.
 - 23 July: **ROYAL TOURNAMENT** at Earls Court, London. We will be making a block booking of seats. See next edition of Northern Light.
 - 24 July: **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING** followed by **EVENING BUFFET DANCE**. Details in next edition.
 - 25 July: **WREATH LAYING PARADE** at Russian Memorial at Brookwood Military Cemetery followed by Buffet Lunch. Details in next edition.
 - 16 Sept: **A "RUN ASHORE IN ICELAND" WITH COMMANDER OLIVER WRIGHT** visiting
to : Reykjavik, Keflavik, Akranes, Hvalfjordur, Akureyri, Blue Lagoon,
24 Sept: Grimdavic, etc, etc. Details from Cmdr.Oliver Wright, Peregrine,
: Four Winds House, 15 High Street, Hampton Hill, Middlesex.
 - June 94: **A "RUN ASHORE IN NORMANDY"** Visit "D-Day" sites in Portsmouth, Poole, Utah, Omaha, Sword, Juno and Gold landing beaches, Aromanches, Mulberry Harbour, and Pegasus Bridge.
 - April 95: **A "VE DAY RUN ASHORE"** in Germany with German Naval Old Comrades Associations.
 - Nov. 95 : **A VJ DAY RUN ASHORE"** in Singapore for a week of Services and Parades covering Remembrance Day with Australian ex-servicemen.
- LATE NEWS:** Three re-fitted WW2 U.S. Liberty ships, **JEREMIAH O'BRIEN, LANE VICTORY** and **JOHN W BROWN** will visit Europe in 1944 to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of D-Day. They are ~~expected~~ to be at Omaha and Juno landing beaches on **6th June**, then spend two months visiting ports in Europe and Britain. Northern Light will keep you informed.

"THE BATTLE OF THE BARENTS SEA"

First, a letter from Tom Spiers (Memb.Nº32):

I have just read Dudley Pope's paperback entitled "North 73" which is a graphic account of Convoy JW51B during which the Battle of the Barents Sea took place.

His narrative covers the events from both British and German points of view and is in my opinion, a part of history well worth reading.

The weather was atrocious on 31 December 1942 when the cruiser HIPPER and pocket battleship LOTZOW with an escort of six destroyers, attacked JW51B which consisted of fourteen freighters accompanied by ONSLOW, ORWELL, ORIBI, OBDURATE, OBEDIENT and ACHATES. Also I must include the corvettes RHODODENDRON and HYDERABAD with the minesweeper BRAMBLE.

Difficulty was experienced in passing enemy reports from ONSLOW to Scapa Flow W/T due to weather conditions and aerals being iced up and Scapa was too far away to receive the weak signals being transmitted.

My involvement with the convoy was comparatively unimportant as I was a telegraphist on ANSON which was in a shadowing role miles away in company with the cruiser CUMBERLAND and destroyers FORESTER, ICARUS and IMPULSIVE.

One of the operators on ANSON picked up a weak signal which he realised was an 'enemy report' from one of the convoy's escorts and this signal was relayed to Scapa Flow, who in turn informed the Admiralty that a battle was in progress.

According to Dudley Pope, this operator was, previously to joining the navy, a monk!! For the life of me I cannot recall anyone on our mess-deck who could have had such an unusual vocation.

Can anyone jog my memory?

For anyone whose appetite has been whetted, North 73 was published by Pan paperbacks and was last reprinted in 1977.....

Tom Spiers.

sinking condition was, in fact, sunk, and damage is claimed to one of the larger ships.

Give praise to the man who led the destroyers in one of the greatest David and Goliath sea battles of the war. The darkness of northern nights, snowstorms and the big guns of the enemy ships did not divert him from his purpose. His name is Captain Robert St. Vincent Sherbrooke, D.S.O., R.N., V.C. in H.M.S. ONSLOW, one of our new lightning class destroyers. This is the official story of the action told by the Admiralty last night:-

Ice Hazards

"In spite of almost continual darkness, extreme cold, navigational hazards due to ice and low visibility and interference from the enemy, supplies continue to reach Russia by the northern route.

"In a communiqué published on December 31, the Admiralty announced that H.M. ships had made contact with enemy surface forces in Northern waters.

"It was then stated that operations were continuing.

"At this time our naval forces were engaged in escorting the convoy, loaded with important military supplies for our Russian ally.

"On the morning of December 31 British destroyers, commanded by Captain R. St. V. Sherbrooke, D.S.O., R.N., in H.M.S. ONSLOW, which were escorting the convoy, made contact with a greatly superior enemy force, thought to consist of one pocket battleship, one cruiser and a number of destroyers off the North Cape, at the extreme north of Norway.

Fled To Bases

"Captain Sherbrooke immediately led his destroyers into the attack and closed with the enemy with great gallantry. In the semi-darkness and with visibility further reduced by frequent snowstorms, contact was fleeting and intermittent.

"Fighting was continued for about two hours. By resolute and skilful handling, this small force of destroyers succeeded in driving off four attempts by the strong enemy forces to destroy the convoy.

"More powerful forces then arrived in support and engaged the enemy, who escaped in the low visibility and returned at high speed to the safety of their bases on the Norwegian coast.

"The enemy has admitted that a destroyer, reported to be of the Maas class, which our forces last sighted in a sinking condition, was, in fact, sunk, and damage is claimed to one of the larger ships.

"The Board of Admiralty regrets to announce that H.M. destroyer ACHATES (Lieut-Commander A.H. Tyndall Jones, R.N.) was damaged in the defence of the convoy, and subsequently sank.

"H.M.S. ONSLOW suffered some damage and casualties. The next of kin of casualties in both these ships have been informed.

Convoy Untouched

"The convoy suffered no loss or damage as a result of the enemy's efforts and has arrived in North Russian ports."

That story of a convoy to Russia bears out the feeling in naval circles that Hitler is being forced to turn his attention to the possibility of bringing out his surface forces.

Bringing out a pocket battleship and sending out blockade runners endeavouring to bring essential supplies from Japan may be the start of a new intensification of the sea war.

Captain Sherbrooke is 42. He received his D.S.O. for his daring resource and devotion to duty during the second battle of Narvik.

The above was unsuitable for photocopy direct from the press cutting and has been typed verbatim.

Daily Herald
No. 8390 * * * SATURDAY, JANUARY 9, 1943 ONE PENNY

Through! DESTROYERS
BEAT BIG
NAZI FORCE
By A. J. McWHINNIE, Naval Correspondent

Give praise this morning to the men of our destroyers who, to safeguard an important convoy to Russia on New Year's Eve, flung themselves at superior enemy forces until "bigger sisters" could arrive on the scene.

The convoy they were shielding got through unscathed, despite the fact that one of Hitler's two pocket-battleships is believed to have been among the German units.

The Admiralty in the official story last night, reveals that the German destroyer previously mentioned as having been left in a

A TIME HALF-REMEMBERED.

On New Year's Eve morning 1942, I was closed up for dawn action stations standing at the back of the bridge on ONSLOW. I remember that it was cold and I remember the incessant snow showers, but I do not recall that at times, according to some official accounts, the visibility was occasionally as much as five miles. I had joined ONSLOW when she commissioned in 1941 and as a signalman had become familiar with identifying shapes seen dimly through misty half-light. In the Battle of the Barents Sea which followed our sighting of HIPPER my recollection is one of blurred, half-seen, images as we engaged the German flagship.

Maybe some of my old shipmates who served with me onboard that day will have more detailed memories. There are not many of us left but I am happy to count amongst the few a number of my old fellow-communication-branch mates - Dicky Ashton, Tom Upton, Phil Vine and Nobby Grant, all alive but maybe, not always kicking.

In a letter written home early in 1943 I described how, after the first HIPPER shells destroyed 'A' and 'B' guns, my immediate reaction was to wonder how I would survive in the icy waters of the Arctic. Mercifully there was so much happening I did not have time for further morbid speculation. Shortly after a shell hit the funnel, I heard a shouted question from the bridge to the starboard lookout. There was no reply and someone, I think it was the D.O.W., instructed me to investigate. I saw a slumped duffle-coated figure; and although I saw no sign of a wound it was clear that the lookout was dead. It was not at first apparent to those of us at the back of the bridge that Captain Sherbrooke had been badly injured. He was still standing but thick smoke covered the bridge; and as information about the devastation above and below decks started to arrive there was so much else to command everyone's attention. It was only when the captain's steward and the ship's doctor were seen supporting Capt. Sherbrooke that it became obvious he had been seriously wounded. I can see him now as he was finally persuaded to leave the bridge. Commander Marchant, to whom he handed over command of ONSLOW, has, I know, an excellent memory so maybe he can recall how long it was after Captain Sherbrooke's terrible eye injury that he at last agreed to go below. We had developed a dangerous list to starboard, but in contrast to my earlier concern I never doubted that we would stay afloat.

Feelings and attitudes can be recalled more easily than actual events, but I do remember the smoke screen put out by one of the 'O' boats as we withdrew through convoy JW51B; and also, later, the frightening scenes of destruction below decks. Preoccupation with survival and what was going to happen next helped prevent contemplation of ONSLOW's dead and dying, but I was shocked and saddened to learn of the death of my messmate Tom Braithwaite. Tom was a radar operator who must have been killed when a shell hit the funnel for he was at action stations close by.

Last year in Cardiff, at the first reunion of ex-ONSLOW shipmates, I met Tom's daughter and recalled how, late in the afternoon after the battle, I had stood on the quarterdeck as we buried her father at sea. Some others of those who died that day were buried at the same time and those of us who stood witness will never forget the scene. I have read a number of accounts of Russian convoys, particularly in 'Northern Light', and often wonder at such detailed recollection. Memories can be very selective and many incidents recalled by old shipmates of mine remain quite forgotten by me; whilst some isolated, sometimes trivial, experiences are still clear. One such I recall occurred New Years Day morning as we sailed into Kola Inlet. I had the forenoon watch and was standing next to a stranger on the bridge. I have forgotten who he was, - maybe a pilot who we had picked up on our way in. Speaking English he had an unmistakable Scottish accent which completely disappeared when he spoke Russian. I do not know why this was so, when some of the more dramatic events of the previous day are only dimly recalled.

After berthing at Vaenga, ONSLOW's wounded were taken ashore and work began

making the ship habitable. The devastation above and below decks, the loss of stores, the cold and the sheer awfulness of the Russian winter combined to make a far from happy start to the new year. The joint efforts of the ship's company and the young Russian shipyard workers helped improve conditions but life remained primitive.

We were eventually moved up the inlet to Rosta where the task of making us seaworthy started. I still have a copy of the signal received shortly after our arrival informing us that Captain Sherbrooke had been awarded the Victoria Cross.

It was in Rosta that I encountered a young Russian shipyard worker carrying a piece of ship's plating which he had just cut out of the ship's side. In the centre of the metal was a jagged hole made by one of HIPPER's shells. It took much persuasion and the sacrifice of a precious 'tot' to induce him to let me have my souvenir. This piece of metal has lain in various attics for close on fifty years until earlier this year. In May, at a civic reception given to ex-ONSLOW crew by the Borough of Oldham Council on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the borough's adoption of ONSLOW, I was delighted to present the memento to Oldham Branch of the Royal Navy Association. I hope they have it suitably framed!

Our months long stay in North Russia had few compensations but I remember a pantomime put on for us by personnel from the local shore establishment, and a not very skilful first attempt to ski. There was an even more unsuccessful attempt to discuss the war with a Russian signalman with whom I once shared a watch in a shore signal station. Despite our failure to communicate easily with many Russians it was during this period that I learned the meaning of total war and came to understand the strong commitment to all-out war against the Nazis.

Many stories of life in North Russia during the war tell of distrust and suspicion and I do not doubt that this was not an uncommon experience. However my abiding recollection is of fiercely patriotic men - and women - suffering great hardships in defence of their country. When our depleted ship's company at last left for Scapa in a patched up ONSLOW we were glad to see the back of the awful place. But I will not forget that it was in such conditions that our war-time allies carried on the grim struggle against a common enemy. My respect and gratitude for the contribution they made to our final victory has remained undiminished through the years.

John Stenton. Memb.Nº1154.

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CAPTAIN R. St.V. SHERBROOKE V.C. R.N.

By 'Bunting Tosser' Tom Upton.

To us on ONSLOW it was to be just another Russian Convoy in late December 1942, with the exception that we now had a new skipper, Captain St Vincent Sherbrooke RN, Captain D17, our previous skipper, Captain "Beaky" Armstrong, having left ONSLOW to take command of LAFOREY serving at that time in the Med. Sadly, Captain Armstrong was later to lose his life with many of his crew on that ship.

It was Captain Sherbrooke's first voyage with us, and in fact his only trip as I will explain later.

Being a Bunting Tosser, and obviously standing watches on the bridge, one was always in close proximity of the Captain and Officers on watch etc. Well, in my own humble opinion it was obvious that Captain Sherbrooke was totally different to Captain Armstrong, as the latter seemed more dashing and flamboyant, the former seemed more serious in his ways, and with no disrespect to Captain Armstrong, was a very good and distinguished looking man.

We left Iceland escorting JW51B on 22 December 1942, it was to be another Christmas at sea, I don't remember what we had for dinner that day, but I know it wasn't turkey!

Between Jan Mayan and Bear Island on 27th a "Daddy of all Gales" struck the convoy and raged for three days. When it did abate the convoy was scattered all over the Hogwash, and we had the tiresome job of rounding them up. Oh well, we had seen it all before! but little did we know what was in store for ONSLOW and the rest of 17th DF.

On 31 December we had a warning that German heavy units were possibly going to attack the convoy. It was not long in coming, we observed gun flashes to starboard and soon a few near misses splashed around ONSLOW. Our 4.7" guns opened up, that is the two that were not iced up. But in no time at all we were hit four times by 8" H.E. shells from HIPPER. One was a direct hit on B gun which wiped out the crew. One struck below the bridge in the P.O's mess, one hit the funnel and demolished the Radar hut, another went through the Seamens mess.

ONSLOW was in a sorry mess as fires raged forward and she developed a list to Port. But it was the skilful tactics of Captain Sherbrooke in making dummy torpedo attacks on HIPPER that succeeded in keeping her from the convoy.

Captain Sherbrooke received horrific wounds to the face from the shrapnel of the shell that destroyed B gun. He was taken down below to his sea cabin for the M.O's attention, but only after he had delegated command of the 17th DF to OBEDIENT. Lieutenant Commander Marchant then took command of ONSLOW and we were out of the action as our main concern now was to keep the ship afloat.

Not long afterwards much to our great relief, Rear Admiral Burnett arrived in the nick of time with cruisers SHEFFIELD and JAMAICA. That tipped the odds a bit in our favour.

We managed to get the fires under control and rejoined the convoy. We arrived at Vaenga and Captain Sherbrooke with the rest of the wounded were taken to hospital there.

Captain Sherbrooke was awarded the V.C. for this action and he was later flown home for further treatment, but still lost the sight of one eye. Although his command of the 17th D.F. was very brief it was certainly full of action.

I served on ONSLOW from September 1941 to September 1945 and during that time we had six different Captain (D)s.

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FROM YET ANOTHER 'BUNTING TOSSER'
(Dickie Ashton)

I was a young signalman of 19 years of age, ONSLOW being my second ship, but my first destroyer. My action station was on the bridge so I had a 'bird's eye view' of the Battle of the Barents Sea.

The weather was atrocious, freezing cold, blowing a gale, plenty of snow flurries, visibility very poor.

It was just another Russian convoy or so we thought! The first thing I recall is a destroyer bearing Green 015°, I challenged it with the code of the day with the aldis lamp - no answer! The enemy destroyer veered away and we never saw it again.

Suddenly on the port bow there were many gun flashes, we turned towards them with all our 4.7" guns firing, little did we know it was HIPPER and LUTZOW. Captain Sherbrooke was to the left of where I stood, he suddenly fell to the deck badly wounded. We had been hit several times.....

.....Black smoke was pouring from what was left of the funnel, the noise from the damaged siren was deafening, we were listing to starboard, it was like a mad house.

All destroyers were making smoke to protect the convoy, keeping HIPPER and LUTZOW away from the convoy. The firing ceased and from my recollection, it was as if a curtain came down and HIPPER and LUTZOW disappeared through it, that was the end of the action.

We had of course retired by this time, reinforcements being on the way.

Lieut. Cmdr Marchant, very skilfully and with great seamanship, considering the damage to the ship, took us, by ourselves into Kola Inlet and we berthed at

Vaenga.

The ship sailed up to Murmansk for repairs but unfortunately for me and my oppo Tom Upton, we were dumped ashore in Vaenga to man a Russian signal station. This station was a wooden hut, no facilities, no heat and very little food. The Russians were very unfriendly and suspicious. We were very happy to rejoin ONSLOW five weeks later.

It was a great thrill sailing into Scapa Flow with all the Home Fleet cheering us and the Royal Marine bands playing all the appropriate tunes.

From Scapa to Immingham for repairs and leave, once again I was unlucky, being Captain (D)s staff, I was recalled from leave to join OFFA with the new Captain (D), Captain McCoy, R.N. We rejoined ONSLOW on her return to the flotilla.

I count myself very lucky to be here to tell the tale, as there was a lot of shrapnel and bits and pieces flying round that bridge.

H.M.S. ACHATES

We have only one ACHATES crew member amongst the club's membership, Jim McHugh. Jim has produced about 14 pages of copy, much of it concerns the convoy and would produce a lot of repetition. The rest makes extremely interesting reading.....The action restarted with the convoy escort being attacked by HIPPER, LUTZOW and destroyers. Unfortunately ACHATES became the first target for HIPPER, the bridge got a direct hit. Our skipper, Lieutenant Commander A.H.T. Johns R.N. was killed as were a lot of our shipmates whose action stations were on or near the bridge. There was considerable damage to the boiler room and elsewhere. In spite of all this we continued to shield the convoy for another hour and forty minutes. But at 1300 hrs we were compelled to call NORTHERN GEM and ask her to stand by. Thank God for that message as the ship had turned over on to her port side. We all clambered up on to the side of the ship pulling a lot of our shipmates up with us.

We saw flashes in the distance, a signalman picked up the message - it was NORTHERN GEM. Just as she approached the side (which was the bottom of the ship, her bows started to go down.

We all went over into the water and swam to her. Thank God for those scrambling nets and the lads on NORTHERN GEM. They ordered us into the engine room area where we got warm and dried out. We had managed to get several of our injured shipmates with us. But there were many uninjured who were not lucky enough to be picked up, there were only 81 survivors. Everyone on NORTHERN GEM did all they could for us, they made soup and sandwiches and the skipper ordered an immediate rum issue. We stayed in the engine room area until we heard voices above. OBEDIENT was asking where ACHATES was. NORTHERN GEM informed them that we had been sunk and there were survivors onboard. The same message was passed to OBDURATE.

OBEDIENT had been damaged during the action and her W/T was out of action. HIPPER and the destroyers continued to try to break through to the convoy but were driven back by our destroyers. They eventually withdrew when SHEFFIELD and JAMAICA arrived to join the escort. It was established that the German forces had retreated to the north west, but the close escort were unaware of this and we all spent a very anxious night. We eventually arrived in the Kola Inlet and a message was displayed on all ships notice boards. "THE CONDUCT OF ALL OFFICERS AND MEN OF THE ESCORT AND COVERING FORCE, THROUGHOUT THIS SUCCESSFUL ACTION AGAINST GREATLY SUPERIOR ENEMY FORCES WAS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE TRADITIONS OF THE SERVICE. AN ENEMY FORCE OF AT LEAST, ONE POCKET BATTLESHIP, ONE HEAVY CRUISER AND SIX DESTROYERS, WITH ALL THE ADVANTAGES OF SURPRISE AND CONCENTRATION, SHOULD BE HELD OFF FOR 5 HOURS BY THE ESCORTS AND DRIVEN OFF BY THE CRUISERS, WITHOUT LOSS TO THE CONVOY. YOUR COMMITMENT IS MOST CREDIBLE AND SATISFACTORY INDEED THANK YOU ALL.

Myself and our officers and shipmates were helped out with clothing and toilet gear, then allocated to the "O" boats for the voyage home to U.K. I was on OBEDIENT for the voyage. When we left Kola Inlet the sea was like a mill pond, there was not a ripple and we had a great voyage home. We were well looked

after by the lads on board and we volunteered to do watches and help out with the chores. We arrived back in Scapa Flow and as we sailed in we were mustered on deck. We sailed through the lines of ships at the anchorage and they signalled our return by sounding off their sirens and two of the ships played the tune "Miss You" on their tannoy systems. It was a great welcome home. We said our goodbyes to the lads who had done so much for us and I hope you wont mind if I finish off my report of the action with a special "Thank You" to the officers and men of NORTHERN GEM for returning and picking us up. From all of us who were lucky to survive. God Bless You All.

JIMMY McHUGH N°1556.
Ex ACHATES/NAIRANA.

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RESTRICTED ADMIRALTY MESSAGE

ACTION ON NEW YEAR'S EVE

The attached account of the action on New Year's Eve in defence of Convoy JW51B is forwarded for the information of Flag and Commanding Officers. It may be demonstrated to ships' companies but they should be warned that the matter is SECRET.

2. Some points of interest for future operations are:-
 - (a) R.D.F. The very great importance of maintaining an all round sweep throughout an action of this sort. Failure to do so resulted in at least one ship on each side being surprised.
 - (b) Tactics. The value of offensive tactics and the unwillingness of the enemy to face much weaker forces if these are resolutely handled. The disposition of enemy destroyers astern of their heavy ships and their failure to take part in the action or to seize the opportunity to attack the convoy while much of its escort was engaged with the heavy forces.
 - (c) Smoke. The value of smoke for covering the convoy and frightening off the enemy. The necessity for prompt action in laying and maintaining it by ships of the escort, especially the smaller ones not engaged in the main action. The C.S. smoke apparatus froze up.
 - (d) Enemy Gunnery. The enemy appeared to be using R.D.F. ranging. The shooting ranged from good to indifferent. Flashless propellant was NOT used.
 - (e) Communications. When silence was broken, W/T communication was good. R/T was a failure, probably owing to the long period of silence before the action. The intense cold, and the fact that low brilliance signal lanterns cannot be operated with gloves on, greatly reduced the efficiency of V/S communication.

3. Technical points will be dealt with more fully in due course.



JACK C. TOVEY
ADMIRAL

DISTRIBUTION

FLAG AND COMMANDING OFFICERS OF H.M. SHIPS OF HOME FLEET.
(Copy to: Commander in Chief, for Western Approaches escorts)
(12 copies)

COPY OF SIGNAL REFERRING TO MESSAGE SENT BY ADMIRAL GOLOVKO,
Commander in Chief, Soviet Northern Fleet.

MESSAGE

From: THE REAR ADMIRAL COMMANDING, 10TH CRUISER SQUADRON

Date: 30th January 1943 N° 406/29

To: THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF, WESTERN APPROACHES,
DERBY HOUSE, LIVERPOOL

The following message which has been received from Vice Admiral Golovko, Commander-in-Chief, North Russian Fleet, is forwarded. The loss of ACHATES when serving with the Home Fleet Destroyers was deeply regretted and her gallant action was an inspiration to all who were in company with her:

"Rear Admiral (Destroyers),
Rear Admiral Burnett.

I congratulate you upon your victory over the enemy. You withstood a battle against superior forces, and, in spite of the latter's counter action, brought the convoy in its entirety into our waters.

I sincerely regret the loss of the destroyer ACHATES and of its valiant company.

(Signed) GOLOVKO
Vice Admiral.

(Signed) ROBERT BURNETT
REAR ADMIRAL

Submitted by Jim McHugh.

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Proud towns raised £1m

OLDHAM'S connection with HMS Onslow began in January, 1942, when arrangements were put in hand for the Oldham and Lees Warship Week, due to begin on Saturday, February 7.

The aim was to raise £700,000 — the cost of a destroyer — but the people of Oldham and Lees actually raised £1,000,681 6s 8d at processions, film shows, exhibitions and rallying speeches around the district.

In appreciation of the effort, crew members of the Onslow visited Oldham and Lees in March, 1943, staying overnight with local residents and being regally entertained.

There was also a visit to the Onslow by the then Mayor of Oldham, Alderman H E Chamberlain, and the chairman of Lees Council, Councillor S Lees.

The Onslow was built on the Clyde in 1941 and sailed more than a quarter of a million miles on active service in the Atlantic, the Arctic and the Mediterranean.

After from the battle which led to the VC for Captain Sherbrooke, the Onslow was involved in further major action when, on Boxing Day, 1943, her convoy was attacked by the cruiser, Scharnhorst.

From EVENING CHRONICLE, OLDHAM, MONDAY, JUNE 8, 1992

M.V.PONTFIELD IN CONVOY JW51B
By J.Walsh 3rd Radio Officer.

I completed Wireless School in Cork, Ireland and applied to the Marconi Company with my Second Class P.M.G. Certificate on December 11, 1942 at Liverpool. I was immediately assigned to the M.V. PONTFIELD, a 10,000 ton tanker laying at Birkenhead with Captain L.B.Carr in command.

I had a feeling of anxiety when I saw the outside steam and water pipes being lagged, but with the knowledge that half of this ship was built in Sweden and the other half built in U.K., my anxiety was allayed, because previously a magnetic mine sunk only half of this ship!

We assembled in Loch Ewe and left there as Convoy JW51B on 22 December at 1500 hours. Captain Melhuish was Commodore in EMPIRE ARCHER and Vice-Commodore was the captain of CALOBRE. The Senior Officer Escorts on leaving Loch Ewe was BRAMBLE's Commander H.T.Rust D.S.O.

BRAMBLE later, was the first to sight the attacking force just before she was sunk. The Rescue ships were NORTHERN GEM and VIZALMA.

JW51B was a small convoy, its other function was to lure the German Battle Fleet out of the Norwegian fjords. The following vessels made up the convoy; EMPIRE ARCHER, CALOBRE, DALDORCH, EMPIRE EMERALD, PONTFIELD, CHESTER VALLEY, PUERTO RICAN, EXECUTIVE, R.W.EMERSON, JEFFERSON MYERS, BALLOT, VERMONT, YORKMAR and J.H.LA TROBE.

The German ships took the bait, HIPPER, LUTZOW and six destroyers attacked the convoy on December 31 at 0900. Shells started dropping close to the ship and we could only surmise that they were coming from the flashes on the horizon, it was not yet daylight so we could not see the near misses to the other ships in the convoy. The convoy made some turns and towards evening the flashes fell behind, we assumed that part of the Home Fleet which had been shadowing us, now had engaged the surface raiders.

At 1000 on January 2, we saw the Russian shore line, then we became fogged in, so we have to for a full day. The weather was poor most of the time, visibility was bad and with the lack of star and sun sights and no navigational aids we had a job locating the mouth of Kola Inlet.

At last the pilot boarded and we started upstream to Murmansk on Jan 3. Half way there we rammed the side of the inlet, in thick fog, we then went astern and put the rudder and propeller up on an underwater shelf. We signalled ashore by Radio, soon a destroyer came alongside and we gave her some fuel, went onboard and had a drink. We were holed just forward of the fore tank. The large reinforcing timber beams installed in the forepeak for iceflow protection saved our cargo and us. We were eventually towed upstream where we anchored off Rosta Drydock. We had Russian lighters, a corvette, a couple of destroyers alongside taking off fuel oil and a large tanker taking the aviation spirit (5250 tons of it!). The tanker was SAN CIPRIANO and while we were both half full, at five minutes past noon on Saturday, January 9, a lone plane dropped a bomb on the galley of SAN CIPRIANO killing four DEMS gunners, six other crew were badly injured and our lifeboats badly damaged. I received a piece of shrapnel in my leg, standing amidships. It could have been a lot worse for all the ships if the bomb had been a few feet forward of where it did explode.

The Russian pilot! disappeared after we hit the rocks, he may have been a spy although it probably would not have made any difference as regards the penalty which he would have received. We did see some footprints in the snow, leading up the side of the cliff, so we presumed he had jumped ship.

For the next five months we were in and out of drydock several times for repairs, the rudder post had to be removed and straightened also the prop. Other Russian ships and destroyers and submarines had priority for drydock work. This period and the ensuing five months in Archangel waiting for the winter darkness to come home, is another story.

We did return to U.K. in November 1943. I do not remember the convoy number (RA54A, Ed.). We paid off on the Tyne and had a few days leave before I signed on another ship bound for the Mediteranean.

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H.M.S. CASSANDRA.

By J.Roberts (Asdics)

An excerpt from a 42-page portfolio of Cassandra memories, edited and produced by Morris Birkett, for private circulation amongst Cassandra survivors.

At approximately 0530 on 11 December, 1944, U-boat U-365, commanded by Lieutenant J.G.Diether Todenhagen, torpedoed CASSANDRA in position 71°57'N 32°04'E, approximately 190 miles NNW of Murmansk whilst returning as escort of Convoy RA62 bound for Loch Ewe.

At that time I was on Asdic morning watch, with S.D.Greeno. I remember that the radar had been reporting many schnorkel echoes astern of the convoy which, were backed up by D/F reports from London and meant a Wolf Pack was following us. Whilst the sea was probably a moderate swell I wished it had been more violent as this made gauging torpedo depth for firing difficult and therefore safer for us. Being "canteen boat" astern of the convoy we were probably the most vulnerable. It occurred to me that the sonar sweep ahead was into the convoy and that we were exposed to the rear and unable to hear anything which was within the arc of our own ship's propellers.

On being hit I was lifted off my seat and I can remember banging my head against a metal protrusion in the Asdic cabinet. As it became obvious that the sonar had gone I went up on to the bridge to see what had happened. It was pitch black, except for our own signal lamp which was rapidly giving a quick signal into the blackness. After about five minutes of rushing about to find out as much as I could it was a relief to realise we were still afloat and relatively stable. I went below to the Wardroom Flat and started to close the Mess Deck watertight doors, the other side of which seemed to be a black hole of nothingness, where the bows had been. To my amazement shortly after closing a door it opened again and out popped a survivor, as if a ghost from the other side. The Surgeon Lieutenant was using the Flat as an emergency area and was administering morphia to an injured Stoker who had broken his back.

At about 0900 it was getting light and a walk on the upper deck revealed a crack right across the deck of the torpedo tube area with light coming through from the Engine Room below. Instructions were given to jettison all eight torpedoes and to ditch all depth charges.

The Wardroom was converted into a hospital sick bay and damage control teams desperately assembled timber baulks to shore up the forward bulkhead. This was buttressed partly by the oil fuel tanks which were bulging dangerously. Chief Mechanic Willis was in charge and he worked tirelessly to hold the bulkhead. If it gave way we would probably have to abandon ship. We prayed that the swell would not make matters worse and fortunately many of us owe our lives to his efforts. His subsequent award of the B.E.M. was well deserved.

Our escort took us in tow and as I recall some assistance was given by our own engines turning very slow astern, it taking about three days to limp back to Murmansk at about 2-3 knots. We rigged a sail of canvas but I think this was more to steady the hull than provide power. A large part of the crew now moved to the Stern Mess Deck to eat and sleep until our return to port.

On reaching harbour we tied up and the following day the Coxswain's party extracted the dead from the tangled mess of what remained of the bow, severed from behind 'B' Gun. A special issue of rum was given to the party concerned for this unpleasant task. The following morning I attended as one of the burial party, the service being taken by the Captain, Lieut. G.C.Leslie R.N. We sailed in a trawler escort which proceeded to the mouth of the Kola Inlet for burial at sea. The rest of the injured were moved to Vaenga Hospital and the remaining crew, including myself, started to count our blessings and enjoy new activities. I still possess the presentation albums of the U.S.S.R. given to us for our efforts in presenting a ships concert at the Inter Club for the crews of other convoys that arrived. We were given the assistance of about 20 Russian dancing girls, lead by Tania - I wonder how many of you can remember

Tania - believed to be a graduate of Leningrad University, dressed in her Russian fur hat and fur coat, with leather snow boots - the sexiest vision we had seen in Russia - hand picked we suspected as an intelligence agent to listen to our conversations. She spoke perfect English and was also in charge of catering administration at the shore based R.N. W/T station - to mingle with our turns. The final night ended with a formal seated party in which all crew members were given tumblers of vodka to toast the glorious war effort of both countries. Few could stand up at the end of it and not to toast was inviting offence.

We survived and the days passed, trying to learn to ski from skis lent by the Russians. The local children roared with laughter at our mistakes and a little ice skating also took place. Other memories of this time were Christmas Day eating lots of Mars bars, appalling Russian rye bread and making Punch from gin, Pusser's rum and vodka. The Wardroom entered into the spirit of things and I can remember Lieutenant Leslie, letting me use the Captain's day cabin under the bridge to sleep in, presumably, to reduce overcrowding in the remaining Mess deck.

A keepsake of this entire affair was a prayer book presented to me at my confirmation, which I took to sea with me and was in my locker in the forecastle when we were hit. I lost everything in the locker, probably blown to smithereens in the bow. I found the prayer book on the deck of the bridge soaked with sea water and wondered how on earth it had arrived there. I still possess it.

U-365, which did the damage to CASSANDRA was sunk on 13 December, 1944. The only survivor, picked up by ORIBI was its Commander Lieutenant Diether Todenhagen.

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I'M TIRED

Yes, I'm tired. For several years I've been blaming it on middle age, poor blood, lack of vitamins, air pollution, underarm odour, yellow wax build-up, and another dozen maladies that make you wonder if life is worth living.

But I've found out it ain't that. I'm tired because I'm overworked. The population of this country is 51 million, 21 million are retired. That leaves 30 million to do the work.

There are 19 million at school, that leaves 11 million to do the work.

2 million are unemployed and 4 million work for the Government, that leaves 5 million to do the work.

One million are in the Armed Forces etc., that leaves 4 million to do the work.

Three million are employed by County and Borough Councils, leaving 1 million to do the work.

There are 620,000 people in hospital and 379,998 people in prison, which leaves 2 people to do the work - You and me!

And you're sitting on your arse reading this -

NO WONDER I'M BLOODY TIRED.

Anon.

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Though he was not in the regular Navy, one World War II merchant skipper was determined to run a taut ship. He requested the ship's officers to wear ties at all meals. Everyone complied except one crusty old Chief Engineer. Threats and blandishments had no effect. But one morning the skipper was overjoyed when he arrived at breakfast to find the Chief wearing a tie. His joy was short-lived, however. After finishing the meal, the Chief left the table ---- wearing no pants.

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Anon.

MURMANSK PADDLE STEAMER

By Claude Webb

(Taken from the Newsletter of North Russia Convoy Club of New Zealand)

After two days laying at anchor outside Murmansk, most of the tiffies on ARGONAUT were able to relax a little, the maintenance work having been completed. Some seamen liberty men had gone ashore, while we and our stoker mates toiled below. I did not envy the seamen; I found it a luxury to be in a three watch system that was the engine room department routine after my experience as a seaman in a two watch system on a destroyer. The two watch system seemed to be self defeating. It did not achieve greater efficiency. When cook of the mess, forenoon part of ship, dhobying, first light and last action stations added, most seamen were never fully rested and alert. Poor living conditions and often bad weather did not help.

(Later in life I spoke to a senior executive Naval officer about this. He said you people down below had to be alert because of the machinery you were dealing with. I could not see how this excused the two watch system.

I digress. I have always had a niggle about that!

While the Russians were very quick to off load the medical supplies they desperately needed that we had brought from Scapa, they were reluctant to give us oil to return home. I think it took them some time to believe we could not return home until we did have at least some.

On the second forenoon, my mate, Jackie Mortimer, and I were taking our ease outside the tiffy's mess. We were in a fairly isolated part of the harbour, keeping an A.A. watch all the time. We could hear the sound of artillery and planes operating in the distance. The water was calm, like glass, when we saw in the distance a small paddle steamer approaching. It came close, and eventually tied up alongside. The chief stoker arrived with his small gang and commenced connecting up for oiling. On a closer look at the paddle steamer we realised it was not a paddle steamer at all, the paddles were just appendages, probably for camouflage.

Being curious, Jackie and I climbed on to the oiler and did our best to make one of the Russian seamen understand we wanted to find the engineer to ask permission to look at the engine room. One pointed to the superstructure below the bridge, where there were several steel doors. The first door we opened was very embarrassing. We found ourselves in a large cabin in which several Russian officers were sitting round a table eating. They looked at us with a steady stare, and one who appeared to be the Captain at the head of the table, spoke to us in Russian. We slowly backed out, said "Sorry" and I think gave a little bow.

Going further aft and opening another door, out came the smell of hot oil. We found ourselves at the head of the usual engine room steel steps. On the bulkhead at eye level, there was, to our surprise, a large brass plate with the shipbuilder's name. From long ago memory it was "Dennys of Dumbarton". It was definitely British built.

On descending to the engine room plates, our first impression was one of spotless cleanliness. It was a little like going into a house where the lady of the house was very house proud. On the ship's side nearest the ladder was a large wooden panel holding the hand tools. The old spanners had been used many times and some had needed to have welding done on the inside of their jaws where they had spread or worn. Instead of a compact set of thou feelers in a case as each of our tiffies carried in their kits, on the panel there were rows of individual feelers mounted on hooks, from one and a half thousand to twenty thousandth of an inch.

We were greeted by a smiling giant of a man, who may have been the Engineer. He knew some English and was pleased to use it. Unlike a Naval ship, the engine room and oil fired boiler had no bulkhead between them. The engine was a small three-stage reciprocating engine with every pipe and gauge gleaming, the engine polished and the lagged pipes white and clean. The ship was quite old, but the engine room and boilers did not reflect this.

We were able to talk to the Engineer about the state of the Russian war effort with the boilerman nodding and smiling in the background. Morale was very high. We gathered from them that the Germans had lost from the very beginning, as even if Moscow was occupied, German troops would always find lines of communication too long and they would eventually be isolated forces, and then the Russian bear would start to squeeze. With this, he put his arms around me and gave a demonstration which left me breathless. Up to this time there had not been any of the big Russian victories which were to follow. Russia was very hard pressed, and I don't think their chances were rated as very good. The oiler was able to give us enough oil to get back to Reykjavik at a reduced speed. In the three days that we were in Murmansk, we were also able to top up several of our small vessels with supplies, mostly food, including a trawler, which came alongside to get a change of victuals from fish. When we sailed we had over double our crew members aboard, made up of RAF personnel and surviving merchant seamen. The RAF sergeants billeted in our mess were full of praise for the Russians, and told us lots of stories about their ability to adapt themselves to flying and repairing our planes. They also commented on how good some of the lady pilots were, which was a surprise to them and us. (We assume Claude is referring to their "Flying" abilities).

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WHAT IS A WREN?

A Wren is a member of the widely known and least understood of all Women's Services. She is loved by the R.A.F., hated by the W.R.A.C., ignored by the Army and tolerated by the Royal Navy. She is hard to convince, easy to talk to but impossible to persuade. A Wren likes stacks of clothes, dances, and being noticed by officers, petty officers and sailors with money. She dislikes ironing, staying on board, Chief Wrens, parade grounds, staying sober and sometimes other Wrens. A Wren is found on, around and under desks of various sizes. During her working hours, she registers expressions of horror, amazement, delight, aloofness and an 'I dont care if you are going out' scowl associated with Pay Officers. Should you chance to meet her ashore that night however, the transformation is unbelievable. Her face indicates coyness, hidden charm, anticipation, pleasure and sometimes an 'I know how much he's worth' leer, also associated with Pay Officers. A Wren wears her civilian clothes like a page out of 'Vogue' or the latest 'Womans Own'. This sophisticated effort is often spoilt because generally she insists on walking like a Three Badge Stoker and shrieks hysterically every time something amuses her. In spite of these alarming habits however, a Wren continues to attract men like candles and a moth. This is in no doubt due to the fact that on occasions she is wonderfully feminine, incredibly naive and depending on how much you have had to drink, fascinatingly lovely. A Wren is an enigma. You can love her, hate her, or despise her, but when the night is almost gone and you hold her in your arms what better ending to the day than to hear her whisper in your ear, "Would you mind keeping your bloody hands to yourself."

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WAR TIME ODE

Twinkle, twinkle little star,
 Girl got in a Yankee car,
 What she done, she aint admittin',
 But what she's knittin' aint for Britain!

ooo000000ooo

Bill Johnston.

AN ARCTIC ADVENTURE
From a publication by the US Maritime Academy, Kings Point, New York.
Submitted by Bill Ryan

In September 1941 Ray Holubowicz entered Marquette University as an OTC Midshipman. Shortly thereafter Ray heard about the Merchant Marine Reserve /USNR programme at Kings Point and effected a transfer from Marquette to Kings Point where he arrived in January 1942.

At this time the indoctrination programme was little more than clarifying who you were, what you thought you wanted to be, where you came from, a few basic courses in seamanship and survival at sea.

In March 1942 Ray was assigned to SS SYROS. It was intended that he would get in the 6 months sea course then required for license applications. SYROS sailed shortly thereafter and the duration would just about fit the time required - one trip to Murmansk.

SYROS was torpedoed and sunk just north of Norway on 26 May 1942. Ray was on the bridge. The Engine Cadet, John Brewster, was on emergency duty in the engine room and went down with the ship. Ray did not make the lifeboats or rafts and ended up in the water - sea temperature was 29°F, air temperature, -10°F.

HMS HAZARD arrived and picked up survivors and bodies, By the time he was recovered Ray was more dead than alive, but the crew revived him and thawed him out. HAZARD took him in to Murmansk, where he spent a month awaiting a ship home. Accommodation in Murmansk was closer to primitive than to bearable.

On 26 June 1942, Ray and other survivors of SYROS departed from Murmansk aboard SS HYBERT. No one was comfortable, but things were better than in the cold accommodations in Murmansk.

On 8 July HYBERT was sunk. This time Ray made it to a lifeboat and was well dressed for the four hours of small boat sailing. Sea temperature 32°F, air temperature 0°F. The environment was warming up!

Ray was rescued by the Free French ROSELYS, and eventually made it to Iceland. After some delay, he and other survivors were put aboard the Honduran passenger ship TOLTEC, and returned to USA. Ray signed articles for this passage.

After due consideration the Academy Review Board decided that he did not have sufficient qualifying sea time, what with all his Polar Bear Club swimming, sight-seeing at Russian and Icelandic Spas and relaxing cruises aboard corvettes, trawlers and tramps. A short trip would be needed to solve this minor problem. Ray packed his sea bag and went off to the Liberty ship SS J.L.M.CURRY.

The good ship CURRY sailed on 21 August 1942, Shortly after leaving the pier the crew was informed of its destination - back to the 'Cold Corner of Hell' By now Ray knew the route by heart. The CURRY made the trip to Murmansk after lying at anchor in Iceland for over three months, almost without incident but with much anticipation. Once there, it was forced to lay at anchor for nearly 1 month before docking to discharge its cargo. During this time the harbour was under attack from German bombers stationed in Northern Norway, on any day they could find the harbour through the fog and mist, snow and rain.

J.L.M.CURRY was never directly hit but suffered innumerable near misses. After unloading, she took on 2000 tons of ore ballast. Finally, on 4 March, 1943 CURRY sailed for Iceland.

On 8 March 1943, not far from the SYROS and HYBERT sinkings, CURRY broke up in heavy seas. She sank that day. Ray did not bother recording the sea and air temperature. By now, who cared? Cold is cold - into the lifeboats for more sight-seeing and cruising. The trawler NORTHERN WAVE rescued our water-logged Cadet and took him to Iceland. From there he returned to USA aboard the USN Auxiliary, GEMINI.

Ray returned to Kings Point on 5 April 1943. As usual, he had misplaced his Sea Project and had another story of losing yet another ship. It was decided that he now had enough sea time for his license and on 15 July 1943 he graduated.

THE "J.D. YEAGER"

New York to Murmansk and return,

I signed on at Port of Houston, Texas, on October 24, 1944 as 3rd Assistant Engineer Officer. The 'YEAGER' had just come out of the Todd Houston Shipyard, this was her first trip. We loaded at Houston with general war cargo. Our deck cargo was Sherman tanks. The ship that came out of Todd Shipyard just before the YEAGER was the JOHNNY APPLESEED - she made the Murmansk run also. We went up the east coast to New York and made up a convoy to Liverpool. We discharged all cargo in Liverpool. At that time we thought we would be going back to the States, not so.

The English completely recommissioned the ship and lagged all steam lines on deck and caulked all quarter walls. We knew where we were going then.

We loaded with 10,000 tons of corned beef hash in 1 gallon cans, all holds were full. We were all issued with foul weather gear and literature on Arctic survival. That is why I believe that this convoy went up as a British convoy. We went from Liverpool to Glasgow, Scotland and picked up eight P.T. boats for deck cargo, and headed for Murmansk.

I do not know what our casualties were being an engineering officer, but I know we lost a few. Going up, we developed a clicking or knocking in the main engine air pump, more on this later. We stayed under general quarters most of the time.

The Russian people were very generous and friendly to us (!!!Ed.) They gave each officer 500 roubles and crew members 300 roubles. They had a club called the International Seamen's Club, plenty of vodka, and girls to dance with.

We were ready to start back. As we were coming out of Murmansk harbour in a long column, 3 ships astern of us, I saw a ship take a torpedo in her port side. She pulled out of line and was burning and going down by the bow. It could have been a mine. I was told later that it was the JOHNNY APPLESEED.

Back to the air pump that was clicking and knocking. It was 2 days out as best I remember. I was on watch and heard a loud bang. The engine room filled with steam - I thought we had bought it. I shut the engine down, and by then all the engineers were down to see what had happened. It turned out to be a caulking tool left in the main condenser. It drifted over into the air pump until that fatal stroke that caught on its end and drove it through the bottom of the pump. We were dead in the water (3 minute water, as you know). The deck crew told us later that an escort stood by for 45 minutes and had to get back to the convoy. It had knocked the bottom out of the air pump. We picked the pieces up and built a stage under the pump and caulked the seams with rags. It worked. It then took about 12 hours to catch the convoy.

You would think that was enough, not so. We got in the worse storm any of us had ever been in. We lost most of our rafts, some of our lifeboats, bent some of the cargo beams.

All the engineers stood 4 hour watches on the butterfly valve, the prop was out of the water as much as it was in. You would think this is all that could happen, not so.

We were beginning to break up. She was breaking just over the deep tanks. The deck crew began seeing the crack across the deck. With each hour, it was getting worse. She was breaking down her sides by the time we reached Glasgow.

We stayed in Scotland until temporary repairs were made. The shipyard welded a band around the ship about 4ft. wide, and also repaired the main engine air pump and other damages.

We picked up a convoy back to Baltimore, Maryland, and discharged from J.D.YEAGER on March 28, 1945.

Augustus R. Letot,
Dallas, Texas.

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TRIBUTE TO SIR WINSTON CHURCHILL ON BEHALF OF TWO BRITISH SAILORS

By David B Craig

The ship which I served on, DOVER HILL, was one of the ships in Convoy JW53, known as the "Forgotten Convoy", as we were left behind in North Russia when Royal Naval forces were withdrawn at the beginning of March 1943 to help in the Battle of the Atlantic. Part of the time we were tied up at Ekonomia, a small port north of Archangel on the North Dvina river, where the following incident took place.

The roads in that area were made of wood and in the village small booths were provided at the side of the road with seats and a tub of water where people were supposed to go for a smoke. One evening our Bosun, who had had a few drinks and was a bit under the weather, was smoking while walking down the road. A Russian civilian pointed out to him that he should be in one of the booths and the Bosun agreed and sat down to finish his cigarette. The civilian then followed him and in good English began to miscall Britain for not having started a Second Front. At that time our country was still Great Britain and we were proud of it and his remarks evidently annoyed the Bosun. He was a big fellow who after finishing his cigarette stood up and laid the Russian out on his back on the road. Unknown to him this was the local Communist Party leader. Two policemen arrived to arrest the Bosun and a struggle started whereupon our Cook also arrived at the scene and after respectfully asking the Bosun if he required a hand, proceeded to help him to lay out the two policemen beside the civilian on the road. Needless to say our two boys were overpowered by superior numbers and carted off to the local jail.

When they came to trial we expected them to get a month or so in prison but were appalled when the Bosun was sentenced to 7 years and the Cook to 4 years for assaulting a Communist Party official.

A few months later, when tied up in Molotovsk, our Bosun and Cook were noticed walking along the quay towards our ship. We quickly got them aboard and they told us that after breakfast that morning they were taken out of the jail and the doors were shut behind them. No explanation was given and when they found they were free immediately headed back to the ship. We got in touch with the Naval authorities who sent them home to U.K. on one of our destroyers which had come up with stores during the late summer.

We never discovered why they had been released and this mystery was never solved for nearly 50 years until a few weeks ago when a DEMS gunner who sailed with me, sent me a photocopy of pages 242 and 243 of Volume 5 "Closing the Ring" from Winston S Churchill's Memoirs -

(Quote) "My attention has been drawn to the fate of two British merchant seamen recently given severe sentences for an assault in North Russia upon a local Communist leader. I am, most reluctant, and the Ambassador agrees with me, to promise resumption of convoys unless these unfortunate British seamen are released and handed over to our naval authorities for removal..... I am convinced it would be utterly repugnant to you, as it is to me, to allow these men to languish in a Soviet gaol while we are accepting those risks to British seamen in future convoys. I shall try what I can do by personal appeal to Stalin and Molotov.

The important discussion took place on 21st. (October 1943). Meanwhile, in order to strengthen Eden's hands, and at his suggestion, I suspended the sailing of the British destroyers, which was the first move in the resumption of the convoys" (Unquote).

This incident gives great credit to Sir Winston Churchill that at a time when he had a great burden and responsibilities of running the War he could still take time to help our two shipmates who had been imprisoned for much longer than was necessary in the circumstances.

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VAENGA 1941

Christmas Menu

H. M. S. ANSON

DECEMBER 25, 1942



Breakfast

PORRIDGE
 FRIED EGGS AND BACON
 ROLLS
 COFFEE

Dinner

SOUP
 TURKEY
 ROAST PORK
 ROAST POTATOES
 GREEN PEAS
 CHRISTMAS PUDDING
 WHITE SAUCE
 FRUIT

Tea

CHRISTMAS CAKE

Supper

SOUP
 COLD HAM
 MINCE MEAT SANDWICH

FIFTY YEARS AGO

Notice to all small ship sailors.

Read Tom Speirs menu, then think of Tom Upton's remark on page nine re 'No turkey' then join the Editor in the traditional chant.
HARDSHIPS!! HARDSHIPS You Be YOU DONT KNOW WHAT HARDSHIPS ARE!!



Bill Johnston's Xmas Card poses one question...

How did you send it home Bill?

Polyarnoe Pigeon Post or Air Mail??



1942-1992 50TH ANNIVERSARY CALENDAR

- 11 Jan: RA51 arrived at Loch Ewe from Kola with no losses.
- 11 Jan: OBDURATE and OBEDIENT sailed from Kola with Battle of Barents Sea wounded. Arrived Scapa 15 Jan.
- 17 Jan: JW52 sailed from Loch Ewe with 15 merchantmen.
- 27 Jan: JW52 arrived with no losses. Two enemy aircraft destroyed.
- 29 Jan: RA52 sailed from Kola with 10 merchantmen.
- 3 Feb: RA52 SS GREYLOCK (US) sunk by U-255.
- 8 Feb: RA52 arrived at Loch Ewe with one loss (above)
- 15 Feb: JW53 sailed from Loch Ewe with 25 merchantmen.
- 16 Feb: JW53B sailed from Loch Ewe with 3 merchantmen and joined JW53.
- 28 Feb: JW53 arrived at Kola Inlet with no losses.
- 1 Mar: RA53 sailed from Kola Inlet with 30 merchantmen.
- 5 Mar: RA53 SS EXECUTIVE (US) sunk by U-255.
- 5 Mar: RA53 SS RICHARD BLAND torpedoed by U-255 and left derelict.
- 7 Mar: RA53 SS J L M CURRY (US) foundered and sunk in gale.
- 9 Mar: RA53 SS PEURTO RICAN (US) sunk by U-586.
- 10 Mar: RA53 Derelict RICHARD BLAND sunk by U-255.
- 13 Mar: SS OCEAN FREEDOM (UK) sunk by aircraft at Murmansk.
- 14 Mar: RA53 Arrived at Loch Ewe with 26 merchantmen
- 18 Mar: Russian Convoy cycle suspended.
- 7 Apr: H.M.Submarine TUNA sunk U-644.
- 1 Oct: Operation "HOLDER" commenced. ONSLAUGHT, HURON and IROQUOIS sailed to Murmansk for stranded ships.
- 11 Oct: Operation "HOLDER" completed.
- 20 Oct: Following escorts sailed independantly to bring back merchantmen; to : MAHRATTA, MATCHLESS, MILNE, MUSKETEER, SAUMAREZ, SAVAGE, SCOURGE,
- 28 Oct: SCORPION, WESTCOTT, EGLANTINE, HARRIER and SEAGULL.
- 1 Nov: Russian Convoy cycle resumed.
- 1 Nov: RA54A sailed from Kola Inlet with 13 merchantmen.
- 14 Nov: RA54A arrived at Loch Ewe without loss.
- 15 Nov: JW54A sailed from Loch Ewe with 19 merchantmen.
- 22 Nov: JW54B sailed from Loch Ewe with 15 merchantmen.
- 24 Nov: JW54A arrived at Kola Inlet unmolested
- 26 Nov: RA54B sailed from Archangel with 10 merchantmen.
- 3 Dec: JW54B arrived at Archangel unmolested.
- 9 Dec: RA54B arrived at Loch Ewe with no losses.
- 12 Dec: JW55A sailed from Loch Ewe with 19 merchantmen.
- 20 Dec: JW55B sailed from Loch Ewe with 19 merchantmen.
- 22 Dec: JW55A arrived at Kola Inlet without loss.
- 26 Dec: SCHARNHORST sunk by Home Fleet and escorts.
- 30 Dec: JW55B arrived at Kola Inlet without loss.

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"NORTHERN LIGHT" 1993 EDITIONS

- MARCH: 'WINGS OVER THE ARCTIC' Reports and reminiscences by our R.A.F. and F.A.A. members.
- JUNE: 'THE SMALL SHIPS' more 'Lamp Swinging' by the corvettes, and trawlers etc.
- SEPT: 'AWAY FROM KOLA AND WHITE SEA' Stories from Norway, Spitzbergen, Iceland, Scapa etc.
- DECEMB: 'BATTLE OF NORTH CAPE' Your personal stories backed up by Admiral Sir Bruce Fraser's official report to the Admiralty.

'Copy Date' for your items should reach the editor by mid-January; mid-April; mid July and mid-October, to allow ample time for editing, collating, printing, stamp-licking and mailing. Thanks.

HIS MAJESTY'S MINESWEEPERS

A booklet prepared by the Ministry of Information for the Admiralty

1943

Price Nine Pence.

The following is an excerpt from the above the 62 page booklet loaned to the editor by Tom 'Big Ships' Adams of Meols, Wirral.

"The larger and faster of these minesweepers operate with the Fleet. Their speed enables them to sweep ahead of the capital ships when necessary, and their size fits them to carry an increased offensive armament of guns and depth-charges, so that when not minesweeping they can undertake escort and anti-submarine duties, particularly when the Fleet is covering the passage of an important convoy.

One of them recently rammed and destroyed a German submarine in Arctic waters, and when HMS EDINBURGH was torpedoed, three of the Halcyons put up a spirited fight against superior forces. The Flag Officer in command had given orders that they should retire at full speed under a smoke screen if attacked by surface-craft. These orders never reached them. When EDINBURGH was hit, instead of turning away they turned towards the enemy destroyers, "going in like three young terriers," as the Admiral said, and firing whenever the visibility permitted. Then, while one made a smoke screen, the other two went alongside the sinking cruiser and took off the whole ships company. The Admiral was among the last to leave. As he stepped on to the sweeper's quarterdeck her Commanding Officer saluted, "Everything correct, sir. Your flag is hoisted."

The Admiral looked upwards. Flying at the masthead was the Cross of St George, with two red balls in the upper and lower cantons. Its ragged edge suggested that it was a Senior Officer's pendant from which the tails had been cut, and the red balls looked as if they had been hastily daubed on with red paint. But there was no mistaking it for anything but a Rear-Admiral's flag.

It was a gesture which no German could hope to understand: but one that Nelson himself would have appreciated.

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SIGNAL SCHOOL BLUES

By Maurice Cross

A freezing January morning. The new intake standing in a searing wind blowing off the Tamar. Fall in for 'Clean Ship'. Came my turn!

"You, Captain of the Warrant Officers Heads", The Killick waved his clipboard.

"Well, don't stand there like a pregnant fairy - double away!"

"What's a Captain of the Heads?" I asked, visions of accelerated promotion flashing before my eyes.

"Ruddy 'ell, you ferkin HO's" said the Killick, "It means, my son, that you are the WO's shitehouse cleaner".

Crestfallen and somewhat outraged, I later stood amid the WO's urinals, Squegee in hand. In came a Signal Bosun, renowned for his bitter tongue. (Were all naval WO's bitter and twisted? - it must have been the long and tortuous battle up from the lower deck to attain their thin gold rings, only to find themselves in wartime, surrounded by young RNVR types sporting thick wavy ones!)

"What are you looking so miserable about boy?" he snapped while pointing Percy at the porcelain.

"Well sir" I grumbled "I didn't join the navy to be a lavatory cleaner."

"Rubbish" he shouted, "come over to this window." I approached warily, having been told about certain naval manoeuvres. "Look out the window" he commanded,

"What do you see - all your oppos working out in the freezing cold and where are you boy? - you're in these lovely warm heads - so grab the hose, squirt it everywhere over the floor, up the walls, down the pans stick it in your ear

if you like, then squeegee the bloody lot down the central sink. Remember boy, everything in the Andrew is just another job - so get on with it and dont moan!"

Sound advice. I always bore it in mind - well, sometimes!!

In a fit of warped humour I told my parents (per letter) that I was now a Captain of the Heads. They were impressed. My mother boasted about it to all her friends and relations, "and he's only been in the Navy a few weeks too." I had to disillusion her, of course, during my first home leave - she was furious, "what shall I tell my friends now." My father laughed like a Chief Stoker, he probably recalled his Service days in the 1914 army. When I returned to Impregnable School, someone else had my clean-ship job and I was in the Parade ground sweeping party and coaling party - my nose and ears blue with the cold, teeth chattering like castanets, my face lined with coal dust. The words of the Signal Bosun rang in my head "It's just another job boy, just another job."

I definitely started my naval career off on the wrong foot you could say several feet!! It all started when we were allowed ashore for the first time. We shambled off from 'Liberty men fall-in', our Passers uniforms hanging like sacks, cap-ribbon bows dangling over our ears, silks flapping in the wind.

"Christ, what a shower of comic singers", breathed the Jaunty, as we marched through the gates. I think he also mentioned something about 'hatters' but I'm not sure. We went to Aggie Westons in Devonport (just before it was flattened) - beans on toast, all round, and then swaggered up Fore Street, downing a few pints and really feeling like Jolly Jack ashore - apart from a few ribald comments from some 'tiddly' Jacks gloriously clad in Gieves-tailored N° 1's, gold badges flashing and bell-bottoms swinging.

Eventually we caught the last bus and gingerly made our way up the St Budeaux road to Impregnable. Approaching the main gate, we stupidly thought that being 'hard-drinking matelots' (at least 3 pints!) a loud song should be in order.

A spirited rendition of 'Nellie Dean' when passing some houses outside the main gate, caused a window to shoot up. "That man down there, be quiet!" I should have recognised the voice of authority but being somewhat 'Oliver Twist' I assumed that the houses were civilian. In a moment of alcoholic bravado I amiably replied, "go to bed you silly old sod!" Then all hell broke loose, "Guard! Guard!" bawled the 'civvie' and suddenly I found myself feet off the ground between two large seaman sentries, being swiftly conveyed to the guardhouse.

Well how was I to know that those houses were officers quarters. The 'civvie' was the Commanding Officer of the Signal School. White with fear and apprehension of a black future, I awaited my 'off-caps' session. The C.O. himself did the honours, presumably he was intrigued by the unusual situation.

With his golden cap, his golden sleeves, beautifully tailored suit with a spy-glass tucked under an arm, he looked a kind of demi-god.

I shook from head to foot in sheer terror.

"Well now" he said, a slight smile playing around his mouth, "what exactly did you call me last night?" Sweat rolled down me in rivers.

"I, I, I cant remember sir", I stammered.

"I believe it was 'a silly old sod' - not quite the thing to call your C.O. would you say Master at Arms?" The Jaunty heartily agreed, obviously thinking the offence warranted a 100 lashes plus a keel-hauling in the dockyard.

"I'm v,v,very sorry sir, I thought you were a civilian". My knees beat a rapid tattoo.

"Oh, it's quite alright to call civilians silly old sods, is it?" quoth the C.O., obviously enjoying himself. He then observed my ashen, trembling face and took pity on me.

"Well Master, as this young man has only graced His Majesty's Navy a few weeks and would appear to have learned a lesson, perhaps ten days N° 16s will drive the lesson home."

"On caps, about turn, double away."

So I rose smartly at 0530 every day, scrubbed the Jaunty's office lino, (white with the efforts of generations of matelots) and in the evening gambolled round the parade ground holding a heavy 1914 Ross Enfield rifle over my head, my ears assailed by the demonic screams of the Duty P.O.....My day finished in the galley cleaning out lots of greasy pots and pans.

When the Chief Cook heard of my episode with the C.O. he was highly amused. "Well", he said, "if he cant take a joke, he shouldn't have friggin' joined!" Then he put me on light duties in the pantry!

I made lots of new friends, apart from the Chief Cook. I acquired a sort of 'Clint Eastwood' status, as the chap who called the C.O. a silly old sod and lived to tell the tale. It's just as well that they didn't see my craven performance at the defaulter's table!!

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THE LAST TRAINS FROM GREENOCK

By Bob Gottshall (USA)

JW 67 sailed from the Clyde a few days after Germany surrendered in May 1945, the last convoy to the North Russian ports.

The combined deck cargoes of the American Liberty ships was railroad equipment including more than 40 Baldwin steam locomotives and tenders. These engines especially built in Philadelphia to fit the wide gauge Russian tracks, and were equipped with automatic stokers a feature many Russian firemen appreciated in the years to come. Another interesting fact, most unusual for all previous PQ and JW convoys, the American ships carried very few war related cargoes. SS BARBARA FRIETCHIE was loaded to the Plimsol with railroad supplies, along with pipes, valves, fittings, etc., a materialistic pay off to convince the Russians to join the Allies in defeating Japan.

The high points of the voyage were the Victory celebrations. How fitting it was for Yanks to stand shoulder to shoulder with Royal and Merchant Navy veterans in a Scottish pub drinking toasts to Victory, and the Memory of our shipmates who never witnessed the end.

Ships anchored in the stream were advised by local authorities not to fire any weapons, but several smoke pots were dropped in the Clyde, and the crew all took turns blowing three shorts and a long, on the steam whistle. The party in Archangel turned into a drinking contest, but the good feelings and comradeship was felt by all.

How strange it was that the years of suspicion and mistrust between the Russians and ourselves was eased at the Russian Embassy in Washington when Mr. Parshenko presented medals to veterans of the Arctic convoys, and thanked the men personally for their efforts. I guess Churchill in his eloquent style spoke of the Arctic convoys as a most tragic and melancholic time. I think most of the living veterans would agree with him.

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TEAMWORK!

There were four people. One was called Everybody. Another, Somebody. The third Anybody, and the last one, Nobody.

An important job had to be done and Everybody was asked to do it.

Everybody felt sure Somebody would do it.

Anybody could have done it but, in fact, Nobody did.

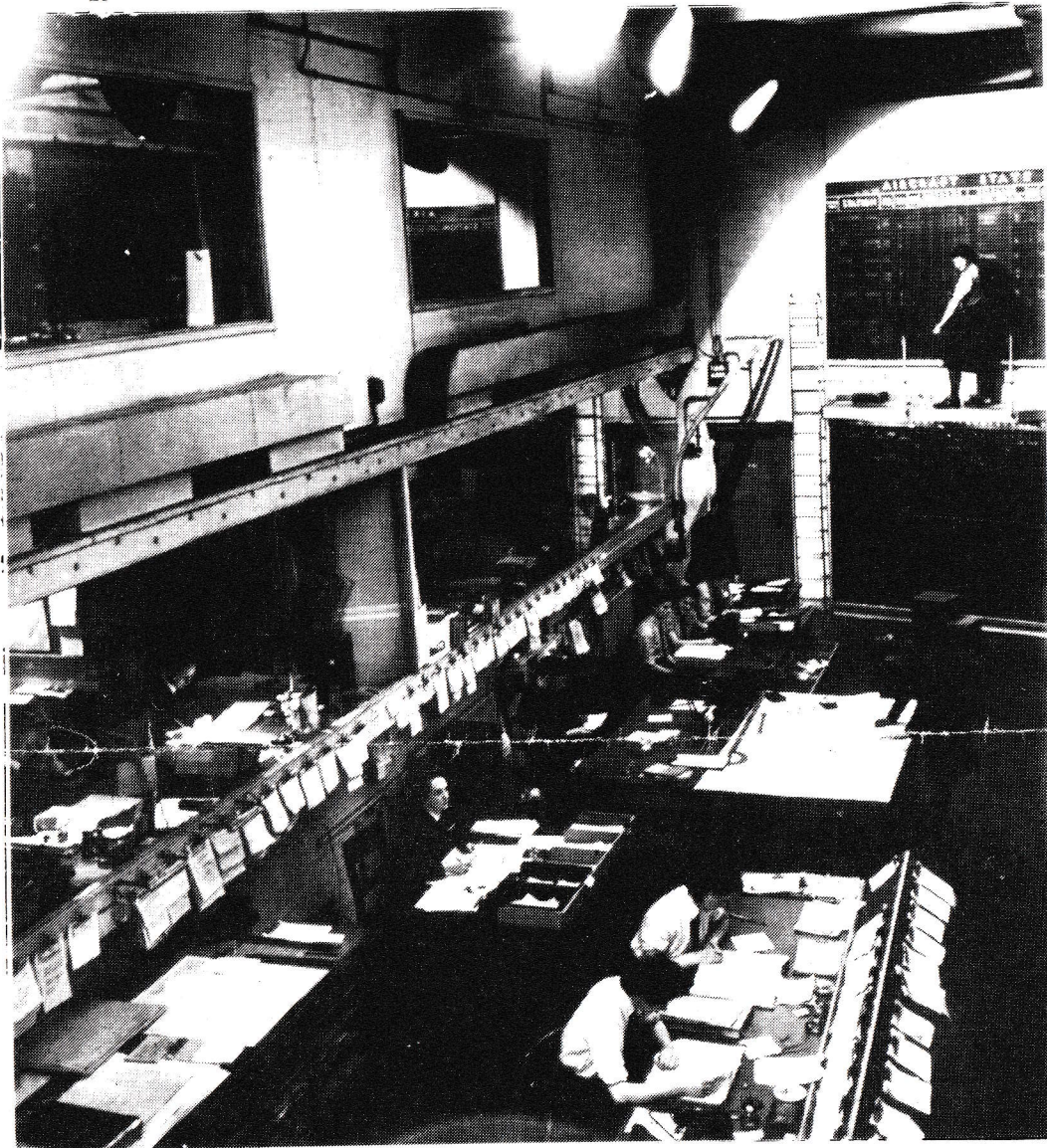
Somebody got angry because it had been Everybody's job.

Everybody thought Anybody could do it.

Nobody, fortunately, realized that Everybody had no intention of doing it!

So, Everybody blamed Somebody because Nobody did what Anybody could have done.

Bill Johnston.



MAIN CONTROL ROOM

The nerve centre of Western Approaches. Area Command Headquarters, i/c Allied naval operations, from below the Equator, north beyond the Arctic Circle and from the Mediterranean to Newfoundland.



WESTERN APPROACHES

WESTERN APPROACHES - "A PHOENIX ARISES" Official Press Release

Work now proceeds apace on the re-creation of Western Approaches Area Command Headquarters, the WW2 secret underground command centre beneath Derby House, Rumford Street, Liverpool.

Western Approaches ACHQ was initially sited in Plymouth, immediately after the outbreak of war, when German bombing rendered this location untenable, command was transferred to Derby House, on 7 February 1941.

The HQ was built on the orders of Winston Churchill who, remembering what had happened with German submarine operations during the latter months of WW1, knew that the Battle of the Atlantic would quickly ensue. It did, and went on throughout the war.

Western Approaches was the world's **first** combined operations HQ, and prototype for all subsequent similar establishments. It was, too, the **first** British/American combined operation, when surface and air units of both countries co-operated under **unified British command**.

Admiral Sir Percy Noble oversaw setting-up of Western Approaches HQ, first in Plymouth, then its transfer to Liverpool, and was its Commander in Chief 1941-42. Admiral Sir Max Horton, a submariner with an already-impressive service record, was C-in-C 1942-45, becoming Bath King of Arms in '46; he died in '51 and is buried in Liverpool Cathedral.

Western Approaches HQ commanded a vast area of Allied sea and air warfare, stretching from below the Equator north to the Arctic Circle and from the Mediterranean to Newfoundland. Subsidiary UK ports were Glasgow, Greenock, Londonderry, Belfast, Cardiff, Milford Haven and Tobermory. The HQ was base for 15 Group RAF, Coastal Command, co-operating with 19 Group, based at Plymouth. Subsidiary air bases were on Merseyside, in Northern Ireland and Scotland.

Convoy operations, too, were commanded from Western Approaches HQ. Convoys (1,300 sailings of Allied merchantmen in groups of up to 60, escorted by 'screens' of corvettes and other warships plied the Atlantic, with horrendous loss of ships and men), bringing vital food, ammunition and supplies from North America, without which the defence of the UK could not be sustained.

Most frightening and onerous of all were Allied convoy operations to Spitzbergen, Murmansk, Archangel and elsewhere inside the Arctic Circle, invariably in conditions of awesome severity. Proper recognition is yet to be made of these actions, and of those involved in the carnage; the vast majority of these operations were managed, too, from Western Approaches HQ.

The HQ co-operated with military, air and naval units and bases in North America, West Indies and Europe in a vast intelligence gathering network. This traffic came to Derby House using state-of-the-art equipment; much sensitive material, brought 'hot' from captured Axis ships and submarines, went to Bletchley Park, national top-secret communications centre where cryptographers toiled, eventually breaking German military codes.

There is no shortage of books and factual reports on the Battle of the Atlantic but, as yet, no physical reminder, anywhere in UK, or indeed in the Western World, of the heroic, momentous feats performed by the Royal Navy, RAF and USAAF commanded from Western Approaches HQ.

The HQ Project opens on 3 April 1993. Later, it will have a HIGH-PROFILE opening by a personage yet to be identified, during the 50th Anniversary of the Battle of the Atlantic celebrations in May.

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NOTICE IN MAJORCA HOTEL: "Guests do not have to get themselves hot in this room - please control yourselves".

MEMBER'S LETTERS

From Vic. Chamberlain of Ohio, U.S.A.- While discharging cargo in Murmansk from the U.S. Liberty Ship STEVENSON TAYLOR I lost a filling out of one of my teeth. So the representative from the Foreign Trade Office arranged to take me to a dentist. I was picked up and taken by Jeep to a dental clinic. It was a large room similar to a hall or gymnasium. I was seated in a dental chair and a large well endowed female dentist put the mirror in my mouth after wiping it on her backside, then used the pick to assess the cavity. All the while asking questions about me through the representative. The dentist was told my name was Chamberlain. She immediately straightened up and said "Niet, Niet, ny do - against relations to Russia" and so refused to work on my teeth, meaning Prime Minister Chamberlain was against recognising Russia, as United States refused to recognise the communist government and never did! (It was not until Roosevelt became President that USA recognised the Bolsheviks). Anyway I kept telling the dentist I was an Irish Chamberlain and not an English Chamberlain, which finally convinced her to put a filling in my tooth. This incident happened in December 1944 and little did she know that my paternal grandfather served 23 years in the British army! However, during last year's Dervish Tour as we approached the school I said to my wife, "it seems I have been to this building before." I asked the principal of the school, "was this building here in WW2?" "Yes" she replied, "as the main hospital was destroyed in the bombing". So I asked if there had been a dental clinic and she said "I am sure there must have been and you could have been treated in this building". Memories!!! I knew there were only 2 or 3 buildings standing at the time, one the Intourist Hotel, another the Arktika which, on our shore leave instructions, we were under no circumstances allowed to enter. Those instructions are published on next page:

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From Mrs Doreen Hepburn, daughter of the late Ted Hennessey, B.E.M:
I would like to thank all his friends of the North Russia Club for the happy times he spent with them, the last being in Glasgow in July. Dad told us very little about his war experiences but perhaps a member could fill us in on this as we would love to hear from them.

Please convey our thanks to all for their friendship.....

.....
 Mrs Doreen Hepburn,
 3 Garden Crescent,
 Gardenstown,
 Banff, Scotland.

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From Don Page, (Ex-Canteen Manager, Polyarnoe!!!): One item in this edition of Northern Light which I read with interest, regarding Geoff Sheldon meeting the most beautiful girl in the world at Lamlash, Isle of Arran.

I too was at Lamlash after coming back from Polyarnoe, I was swinging round the buoy on H.M.S. TROUBADOR, (Barbara Hutton's yacht). I would like to tell Geoff that I must have danced with his wonderful young lady before he did, because whilst based up there our only entertainment was a dance at the local village hall and there wasn't all that many girls at Lamlash!
 (You could never trust a NAAFI manager Geoff. Editor)

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Modesty is hoping others will discover how wonderful we really are!

OFFICE OF ASSISTANT U.S. NAVAL ATTACHE
MURMANSK, U.S.S.R.

TO MASTERS AND ARMED GUARD OFFICERS U.S. VESSELS IN PORT:

In order that each man may be fully cognizant of the simple but highly important instructions concerning shore liberty, it is requested that he signify by appending his signature that he has read and understands the following before his shore pass is signed:

All hands are requested to conduct themselves ashore in a manner befitting an American citizen ashore in a foreign country, and in particular;

1. When going on shore liberty dress neatly and cleanly.
2. Do NOT carry knives or other weapons (Violators are liable to 5 years imprisonment under Soviet law).
3. Do not enter into arguments which may lead to public disturbances.
4. Be prepared to show your ship's pass and identification documents when so requested by sentries, militiamen, and any properly identified member of the American Mission.
5. Observe the midnight curfew.
6. Do not enter a private dwelling without invitation.
7. Do not engage in bartering or selling of foodstuffs, cigarettes, clothing, etc. This is a serious customs violation.
8. It is wiser to refrain from intimate relations with local women.
9. Vodka, at best, is a powerful drink and should be consumed with caution. Any fluid which might possibly be bought outside of the International Club or the Hotel may be poisonous.
10. Do not under any circumstances become involved in altercations with Soviet citizens.
11. Remember that when you come ashore, you do so as a guest of the city, and the Russians do all possible to make your visit enjoyable. Conduct yourself accordingly.
12. The ARKTIKA HOTEL is OUT OF BOUNDS for ALL AMERICAN MERCHANT CREW and NAVY PERSONNEL.

Signed and sealed

J,M, MAURY
 Lt. Colonel U.S.M.C.R.
 UNITED STATES EMBASSY.

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MORE MEMBER'S LETTERS

From our Liaison Officer in Florida:

MERCHANT MARINE IGNORED ONCE AGAIN

On pages 4 and 6 of the current issue of Northern Light, my mates, Chris B. Tye (who I now know as Chris) and Geoff Shelton (who I now know as Geoff) erroneously credited me with serving in the US Navy Armed Guard, during WWII. I had the honour and privilege to serve in the MERCHANT MARINE, during the first part of WWII, prior to my entry in the US Army.

This is a natural mistake, due to the fact that both my mates served in the Royal Navy. They truly believe that there is no other service.

Bill Ryan N°1130.

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From John Middleton, of the North Russian Convoy Club of New Zealand:

"I must take exception to the article in the last edition of Northern Light where it states, "We soon discovered that it would be impossible to get a number of merchant ships, all with different maximum speeds, running scared, to form any kind of formation, etc, etc, etc.....". Running scared indeed! if we had been running scared we would have turned and followed the Fleet, or we could have just 'hove-to' and abandoned ship, now that would have been running scared!

I as a 16 year old Merchant Seaman, can vividly remember thinking, I wish they would get us then we could take to the boats and it would all be over. I never thought that some of us might be killed or injured in the process, only that my tired brain and body would get some respite from the intense enemy action flung at our ship. That was not fear talking, that was weariness, not scaredness, just fatigue, that most of us on the Russian Convoys felt from time to time. That three M.N.Captains were awarded the D.S.O. for their part in that convoy, must in itself show that we were not running scared, as they were in fact, the first M.N. officers to be awarded that decoration. our 'skipper' Capt. William Walker, was one of them, our ship also had two DSC's, two DSM's and a BEM, these were not awarded for "Running Scared" as the writer John Reynolds mentions! To me, Scaredness or Fear, as John Reynolds should know, attacks us all for about thirty seconds after the event that caused it, air attack, submarine attack or whatever, then our training takes over and you do not have the time to be 'scared'. Unlike the Royal Navy, who are trained to seek out the enemy and fight him, we were Merchant Seamen, who were still lawfully going about our business of delivering cargoes, whether of food or war, and would if provoked, fight back as best as we knew how. No John, we were not scared, only doing our best to deliver our cargoes..... that is what we were paid for..... and John, I can also remember at Novaya Zemlya, when we had our bows bashed in and running with NORTHERN GEM, we came out of the fog and received the undivided attention of the Luftwaffe and when we asked permission to join the 'Banana Boats' and the rest of their convoy we were denied permission to join them and had to fight off the attacks with NORTHERN GEM and SALAMANDER... now that was SCAREDNESS on the Banana Boat's part, they were scared that we would get hit and take them and the convoy with us.....

....NORTHERN LIGHT PLEASE COPY.

Editor's Note: John Middleton is founder and secretary of the New Zealand North Russian Convoy Club and he sailed aboard OCEAN FREEDOM during PQ17

He is popularly known by his members as LHDAB (Left Hand Down a Bit)

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Instead of Births, Marriages and Deaths, why dont we have Yells, Bells and Knells?

MORE MEMBER'S LETTERS.

THOSE RUSSIAN DESTROYERS

Dear Editor,

The excellent account and history by J.R.Smith in September's edition of the Role of Russian destroyers etc. is borne out by my experience.

The minesweepers were based at Polyarnoe and certainly we saw little of the Russians at sea, although they seemed to put up a good A.A. barrage when tied up at their berths.

The mention of GREMYASCHI helping EDINBURGH is puzzling and is in contradiction to HARRIER's Captain's Report, and my own memory of two destroyers meeting us in the Kola Inlet after the action.

An amusing sequel to this was some weeks later when watching a concert at the Red Fleet Club, a Medal Award Ceremony took place, and my Russian friend who had lived in Canada and spoke perfect English explained, "these are very brave men who fought to help the EDINBURGH".

They made it up many years later when I attended the ceremony at the Soviet Embassy to receive not only a medal, but a warm reception with lashings of Vodka and Caviare.

As Jimmy Greaves would say "its a funny old game". I thought the summing up of "eventually they tried, they did little and achieved less", rather harsh.

Perhaps one should try to see it through their eyes, for years between the wars there was hostility between our countries with crude propoganda stoking it up, now suddenly we are bed fellows.

In the early years Russians suffered huge losses of life Military and Civilians and couldn't understand why Britain and U.S.A. were not doing more. They only saw the ships that arrived and not the losses and battles that took place.

Furthermore they believed that as they were paying with gold it was up to us to deliver.

Perhaps their ships were not built for rough seas and their crews lacked the training and experience we had.

We should now concentrate on the good relations that now exist between them and our club, and rejoice that they finally understand the effort and sacrifices that were made.

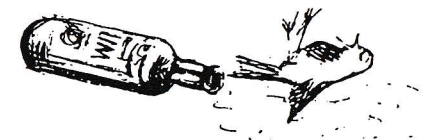
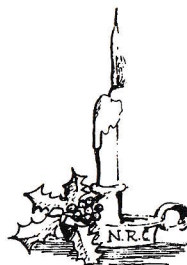
JOHN ELDRED
ex-HARRIER.

AN APPEAL TO ALL EX-NORFOLK'S

One of your old shipmates is housebound and would be proud and pleased to receive correspondence from old shipmates, especially at this Christmastime.

He is: C.R.Davies,
11 Min Y Mor,
Aberffraw,
Iycroes,
Gwynedd LL63 5PQ.

Shipmate Davies (D/JX 187936) was in 18F Mess aboard NORFOLK from 4 June 40 to 14 March 44.



MERRY CHRISTMAS & HAPPY NEW YEAR
COCKS.

"WARSHIP WEEK"

Remember "Warship Weeks" during 1941-1942? Remember which city, town or village adopted your ship? Did the community and ship maintain their links afterwards?

We have received a comprehensive list of "adoptions" from NRC member Gus Britton. The list was produced by the Naval Historical Library.

"Warship Weeks" were organised by the National War Savings Committee, with the support of the Admiralty, and were intended to stimulate public loan investment by setting savings targets appropriate to the sizes of various communities and the type of ship which the targets represented. Thus a village could find the £25,000 needed to sponsor a motor torpedo-boat while at the other end of the scale a large city could reach £2m for a battleship. The money was actually invested by individuals in Government Bonds, National Savings Certificates and even the Post Office Savings Bank, so that it was recovered with 2½ to 3 per cent interest (nearly £10m was loaned interest free) and there was no question of the communities "buying" their ships.

The savings targets were almost invariably exceeded, some areas being allocated additional ships in consequence. Local War Savings Committees organised 1,178 "Warship Weeks" in a total of 1,273 districts, some banding together to increase the target, between 18 October 1941 and 28 March 1942: this campaign raised £955,611,589. A small plaque and a scroll was presented by the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty to each of the participating districts, the Commanding Officers of the respective ships making the presentation whenever possible. The announcement to the Press quoted the adoption of eight battleships, four carriers, 49 cruisers, 301 destroyers, 25 submarines, 164 corvettes and frigates and 288 minesweepers: the balance of 339 was presumably made up of the Coastal Forces' MTBs, MGBs and Motor Launches, as well as many miscellaneous craft.

The extent to which affiliation was pursued by communities and ships varied considerably - some lost track immediately but others maintained very close links which have endured to the present.

WHY NOT TRY TO RE-ESTABLISH LINKS WITH YOUR SPONSORS?

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OLD SHIPS

Although so many years have passed
 Yet still in memory fine,
 I see her now and all my mates
 On that old grey ship of mine.
 Long gone indeed, she sails no more
 Except in memory fond,
 But still she lives within my mind
 Linked by a loving bond.
 Her messdecks crowded warm with life
 And posts of duty too,
 Ashore, afloat, she welded us
 Into a working crew.
 She shared our laughter and our tears
 Our happy times, our inward fears,
 But left within us, though gone lang syne,
 Fond memories, old ship of mine.

Bill Johnston.
 HMS Tracker.

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"U P S P I R I T S"
"THE TOT"

In days of Admiral Nelson,
 Or it may have been before,
 The Navy got it's heritage,
 It's custom and it's lore.
 Now, some of these were good things,
 And some of them were not,
 But they'll never find one to replace,
 The little "Daily Tot".

It isn't served haphazard,
 Like tea or even beer,
 But with pencil, book and water,
 And other useless gear.
 "Jack Dusty" and his "Winger",
 Perform a sacred rite,
 And brew a swill called "Two-and-one"
 On which to have a fight.

With bottle, jug and fanny,
 We muster at the shrine,
 "Get in line you"
 "That fanny's mine".
 Then with murmured incantations,
 Such as "Seven one and two",
 The High Priest and his Acolyte,
 Dispense the Holy Brew.

And when the seas are breaking over,
 And you feel you've had enough,
 When the Chief has dropped the "Taties",
 And his "Oppos" burnt the Duff.
 When your locker's full of hogwash,
 And your hammock's gone to pot,
 There's nowt twixt you and Davey,
 BUT THAT LITTLE DAILY TOT!

"R.R." N.Z.

Submitted by John Kenny.

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"NORTHERN LIGHT"

We now produce your quarterly magazine on a Sharp Word Processor - it has a built in 'Spelling Check', so now there will be no mis-spellings, at least thats what I thought - until I got 10 out of 10 with my little poem:

SPELLBOUND

I've got a spelling checker,
 It came with my W.P;
 It plainly marks four my revue
 Mistakes I cannot sea.
 I've run this poem threw it,
 I'm sure your pleased too no,
 Its letter perfect in it's weigh,
 My checker tolled me sew.

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EDITOR

THE SCAPA SAGA

THE START:

Scapa approximately 15miles x 8miles. In 1812recommended for Royal Navy use, but only used between 1908 - 1914 for gunnery practice. July 1914 Royal Navy moved in.

THE FIRST WORLD WAR:

May 1916. Fleet assembled and sailed for the Battle of Jutland.
June 1916. Lord Kitchener lost aboard H.M.S. Hampshire off Orkneys.
July 1916. Battleship H.M.S.Vanguard blew up in Scapa Flow following cordite combustion. More than 700 crew perished.
November 1918. 71 ships of the German Fleet started to surrender at Scapa.
June 1919. German Fleet scuttled.(Salvaging carried out during 1924 - 1939. Abandoned as a base in 1920.)

SECOND WORLD WAR:

1938. War approaching. Interest in Scapa renewed. Rosyth was also favoured but not accepted. The vulnerability of Holm Sound was recognised but no action was taken. (H.M.S. Royal Oak was a later victim).
April 1939. S.N.O. Scapa appointed. Lyness set up as main base. (At the peak 30,000 were stationed at Lyness).
14 October 1939. H.M.S. Royal Oak torpedoed. 800 perished, 400 were saved. Four -year building programme of Church Barriers commenced. Italian Chapel built on Lamb Holm during 1943.
17 October 1939. H.M.S. Iron Duke bombed and beached. H.M.S. Dunluce Castle main depot ship. H.M.S. Tyne became destroyer depot ship.

SOME HIGHLIGHTS:

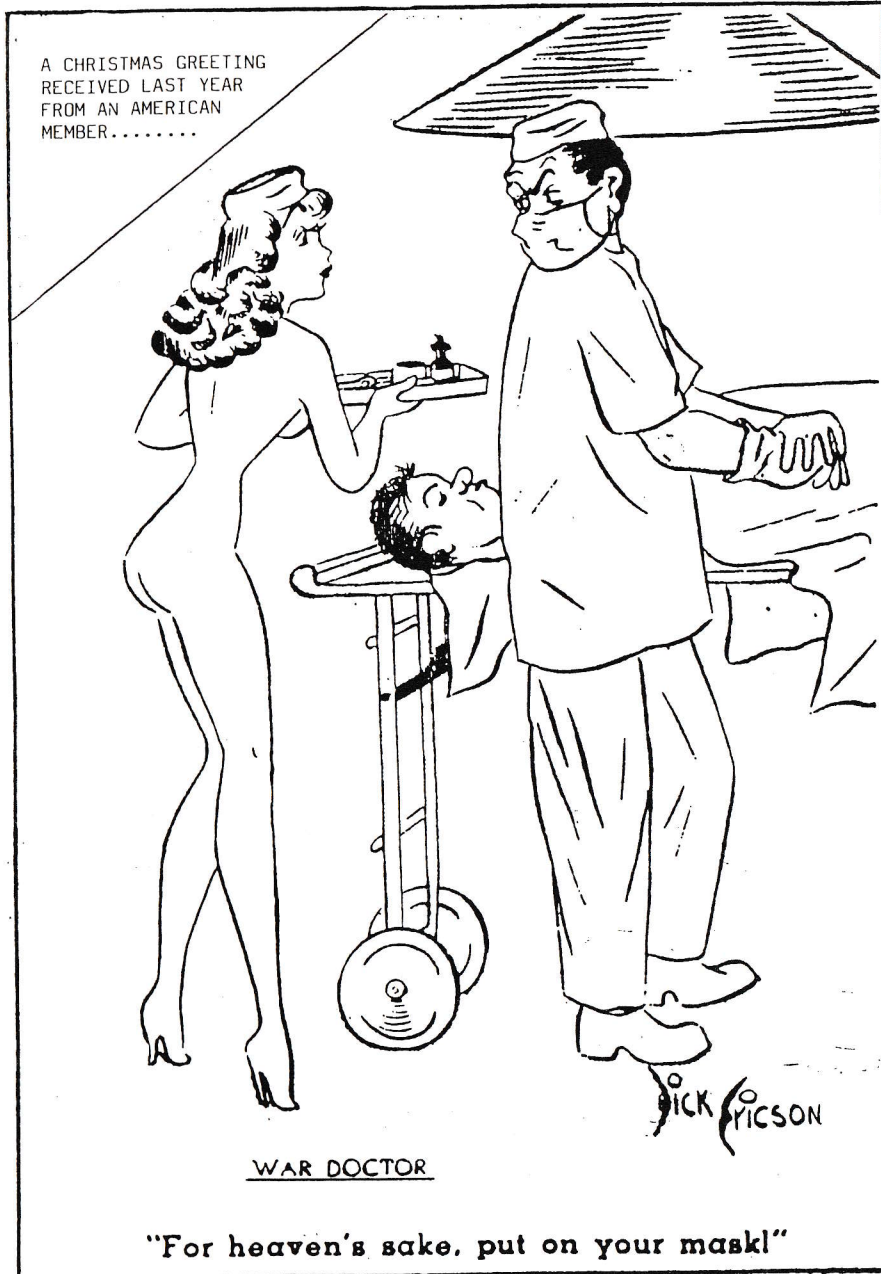
Flotta: Fleet Canteen - Tickets for Beer - "All In" opera - Theatre - NAAFI at Lyness.
Newspapers: "Orkney Blast" forces newspaper - "Outlook" Navy paper produced on H.M.S. Tyne.
Entrances: Hoxa - Battleships, carriers and larger ships: Switha: destroyers, corvettes, etc. Hoy - non-naval craft.
Drifters: More than 300 drifters served the fleet between 1939 and 1945. (Memories of humping kit bag and hammock across as many as a dozen of 'em.)
The "Jellicoes": 'Guzz' to London - 200 miles. Then 700 miles to Thurso, via Euston, Crewe and Carlisle (the last mailing point to avoid censorship. Or Kings Cross and Carstairs on the Eastern route. On either journey a corner seat was priceless. Then Thurso and a meal in the Town Hall. Then lorry for two-mile transport to Scrabster, three to five hour voyage depending on weather in Pentland Firth. Switha for Longhope and Lyness. Hoy and Stromness for mainland.
Service vessels: S.S. St Ninian, made more than 3,000 war crossings covering 100,000 miles, carrying more than 900,000 passengers. Broken up at Rosyth in 1948. S.S. Earl of Zetland was still in service in 1960s.

TWILIGHT TIME FOR SCAPA:

October 1944. Naval H.Q. Kirkwall closed down.
June 1945. Base generally run down.
29 March 1957. White Ensign lowered. Only one Boom Defence vessel present. Pipers played a lament. Paying Off pennant was 266 feet long. (One foot for every month in commission, plus the length of the ship - in this case taken as one of the M.F.Vs..
Museum now at Lyness.

JOHN KENNY,
ex-Edinburgh.

.....



A TRUE IRISH TALE

(Submitted by Doug Peel of Pompey, via Bill Ryan of Florida!)

Some time during WWII, Glen Miller and the U.S. Air Force Band were doing a few concerts over in the old Emerald Isle, where quite a few U.S. servicemen were stationed prior to D.Day.

At one village, where some of the local lads were allowed in to the concerts and dances, a young Irish lad came up to Glen and asked for a request number.

The conversation went something like this:-

Irish Lad: "Excuse me Mr. Miller, but will ye be after playing any request numbers for us this evenin'?"

Glen Miller: "Why certainly, we've already promised quite a few. What do you want us to play for you?"

Irish Lad: "Sure now, Oi'd loike ye to play PADDY ME BOY!"

The evening went on, and during the interval the Irish lad still had not heard his request played, so he went over and spoke to the great bandleader once more.

Irish Lad: "Say, Mr Miller, you'll not be playin' any requests after all then?"

Glen Miller: "Sure we are, we've already played eight for you boys"

Irish Lad: "Well, ye havn't played moine yet!"

Glen Miller: "Sorry - but we'll soon put that right - what was it again?"

Irish Lad: "Paddy Me Boy!"

Glen looked around at the boys in the band and asked, "Say, any of you guys know Paddy Me Boy?"

The boys in the band looked at each other and none had heard of it. "Well sir" said the bandleader "If you'll be good enough to hum us a few bars and maybe sing the words, we are bound to recognise it and we'll play it for you."

At this, the Irish lad gave a beautiful smile and burst forth into the song;

"Paddy Me Boy - is that the Chatanooga Choo Choo?"

End of Story

THE ROYAL NAVY SUBMARINE MUSEUM - GOSPORT

Why not visit this intriguing museum during 1993? The museum portrays the whole story of submariners and underwater warfare from the earliest days - way back in 1776 - to the present nuclear age; but, not surprisingly, the crucial years of World War II take pride of place.

Fortuitously, HMS/M ALLIANCE - the most popular attraction - blends wartime living conditions with post-war fire control equipment. Ex-submariner guides show visitors through the quite large submarine which dwarfs the Royal Navy's first 'submarine boat' HOLLAND I.

One of the tiny but deadly wartime British X-Craft is on display, together with an exhibition showing the strategic successes which midget submarines achieved - and the reminder that updated craft, whose primary task is still to penetrate enemy harbours, are on the march again.

The Submarine Museum is a signpost to the future as well as a memorial of the past. After all, history is only another word for experience - and nobody can sensibly look ahead without knowing what happened before.

If coming by rail, go to Portsmouth Harbour station and catch a regular ferry to Gosport, thence by bus or walk (about 12 minutes) to the Museum. Coming by car, head for Gosport (M27 Fareham Central exit) and then the A32 to Gosport following the numerous well-placed signs to ALLIANCE and the Submarine Museum. The Museum is open at 10 am every day except December 24 and 25 and January 1. Last tour - 3.30 pm (Nov/Mar) and 4.30 pm (Apr/Oct).

For further information contact Gus Britton (NRC member), at The Submarine Museum, HMS Dolphin, Gosport, Hants. PO12 2AS.

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DEPARTED SHIPMATES

We regret to announce that the following shipmates have "Crossed The Bar":

PURCHASE R.	of London	BELLONA
BUTTON L.	of Hunstanton	LONDON
FRERE L.	of Banstead	SS CHARINDA
PAGE C.	of Rosssshire	GOSSAMER
WEBB C.	of Hayling Island	REVENGE/STRIKER
WATSON	of Milton Keynes	KEPPEL

The above late shipmate's names were omitted from previous lists due to lack of information.

HENNESSEY E.	of Gardenstown	SS OLOPANA
LONG P.J.	of Eastleigh	LOCH DUNVEGAN
MARSHALL K.	of Nottingham	HUSSAR
MOORE F.J.E.	of Cheltenham	LIVERPOOL
WELLBELOVE	of Chelmsford	ORWELL
NELSON E.	of Buckingham	BERMUDA/BELFAST
FRY J.	of Ross-shire	SS HARMATRIS
PRITCHARD C.	of Natal, S. Africa	SHROPSHIRE
PIERRE J.	of Middlesborough	HYDERABAD
KENYON W.	of Wimborne	BOLTON CASTLE

MAY THEY REST IN PEACE



CHANGES OF ADDRESS

- Nº 227 D.COTTRELL (not Cotterell) to 15 Byside Road, Sidford, Sidmouth, Devon EX10 9NB.
- Nº 700 R.E.J.THAKA to 10 Blacksmiths Close, Trunch, Norfolk NR28 0QZ
- Nº 821 R.C.WILLIAMS to Flat 1, Neptune Court, Stocker Place, Bridgmary, Hants PO13 0MA
- Nº1123 L.HARTLEY to Branch 133, Legion Village ICO, 111 Hibernia Street, Coburg, Ontario, Canada K9A 4Y7.
- Nº1396 G.A.SEYMOUR to 39 Livingstone Road, Purewell, Christchurch, Dorset BH23 1HL.
- Nº 935 J.MCNULTY to 17 Gartness, Ballygrant, Isle of Islay, Argyll PA45 7QN.
- Nº 270 T.STEVENSON to Cromwell House, St Brannocks Road, Ilfracombe, Devon EX34 8EQ.
- Nº 558 G.MARSDEN to 18 St Marks Road, Burnham on Sea, Somerset TA7 2BB



I N W A R T I M E R U S S I A
Lieutenant R.A.Cobb, R.N.

(First published in 'The Communicator')

In January 1942, I took passage in the cruiser TRINIDAD to North Russia. On the way we had a foretaste of things to come when condensation formed a thick coat of ice on the inside of the hull. At Polyarnoe, the submarine base near Murmansk, a party consisting of 3 Lieutenants, 3 Signalmen and 3 Telegraphists (myself included), was selected to act as liaison staff on Russian ice-breakers. The icebreakers were to be employed in breaking out British Merchant ships frozen in at a small place called Molotovsk (I wonder if it still is) (see editor's note at end) in the southern part of the White Sea. To get to the icebreakers the party had to travel from Murmansk to Archangel by train. This meant a journey of some six days in a carriage with wooden seats, the backs of which lifted to become the top bunks: no cooking facilities and only one very primitive lavatory. Fortunately we had the whole carriage to ourselves, or we did until one of the party (a school teacher in peace time) who wished to learn Russian, allowed some of the local populace in to help him with his studies. This had some advantages, however, for they showed us how to rush out to make tea at the huge cauldrons of boiling water to be found at every station. They also managed to have our carriage coupled to the ends of a goods train for the journey along the line joining the Murmansk-Leningrad route to the Archangel-Moscow one. As this was single track with loop passing places, and all goods trains had absolute priority for the war effort, it might have been a very slow part of the trip. In the end we managed to arrive in a record three days.

Eventually we boarded the icebreakers LENIN, STALIN and LITKE where the whole party was given wardroom status, as the conditions on the messdecks would have been difficult. The LENIN and STALIN were massive, broad beamed ships with square-tipped propeller blades and reinforced bows. They were used as enormous battering rams and were fitted with a third propeller forward which was used to create a suction under the ice, and so let the bows break through when they rode up at the end of the charge. The LITKE (the only one of the three under the National Flag) was a converted yacht with reinforced bows, and termed an Ice-Cutter. The usual procedure was for the LENIN (as Senior Officer) to break the channel followed by two merchant ships, then STALIN with a further two and finally the LITKE ready to go to the assistance of any that stuck - which they frequently did. While we were under way, the Captain of the LENIN would spend a lot of time in the crow's nest, looking for the best route. At night the convoy would simply stop and freeze in, then the whole laborious business of breaking them free would start again next morning.

The food on board consisted of watery soup, black bread, a heavy porridge-like substance made from course grain and occasionally some very tough meat (which we christened 'Yak'). The communication equipment was rather antiquated. There were two Radio Officers, neither of whom spoke English, so we conversed by signs and the Q Code.

Having completed the trip we returned to Archangel W/T. There we helped to man the Fixed Services to Admiralty and Murmansk and the Port Wave, when required. Our equipment consisted of Type 52's and 5G's with B28 receivers. Later we used Army transmitters and even obtained an SWB 8. The latter had to be sited at the Russian transmitting station and wave-changing became a very difficult process. This was achieved by the passing of certain Russian words over a field telephone to the non-English speaking Engineer at the Radio station. If he only half completed the job, chaos ensued while we attempted to sort things out in pidgen Russian. It was a major operation for the C.P.O.Tel. to go and carry out routine maintenance.

Power supplies varied considerably according to the time of day or night, and cuts were frequent, in order to save wood, which was the only fuel available. To stock up supplies for the winter, a party would be sent up river in summer to cut down trees. These would be formed into large rafts and floated down to

Archangel where everyone in town was obliged to spend a week or fortnight hauling them out and stacking them on the beaches. This naturally went on for as long as possible and even when the river was starting to freeze, women would be working up to their waists in water, dragging the logs ashore. Food, too, was scarce, especially in the winter of 1941/42. The average daily ration consisted of approximately two inches of black bread and some watery soup. This could be supplemented by donating blood at one of the hospitals for food coupons which were given in exchange. This enabled the donor to obtain extra tea or butter when available. We were more fortunate, as naval rations were available to us, or we could go to the 'Interclub' for a meal used by visiting merchant seamen. No matter where one went on the evening one eye had to be kept on the clock, as there was a strict curfew from midnight to 4 a.m., and anyone found on the streets was in for a very uncomfortable night. Police supervision was strict, for during the curfew hours a section of the town would be cordoned off and a house to house search made. The variation of temperature in the year was enormous - from a warm 70° to 80° in the summer, when one could swim in the river, to a very cold 40° below, when a three-ton lorry could be driven across it. Indeed this was the only way to get to the railway station in winter but the most exciting trips took place when the thaw set in. Then it was a case of going as fast as possible in order to spread the weight, with no thought of being helpful to the poor unfortunate whose lorry was slowly sinking through the ice. Because of the climatic conditions all personnel should have returned to give visas for reliefs, so most of us stayed about two years.

Editor's note: Molotovsk is now known as Sverodvinsk and is a modern Arctic town of 300,000 people. After the war it became the centre of the Soviet nuclear submarine building programme. It is now suffering a similar recession as Barrow in Furness!!

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JACK DUSTY'S SLOPS

We are now holding a good stock of memorabilia etc., including a couple of new items. Get them from Jack Dusty now!! A reminder of his address:-
Shipmate Sid Bateman, 70 Nickleby House, All Saints Road, Portsmouth PO1 4EL.

- NEW ITEMS:** KEY RINGS with leather fob and N.R.C. badge: £2.00 each.
N.R.C.COASTERS (4 in presentation box. Blue or Maroon) Leather & cork bonded 3¼ x 3¼ with N.R.C. motif printed in gold. £2.50 per box
Book "CONVOYS TO RUSSIA" 104 pages, fully illustrated. Book of reference. £10.00 each.
SOVIET 40TH ANNIVERSARY MEDAL MINIATURE. at price fixed by supplier £8.25 + £1.25 p + p.
- STOCK ITEMS** NRC ENAMELLED BROOCH BADGE £3.00 each
PLASTIC MEDAL HOLDERS £1.00 ""
BLUE NOSE CERTIFICATE £6.00 ""
UK/RUSSIAN FEDERATION FLAG BADGE £1.50 ""
TIE (Printed motif) £6.00 ""
BLAZER BADGE £8.50 ""
BERET BADGE £5.00 ""

A donation towards postage would be appreciated with mailed orders.

- MORE NEW ITEMS:** SLIM POCKET DIARIES: Club logo gold printed on grained cover. Gilded edges, two gilt corners, ribbon marker. 15pp information. 16pp U.K. road maps. Excellent value £3.50 plus p + p.
BONDED LEATHER KEY CASES: Club logo gold printed, three fold, 6 hook, press stud closure. £2.00 each.

WELCOME ABOARD TO NEW MEMBERS
(Enrolled since 1 August 1992.)

- 1591. LUKE A.A. H.M.S.Glasgow.
21 Ashmead Road, Maybush, Southampton, Hants SO1 6DJ.
- 1592. PICK William. H.M.S.Cambrian.
58 Butler Court, Gunson Street, Miles Platting, Manchester M10 7WU.
- 1593. WILLIAMS Edwin. H.M.S.Volunteer.
74 Farrar Road, Bangor, Gwynedd LL57 2DU.
- 1594. WILSON J.
9 Goedon Terrace, Ross-shire, Scotland IV18 0BU.
- 1595. OSLER J. R.F.A.Aldersdale.
149 Monreith Road East, Glasgow, Scotland G44 3DF.
- 1596. KLAUSER William K.
403 Knottwood Lane, Naples, Florida 33962-7245, U.S.A.
- 1597. CAMPBELL G. S.S.Hoosier.
2320 Becridge Road, #58, Saracosta, Florida 34239, U.S.A.
- 1598. SCHRETTER E.A.
2305 Aason Street, Villa Lane South, Port Charlotte, Florida 33952, USA.
- 1599. MILLWARD Harold A. H.M.S/M Taku.
39 Marion Murdoch Court, Queens Avenue, Gedling, Northumberland N94 4DH.
- 48. TURNER E. H.M.S.Walker.
28 Peterdale Drive, Penn, Wolverhampton, West Midlands WV4 5NZ.
- 1600. FOOTE Phillip J. H.M.S.Rodney.
12 Ian-Y-Bryn, Penclawdd, Swansea SA4 3XP.
- 1601. FAIRLEY Robert. S.S.Scythia.
230 11th Street West, Owen Sound, Ontario, Canada N4K 3S6.
- 1602. EDWARDS James. H.M.S.Kent.
Leander, Cowgate Lane, Hawkinge, Folkestone, Kent CT18 7AR.
- 1603. HUDSON Fred W. S.S.Empire Lawrence/Empire Windrush.
5 Shorrocks Avenue, St Michaels on Wyre, Preston, Lancs PR3 0TL.
- 1604. PAGE Fred. H.M.S.Tartar.
3 Kestrel Avenue, Clifton, Gt.Manchester M27 2JL.
- 1605. MANTLE Richard W. H.M.S.Myngs.
7 West Road, Halesowen, West Midlands B63 2US.
- 1606. YOUNG Albert E. H.M.S.Glasgow.
20 Jupiter Close, Lordshill, Southampton SO1 8BP.
- 1607. ANDERSON Frank. H.M.S.Jamaica.
Flat 6, 52 Bell Street, Glasgow G1 1LQ, Scotland.
- 1608. GIBBS D.G. SS PAUL HAMILTON HAYNE
8802 S.Losseliz Drive, Temple, Arizona 85284-3430, U.S.A.
- 1609. MACALVANAH Robert. S.S.John Langdon.
1779 N.E. 39th Court 1104, Dondano Beach, Florida 33064-6061, U.S.A.
- 1610. PYE John J. H.M.S.Marne.
2 Teal Court, Peterhead, Aberdeenshire AB42 6WW.
- 1611. Grossman Jack. H.M.S.Kenya.
11 Brownlow Court, Brownlow Road, New Southgate, London N11 2BH.
- 1612. MILLS Dudley J. H.M.S.Cassandra.
35 Nutley Avenue, Saltdean, Brighton BN2 8ED, Sussex.
- 1613. MARTIN James. H.M.S.Sheffield.
11816 Mentone Road, Siver Spring, Maryland, 20906 U.S.A.
- 1614. GALVIN John H. S.S. EMPIRE LIONEL
44 Bristol Avenue, Bispham, Blackpool FY2 0JE
- 1615. CARTER Charles W.MBE H.M.S.CASSANDRA
41 Fulwell Road, Teddington, Middlesex TW11 0RH
- 1616 TULLY Leslie H.M.S.MERMAID
31 Harewood Court, Willbury Road, Hove, Sussex BN33GJ
- 1617 PEARSON Victor C. H.M.S.BLANKNEY
96 Malcolm Road, Lurgan, Craigavon, Co.Armagh, N.Ireland BT66 3DG
- 1618 JACQUES Alfred E. H.M.S.PREMIER
61 Holcombe Drive, Llandridod Wells, Powys LD1 6DN
- 1619. LYONS P.J. H.M.S.ZEALOUS
13 Upper Baptist Street, Holyhead, North Wales LL65 1SL.

WELCOME ABOARD (Continued)

- 1620 PARK Joseph W.C. S.S.RIVER AFTON
3 Burnbank Terrace, Kilsyth, Glasgow G65 0AE
- 1621 ASHLEY GRIFITH W B 134 SQDN 151 WING R.A.F.
Anchor House, Spa Common, North Walsham, Norfolk NR28 9AJ
- 1622 BARROW Stanley J H M S SOMALI/MARNE
69 Heathwood Road Cardiff S Wales CF4 4JN
- 1623 HUGILL Stanley H M S. BERWICK
30 Deerpool Close Hartlepool. Cleveland TS24 0TD
- 1624 MARSLAND John W E 134 SQDN 151 WING R A F
South Lodge. Stanfield Hall, Wymondham. Norfolk NR18 9RJ

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AMENDMENTS TO MEMBERSHIP LIST

- Nº 161. GREEN FShip KEPPEL (not SWIFT)
- Nº 213. FRENCH JPost Code is CO7 0AN
- Nº 250. MITCHENALL S.....Ship CUMBERLAND (not PARTRIDGE)
- Nº 255. HOWELL H.....Ship SS FRANCONIA (not OBEDIENT)
- Nº 639. HORNE A.D.....Ship add VINDEX
- Nº 655. HOWES A.R.....Delete R.A.F add F.A.A.
- Nº 721. BAKER G.....Ship BEVERLEY (not VINDEX)
- Nº 755. MACMANNAWAY L.....Title is Canon L. MACMANNAWAY
- Nº 866. RILEY J.H.....Ship LOTUS (not MYNGS)
- Nº 885. CRAIG D.B.....Ship DOVER HILL (not DOVER HALL)
- Nº 1111. NIXON L.A.....Initials are L.A. not L.H.
- Nº 1356. CARTER R.A.....Unit/Ship 813 Sqdn.F.A.A. CAMPANIA (not R.A.F.)
- Nº 1361. AUSTIN R.H.....Address BORDEN LANE (not BORDER LANE)
- Nº 1364. CAMP R.A.....Ships WALPOLE/SHEFFIELD/BELLONA
- Nº 1367. BASHFORD F.V.....R.A.F.151 WING 134 SQDN. (delete ships)
- Nº 1438. DENISEWICZ J.....Address CANDACE STREET (not CANADA STREET)

Please amend your Membership Lists accordingly

A MESSAGE FROM OUR MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY: Our membership losses since March 1st 1992 have been 22 "Crossed the Bar" and 26 membership defaulters, and these figures have been well covered by our new membership, which now stands at 1322.

I hope that you all have received your copy of the new membership list and will keep it up to date with the publication of changes in each edition of Northern Light. There are some minor mistakes so if you find one, please dont complain to your "oppo" - tell me and the necessary correction will appear in the next edition of our magazine.

Next, may I please remind all members that it helps if you always include your membership number in any correspondence to members of the committee. Finally, may I wish you all a Very Happy Christmas and a Healthy, Prosperous and Successful New Year. I hope to greet you all again next year.



S T O P P R E S S

H.M.S,COTTON & 18TH/19TH GROUP REUNION at Southport on 3rd/4th September 1993. Crews of all ships of these groups plus all vessels from Convoy JW66 (the last Eastbound convoy before V-E Day) are welcome to attend. Included are other escorts of convoy - GOODALL, ANGUILLA, DIADEM, BELLONA, LOCH INCH, LOCH SHIN, CYGNET, HONEYSUCKLE, PREMIER, etc., etc. Further details from LEN HAYDOCK, YEW TREE COTTAGE, 94 GRIMSHAW LANE, ORMSKIRK, LANCS L39 1PE Tel:0695 577944.

HELP!! BRAVERY AWARDS: Excerpts from a letter seeking information.....
....."The reason for my request is that I have Gallantry Medals awarded to members of the ship's company of STARWORT (DSM and Campaign Medals of Petty Officer Joseph Elliott D/J 107563) and of ULSTER QUEEN (DSM and Campaign Medals of Assistant Steward Albert Edward Green). The DSMs were awarded for service in PQ16 and PQ18 respectively and I am trying to obtain as much information about each man and the circumstances of the award.

I trust that you do not mind my approach.
Lieut.Cmdr. Ivor Howcroft RD* RNR (Rtd), Barrowby House, Hindon Lane, Tisbury, Salisbury, Wilts SP3 6PZ. (Tel:0747 870286).
Replies & information direct to Lieut Cmdr Howcroft please.

ORDINARY NAVAL AIRMEN

by Jim Spencer

Foreword by Vice Admiral Sir Donald Gibson, KCB, DSC, JP

Do not mistake this book for yet another, somewhat belated autobiography. An entertaining autobiography it may be, but it is no tale of derring-do. The author was just an ordinary F.A.A. pilot, one of those of the title. He tells how he trained as a pilot and then flew from Escort Aircraft Carriers accompanying convoys to Russia and striking the enemy hard in Norway. But the biography is only a framework for the author to establish his credentials for a devastating attack on the establishment of the R.A.F. for failing to adopt the technique of dive-bombing.

The author was trained as a dive-bomber pilot by the U.S. Navy, one of the foremost practitioners of the art, and this opened his eyes to the accuracy of this method of bombing. In 1941 Winston Churchill wrote to the Chief of Air Staff saying; "The policy of the Air Ministry in neglecting the dive-bomber type of aircraft is shown by all experience to have been a grievous error, and one for which we are paying dearly." When the reader has read the author's case against the R.A.F.'s continuing 'not-invented-here' attitude to dive-bombers stronger words than Churchill's might come to mind. "Bloody minded obstinacy!"

In a controversial final section of the book the author contrasts the publicity given to the exploits of the R.A.F. during WW2 with that given to the F.A.A. For example, how many people realise that post-war records show that in defence of one Russian convoy the guns of the ships and the fighters from the escorting carrier destroyed almost as many aircraft as the R.A.F. did on 15 September 1940? He does not raise these issues in a spirit of narrow inter-service rivalry, he has been out of the Navy too long, and is too critical of the 'Battle Ship' mentality of some Admirals for that.....

Jim Spencer, who is a member of North Russia Club (Membership No.720), says "We might be able to put together a special offer for N.R.C. members". So, if you would be interested in purchasing a copy, why not let him know? His phone number is Ascot (0344) 23983.

ROYAL AIR FORCE AND FLEET AIR ARM STORIES, REPORTS AND PHOTOGRAPHS
REQUIRED FOR NEXT EDITION. COPY TO EDITOR BY 15 JANUARY PLEASE.
