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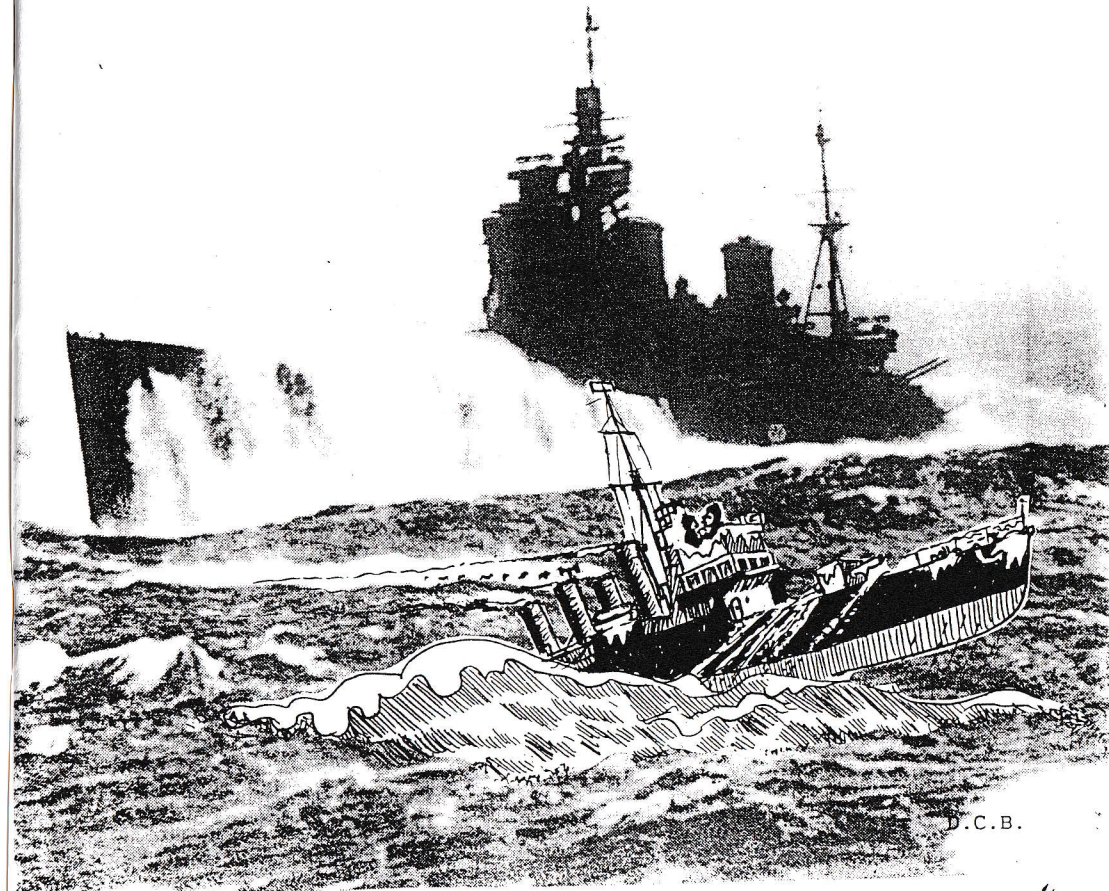
6/94

JUNE 1994

ISSN 0958 1014

NORTHERN LIGHT No37

"BIG SHIPS"



D.C.B.

"THIS WEATHER MUST BE HELL FOR THE C.I.N.C., NOBBY"

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North Russia Club

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**EDITOR'S MESSAGE:** This latest edition of Northern Light was intended to be a "Big Ships" Special. But, due to a shortage of articles and letters, the "Small Ships" lads have had to come to the rescue. A rather unkind committee member has suggested that, "They did so much letter writing during the war that they suffered from R.P.I. (Repetitive Stress Injury) and have had no counselling for it. I dont believe it, they are probably holding back to see what their oppos have written.

The highlight in this edition is, I am sure, the report that the mystery of the sole BLUEBELL survivor has been solved and in a most gratifying way.

The next edition will include a number of world-wide press reports and cuttings and if any of you can supply more, I would like to receive them by mid July. Photocopies will suffice if you do not feel inclind to release the original.

You will notice that several kinds of type font are used in this edition. This is due to changing our word processor in mid-stream. Should any of you feel that a certain font is easier on your eyes please let me know. Good news to those with very bad eyesight - we have experimented with an Audio Tape Edition during the past few months with very encouraging reports. So we are now ready to put the scheme into action. Please let me know if you are interested.

**CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE:** Firstly, may I sincerely thank you all for your wonderful support of the Grand Spring Draw - our Memorial & Welfare Fund now looks much healthier. We cannot yet produce the final balance sheet as there are a few outstanding items to settle with prize winners - air fares, prizes not yet claimed, etc. A detailed Financial Statement will be available soon.

We are now pushing ahead with the Sponsored Parachute Jump and a collection form is enclosed with this edition. Our volunteer 'submariner sky diver' has stated that all proceeds should go to the needs of distressed members and their dependants, widows, etc. We will be pleased to comply with this request. But, I must stress that despite committee's suggestion, I WILL NOT be doing a Sponsored Bungie Jump at Canary Wharf! What!! give the President the opportunity to cut the elastic - never!!

Recently, the officers held the Annual Liaison Meeting with officials of the Russian Convoy Club. This meeting was mainly to discuss avenues whereby the two clubs can co-operate to everyones advantage. Mainly, in similar ways to last year's cruise to Norway and Russia on m.v.RUSS, and the previous "Dervish" visit to Murmansk and Archangel.

Our local reunions continue to be popular and we hope that many more of you can participate in events at new venues as well as the established "do's" in London, Pompey, Guzz, Frome, Blackpool, Margate, Folkestone, Northampton, Liverpool and Jersey.

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### GRAND SPRING DRAW - ALL THE WINNERS!

- No 1: JERSEY HOLIDAY . 40660 MRS J WILLIMORE, DELMEDE, NORTH STREET,  
SUTTON VALANCE, KENT.
- No 2: GOZO HOLIDAY 17057 GEORGETTE SHORT, 100 THISTLE STREET,  
DUNFIRMLINE, FIFE KY12 0JA.
- No 3: BODDELWYDEN 20521 MRS E.MOORE, 28 ROSE AVENUE, WHITBY,  
CASTLE HOLIDAY NORTH YORKSHIRE, YO21 3JA.
- No 4: RUSSIAN SEASCAPE 19934 M.STUART, 14 WARNER ROAD, WORTHING,  
OIL PAINTING SUSSEX
- No 5: ROYAL DOULTON 36240 A.J.JENKINS, 3 DEVON CLOSE, RAINHAM,  
GLASSES KENT ME7 7LJ.
- No 6: HALF LAMB 41871 G.K.WICKHAM, 10 ORACLE DRIVE, CROOKHORN  
(Starboard) WATERLOOVILLE, HANTS PO7 8BG.
- No 7: HALF LAMB 18985 A DUNRIDGE, 11 LATIMER ROAD, CARTERTON,  
(Port) OXON, OX18 3SE.
- No 8: SWEDISH GLASS 26579 PHIL LANCETT, TRINCOMALEE, WHERBY LANE  
TANKARD PRESTEIGNE, POWYS, LD8 2DP.
- No 9: PERSONALISED 12517 MR B SMITH, 217 KENYON WAY, LITTLE  
STATIONERY HULTON, WORSLEY, MANCHESTER M38 9DT.
- No 10: A.C.M.T. GIFT 40729 MRS G WESTCOTT, 7 SEABURN ROAD, TOTON,  
PACK BEESTON, NOTTINGHAM, NG9 6HT.
- No 11: LIFE MEMBERSHIP 08012 MR G J GILROY, 6 BARNABY TERRACE,  
OF N.R.C. ROCHESTER, KENT.
- No 12: BOTTLE OF RUM 35089 D.BLAKE, 6 FAIRCROSS CLOSE, HOLBURY,  
HANTS SO4 1HF.
- No 13: BOTTLE OF WHISKY 11363 R.FOWKES, 18 GRANGE ROAD, HUGGLESCOTE,  
LEICESTER LE67 2BQ.
- No 14: BOTTLE OF RUM 42916 JOHN TOWNEND, ROSEVALE COTTAGE,  
ST JOHN'S ROAD, SCARBOROUGH YO12 5ES.
- No 15: BOTTLE OF WHISKY 32573 Ms C. McDONOUGH, 83 DEACROFT, CHEDDAR  
CLOSE, WOOLTON, LIVERPOOL L25
- No 16: BOTTLE OF RUM 04373 PAM PADDINGTON TEL 0703 454125.
- No 17: BOTTLE OF WHISKY 00586 A.W.ELLIS, 48 ST CLEMENTS COURT,  
HIGHFIELD RD. KETTERING, NORTHANTS
- No 18: FRAMED WATER 37389 K.T.PRITCHARD, 55 MILMRAD ROAD,  
COLOUR MARGATE, KENT.

THANK YOU ALL FOR YOUR GENEROUS SUPPORT.

### CROSSED THE BAR

MAY THEY REST IN PEACE

WE REGRET TO ANNOUNCE THAT THE FOLLOWING SHIPMATES HAVE PASSED ON TO A HIGHER SERVICE.

H.P.ROGERS	of London N14	SCOURGE
O HAVARD	of Telford	N.P.100
H.J.WALSHAM	of London E1	VIGILANT
J.CUNNICK	of Portsmouth	134 SQDN RAF
L.HARTLEY	of Ontario	LONDON
J.E.STENTON	of Seaton	ONSLow
K.SHORT	of Oxford	VINDEx

+++++

JOHN CUNNICK No.203. 134 (F) SQUADRON R.A.F.

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FOR JOHN'S FUNERAL WE PROVIDED OUR R.A.F. ENSIGN AS THE COFFIN DRAPE. OUR STANDARD WAS PARADED IN COMPANY WITH THE BURMA STAR STANDARD. A BUGLER WAS ALSO IN ATTENDANCE. OUR WELFARE OFFICER PLACED A POPPY WREATH. SIX N.R.C. MEMBERS AND TWO WIVES ATTENDED.

Sid Bateman.

WE ARE SPECIALLY ASKED TO THANK JACK AND BETTY CLARKE WHO DROVE 160 MILES ROUND TRIP TO PARADE THE STANDARD.

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#### SICK VISITING

We occasionally have reason to visit shipmates who are ill, disabled or lonely, and we are drawing up a list of able bodied members who are prepared to visit unfortunate shipmates in their area. If you are able and willing to help, please contact the Hon. Secretary or Welfare Officer - their addresses and phone numbers are on page 2.



## Solving the "BLUEBELL SURVIVOR" Mystery. "MIRACLES SOMETIMES HAPPEN"

Compiled by Don Kirton with updates by the survivor Albert "Sherlock" Holmes.

(1) At approx 2030 on 12 February, 1994, just as the previous edition of Northern Light had gone to print, Paul Kavanagh answered his telephone in Sheringham. The caller was Albert E.G.Holmes, P/JX 217490, of Millbrook, Southampton. After many years we had found him.

(2) Albert, had met a couple from Norwich, whilst cruising last year with his wife. The Norwich couple had read the article in Eastern Express regarding the meeting with Captain Lange of U711 and noted that the one survivor could not be traced. A few phone calls later and the mystery was solved and we can now give first hand news from Albert, the subject of our enquiries.

(3) Paul Kavanagh contacted Don Kirton at 2100 that evening and was virtually incoherent with excitement and within the hour Albert had held conversations with the two investigators. He did not understand how we felt about this 'miracle' that had occurred making him in our eyes something of a hero. One of the first questions that Don put to Albert was, "Why did ZEST not stop to pick you up initially"? Albert's reply was, "ZEST's job was the protection of the convoy and possible destruction of the enemy". A typical stoical response by a man of that era immediately after a shocking experience.

(4) The story commenced with Mr Alan Marchant of Cornwall who wrote to Navy News for information regarding the sinking of BLUEBELL and anybody who knew his brother Coder Marchant, killed on that fateful day 17 February, 1944. Several ex-Bluebellians and members of other ships present wrote in and many of these were photocopied in addition to Admiralty reports, etc. Much of this material was published in our last edition.

(5) (Editor's comment): Don Kirton says, "We based our story on the available information and any errors in our guesswork have now been rectified, except for one query - Who was the man in cells on BELLONA? We shall not rest until this is settled" We now know the name of this rating who was an Able Seaman, but as the Public Records Office refuse to release these details we are seeking them from other sources.

(6) And now the survivor's own comments - "On 17 February, 1945, at approx 1530 BLUEBELL, from whatever cause, exploded and sank. I was not, as has been suggested, "rocketed" into the sea by the force of the explosion. This is a far too dramatic description of what happened. I simply grabbed the nearest piece of BLUEBELL's safety rail in close proximity to a 20mm Oerlikon placed just under the Pom Pom mounting on the port quarter and as BLUEBELL vibrated violently as a result of the explosion, I simply covered my face and eyes with my left hand as protection against the blast and heat of the explosion and quietly entered the water.

I was wearing my one-piece Kapok lining but I cannot recall wearing an outer cover of oilskins - the temperature was far too low for this type of clothing. I could have been wearing a Duffel coat

plus a semi-inflated "Mae West" together with survival torchlight. My leather sea-boots remained on my feet during my descent until I realised that, being full of water, they were of no further use to me - in fact they were a liability. Being a couple of sizes too big they were no problem to kick off and having done so I became aware that my descent had slowed to nought and very soon began to ascend to the surface leaving behind weird sub-aqua sounds of twisting and buckling metal - there were no further explosions. Upon surfacing there was an area of oil, smoke and something still burning - I quickly swam from this offensive source - at this time I took the opportunity to fully inflate my "Mae West" (a very sensible Naval instruction!), check that I was all in one piece and then investigated the near presence of some of my shipmates - Remember all of this happened in a very short space of time - It is of some interest and mystery to me why reports made by eye-witnesses of BLUEBELL's sinking have described her end as a "Blinding Flash" leaving nothing to be seen. I have very vivid memories of the whole of K80's Focslie from the Bridge Bow-high at approx 45 degrees sliding gently backwards to find her final resting place - this was a very sad moment knowing that so many of her crew were trapped in that area..

Of those shipmates I saw whilst in the water only three were alive - Captain G.H. Walker who said he was alright but remarked that we needed to be picked up quickly - Lieutenant Walton who was quite chirpy, but did complain about his legs. Petty Officer Bill Stockwell had suffered head injuries from which he died almost immediately. A.B.Greenslade was seen by me to be floating face downwards and after identifying him he floated away. Later, I was surprised to learn that Captain G.H.Walker had not survived.

At the time ZEST returned I was conscious, but having seen her and shouted "Boat Ahoy" I then lost consciousness and remember nothing whatsoever of the rescue operation. I only became aware that I was still alive when I regained consciousness to find I was aboard ZEST.

(7) One of the whaler's crew who rescued Albert was T.V.Blanchard. He appears to have wonderful memories of the events and recalls the rescue rope, to haul Albert aboard ZEST slipping or breaking and immersing Albert once again. The constant care offered by ZEST's Surgeon Lieutenant (we believe his name was Cunningham), Albert is sure, saved his life. This officer worked on and cared for him for days, making sure that the trauma and exposure did not prove fatal. Albert was interviewed by Lieutenant Commander Hicks, C.O. of ZEST, but does not agree with his remarks in the C.O.'s report regarding piping action stations. The efforts of the Surgeon Lieutenant were rewarded, by Albert presenting him with his sole remaining possession - his pocket knife! In the circumstances a wonderful gesture of gratitude. It would appear that ZEST's report was sufficient inquiry regarding the sinking. Though Albert was interviewed by two Admiralty gentlemen whilst in hospital in Aberdeen. In the next bed to Albert was Neville Lee, HFDF Telegraphist from DENBIGH CASTLE.

(8) Albert is now a member of the North Russia Club and the Flower Class Corvettes Association.

(9) The Hon. Treasurer of the Russian Convoy Club, Walter M. Hicks, spoke to Albert during his short stay on ZEST, but Albert cannot recall this conversation.

(10) Albert is the father of six children, three girls and three boys! What more can we say, other than he must have a wonderful wife.

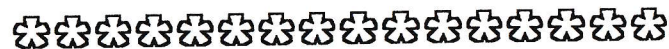
END OF STORY BAR LOOSE ENDS!

DON KIRTON.

Editor's summing up: Several other members wrote on specific points of the last edition's story. Some on the sinking of U711 by F.A.A.Squadrons 846 and 853, others defending the good name of Torpedo Coxswain Bill Stockwell who died on BLUEBELL, notably a moving letter from George Makie (No390) - an excerpt reads - "Regarding the character of P.O. Stockwell I can assure you he was a very popular young man, ambitious and very efficient. He was in no way over fond of the "Bubbly" as he had too much to lose and so much to look forward to. My sole reason for writing is to clear any doubt over Bill Stockwell. He cannot speak for himself and I would hate to think of anyone getting the wrong idea about the character of the man himself".

It is good that the mystery has been solved and many buzzes, accusations, innuendo and fallacies have been cleared away. The Admiralty did a good cover-up job on BELLONA's prisoner, but this threw suspicion on other members of BLUEBELL's ships company.

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### DENBIGH CASTLE & BLUEBELL

A letter from K. Taylor.

"I read with interest in the Northern Light of the last hours of BLUEBELL. I was a young Ordinary Seaman on DENBIGH CASTLE which, after we were torpedoed were picked up by BLUEBELL and taken to Vaengal

The last we saw of DENBIGH CASTLE (bows under) was being towed by a Russian tug - not as stated, by BLUEBELL.

We were then all transferred to bigger ships, I took passage home aboard NAIRANA. You could imagine our horror, when people coming off watch, told us that BLUEBELL 'had gone up in smoke'.

I must add that DENBIGH CASTLE's 'Hero of the Hour' during this episode was our Sick Bay Tiffy, who continued to tend the wounded even though the ship was on end and liable to sink at any moment.

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## "BIG SHIPS" BATTLEWAGONS - FLAT TOPS & "COUNTY CLASS" CRUISERS

THE LIFE OF A ROYAL MARINE ABOARD "KING GEORGE V"

OCTOBER 1940 TO FEBRUARY 1944

By Aubrey Wm. Ellis (No.733)

The Home Fleet Flagship that was almost TOWED home from the BISMARK action through fuel shortage - Churchill's signal 26-27 May 1941 to Admiral Tovey C-in-C. (QUOTE) "BISMARK must be sunk at all costs and if to do this it is necessary for KING GEORGE V to remain on the scene, then she must do so, even if it subsequently means towing KGV". We reached Scapa safely via Loch Ewe, where we refueled. Admiral Tovey lost no time in phoning the First Sea Lord, Admiral Pound, to vent his feelings of anger at such a signal. The BISMARK action which is now legendary, and so successful, with the massive British Fleet which were engaged, and the final destruction of BISMARK. Such a loss of both British and German seamen and we must salute each and every one.

However, I joined KGV on her first commission with many of the ships company, travelling overnight by special train from Portsmouth to Newcastle on October 1st 1940 and she was to be my life and home until February 1944. Months were spent working up, gunnery trials etc. joining the Home Fleet on December 11th 1940. Captain W.Patterson CVO being our first Captain. I trained and was interested in gunnery, obtaining a QR3 rating, later progressing to QR2. So therefore my action station was i/c one of "Y" Turret's shell rooms. One of our first assignments was escorting Lord Halifax to the American port of Annapolis in January, as Britain's ambassador to America. President Roosevelt hoped to come aboard but decided to sail round us in his yacht POTAMIC. We were told that there were 2,000 young ladies on shore waiting to show us round. Unfortunately only one part of a watch was allowed ashore, just for a few hours. Naturally, I was one of the unlucky ones. We sailed the next day, escorting a convoy of 24 tankers back home.

A few weeks later we were to provide cover for Operation Claymore, a commando raid on the Lofoten islands, the object was to destroy the fish oil factories, a complete success.

We did two more trips to Halifax, Nova Scotia to escort home-ward bound convoys, and I remember a short leave ashore in Halifax being met by two charming young girls who took us, my friend and I, shopping in about two foot of snow, then back home to listen to a speech by President Roosevelt and a nice meal. I still remember Dorothy Moran of Garrick Street

On April 1st 1941 Admiral John Tovey came aboard making KGV Flagship of the Home Fleet: We spent so much of our time in and out of Scapa. You all know the heavenly names we were called and I swear that the ship used to rise so much out of the water with the amount of 'Herrings In' that used to go through the portholes at breakfast. We all had runs ashore to our wonderful Flotta Canteen, but not being too much of a drinking man, most times we walked the fields and talked to the sheep. There were wonderful shows if you could hear the stars

and few will remember George Formby, Frances Day and Beatrice Lillie and other E.M.S.A. stars. Our Royal Marine Band was also a great feature, as they were on board, very often accompanying our own stars - Bobby Ragan, Arthur Lane, Ernie Rigby, Tony Moore, etc. etc. who were always producing shows in our hangar for our, and other ships companies to enjoy, Bobby a Granada Circuit organist, died in 1992, my wife and I attended his 80th birthday celebrations at Worthing. Ernie is 88-89 and still entertains old folks in the Portsmouth area. After the shows at Flotta Canteen I was always amazed by the 'lighters' which used to return the ratings back to their ships, all having a whale of a time, but on reaching the Gangway where the Officer of the Watch and I, Corporal of the Gangway, were waiting, suddenly, they or most, appeared sober, saluted at the quarterdeck and went down to their messes as if they hadn't had a drink at all. What a grand and happy crowd they were.

However, back to war, convoys, supporting other landings, visiting Iceland regularly, they didn't want to know us, at least they gave us that impression. We took chocolate ashore for the children only to get it thrown back in our faces. So we went doing a little mountaineering up the smaller slopes. We did return there worse for wear during May 1942 to have temporary repairs done to forty feet of our bows.

We were doing manoeuvres with other units of the Home Fleet and Task Force 99 American Fleet some 350 miles east of Iceland in really foul weather and we gave the order to cease zig zagging. PUNJABI misunderstood the signal, crossed close under our bows and collided with KGV cutting PUNJABI in two. Depth charges which were set, exploded. I was on duty on the Keyboard on this particular watch at 1345 hours when this happened. KGV through the explosions was sent pitching and shuddering, and personnel were rushing to and fro, locking all watertight doors around the Keyboard. True to Royal Marine style, you never leave your post. So I was locked in, and I thought safe, in a water-tight compartment which I understood had the Rum Store directly below. "Die happy, Aubrey", were my thoughts! Short lived, panic over and the doors once again opened. A number of survivors were picked up and made comfortable, some of whom we have met on two previous KGV/PUNJABI Reunions at Plymouth Hoe Memorial. I have always remembered a Lt. Barry RN, a doctor, who transferred to PUNJABI and died with her. Our bows were made as watertight as possible and we slowly proceeded into Iceland for further temporary repairs, then sailed for the Gladstone Dock in Liverpool, arriving on 9th May and taking seven weeks there for repairs, returning to Scapa in 1st July. This was the occasion for the ships company to have six weeks leave, sad the occasion had to be.

After this we sailed for the Med.....  
 ..... (That's another story, Editor)

We returned to home waters to rejoin the Home Fleet in October 1943. Further Russian convoys! Many of us packed our bags in February 1944 to be sent back to Portsmouth Barracks.

I have the highest regard for all of the ships, big ones, particularly the carrier VICTORIOUS, our constant companion, cruisers, destroyers, smaller ones too, WHO KEPT US SAFE. Many thanks to all who sailed in them.

**BIG SHIPS!!!! WE DID DO A LITTLE  
TOWARDS SUCCESS!**

## A PLEASURE CRUISE

By C. L. Edick.

No doubt one of the main reasons for having a "Big Ship Edition" of Northern Light is to confirm the opinions of Small Ship men that 'ardship is a term unknown in such vessels. The following brief account will do just that.

The convoy was PQ2, the dates 18 October to 13 November 1941, the ship the 8" cruiser NORFOLK, flying the flag of CS1, Rear Admiral Wake Walker.

It happened to be my first voyage to sea as a 17 year old midshipman and was a very gentle baptism. There were six merchant ships escorted by the destroyers ECLIPSE and ICARUS, and the minesweepers BRAMBLE (MS1), SEAGULL and SPEEDY, with ourselves in a nice safe position in the middle. The weather was fine, though when we reached 75° North it did become a little chilly; the new issue of sheepskin coats was most welcome. My journal written at the time draws attention to the fact that the pussers, who only occasionally came on deck to seek fresher air than that in their offices and store-rooms, received their winter garments a day before those keeping watch on the bridge and guns.

The only items of interest were the inability of SS HARTLEBURY to maintain convoy speed, and the disappearance of BRAMBLE for about ten hours when the convoy altered course without her having seen the flag hoist.

We reached our anchorage off the island of Modyguski on 30 October, and spent the next four days anchored in the River Dvina during which time I was one of the few onboard lucky enough to board a tug for the five hour trip to Archangel, where we had one hour's shore leave to sample the joy of vodka (which I described as tasteless firewater) and black bread.

There was no question of precautionary measures while at anchor, just a normal harbour watch of gangway staff on the quarter-deck. Daylight hours were spent taking in oil and transferring naval and victualling stores to the minesweepers who were to remain, reinforcing GOSSAMER, HUSSAR and LEDA who were already there.

The return voyage with QP2 was as uneventful. There were twelve merchant ships escorted only by ECLIPSE, ICARUS and NORFOLK. We were unable to maintain as northerly route as on the way out, as thick ice forced us south of Bear Island and Jan Mayen Islands, well within range of hostile aircraft had they wished. This time the weather was less kind, being colder and the convoy having to heave to for a few hours as a gale from the south with attendant beam seas proved too dangerous for ships with high deck cargoes of timber. But no water swilling over messdecks, no lifelines rigged on the upper deck, and scarcely any spray over the bridge. It is difficult to visualise later convoys stopped for ten daylight hours in those waters.

And so ended what was akin to a pleasure cruise now available from Cunard at enormous expense.

(I did later have a rather different experience in the old

First War destroyer WATCHMAN, but that is another story; I believe that NORFOLK too had several less comfortable trips after I left her).

## ***H.M.S. NORFOLK IN THE ICE***

*By J.R.S. White No 1811*

I was Dental Officer - the "Toothwright" aboard NORFOLK 1941-1943. In December '41 we were on "White Patrol" in Denmark Straits - looking for another "BISMARCK" they said. I was snugly tucked up in my cabin in the Office Flat when I was awoken at about 0300 by a slow, regular bumping sound coming from somewhere below my head. My immediate thought was "Ice", so I hastily pulled on some clothes and shot up on to the Quarter Deck. It was a bright moonlight night and the ship was surrounded by a brilliant white sheet for as far as you could see, except for a long black line astern back down which the ship was slowly making its way. I soon saw the cause of the bumping noise as the ship's stern was against the ice on the port side, so that the outer port propeller was bashing against the thick ice and it looked as though we might lose a propeller blade at any moment.

Seeing the Depth Charge sentry in his caboose on the stern I suggested that he phoned the Compass Platform to let them know what was going on. He replied that he daren't, so I said "Well I dare" and the exchange put me through without an argument. A voice said "Compass Platform", so I said "Quarter Deck here" and proceeded to give brief details and suggested that the ship's stern be put a couple of degrees to Starboard. There was a deathly hush from the other end but I noticed that the ship was beginning to edge away from the ice.

Then I saw a figure which I instantly recognised coming along the Quarter Deck towards me. It was the Commander - Commander Litchfield - and I thought "Now I'm for it", but he just took a look at me and said "Oh! Its you Toothie! We wondered who was giving Executive orders from the Quarter Deck!"

And ever after, even at our reunions, he would introduce me to people as "the only Dental Officer to give an Executive Order aboard a warship."

**The Missing Walrus.** In the March 1991 edition of Northern Light (Nº23), Jack Hayes tells the story of NORFOLK's Walrus plane that took off in the Barents Sea and came back to find us gone. He asks what happened to the Walrus? And I would like to know, if anybody can tell me, "What happened to the crew"? Godfrey Winn, in his book PQ17 says the Walrus was towed to Novya Zemlya and finally to Murmansk where she was hoisted out and put on the quay, part of our Lease-Lend presumably. I have a faint recollection that one of the crew of the Walrus later visited us and said that they had travelled back to safety overland. Does anybody know? There should be a story there!

**A Patient from ashore - Archangel.** On my first convoy to Russia in NORFOLK, October 1941, no sooner had we got alongside than I received a signal requesting an urgent dental appointment for an officer from ashore. He duly arrived with several VIPs in a most sumptuous motor yacht type of craft belonging to the Russian Navy.

Having fixed him up and given him lunch I crossed over to the craft alongside.

The crew were mostly women and nobody took any attention of me so I had a good look around, starting with the bridge where my eyes popped open. The bridge and wardroom were panelled in Birds Eye walnut. There was a green moquette carpet on the deck and the wardroom armchairs were upholstered to match. There was a baby grand piano in the wardroom, also in walnut. Altogether not the sort of furnishings you would expect to find in a Soviet ship. I went down to the engine room where there were two 800HP diesels, made in Moscow, a bit rough by our standards, while the ship had been built in Murmansk.

**1943 in the Kola Inlet.** In February we had passed through the Bear Island passage, entered Kola Inlet and moored alongside at Vaenga (now named Severomorsk). Everywhere was thick snow with nothing to be seen but a few miserable huts, a few equally miserable looking old men and women and the usual small boys with rifles. And it was cold!!! The convoy arrived and went straight on to Murmansk to unload.

The next day some of us were invited to lunch aboard a Russian Destroyer Flotilla Leader that was lying nearby. We were taken over in one of our boats which was supposed to return to the ship but the crew were invited aboard by the Russian sailors and 'treated' - unknown to us! With unfortunate consequences as it turned out.

My first impression as I boarded the ship was the appalling stink of the Heads that seemed to permeate everywhere. However, we were taken down to their Wardroom, six of us and about eight of them, and the only one of them that could speak English was their Commissar who had apparently attended a British University. There were several jugs of what looked like water on the table which of course turned out to be Vodka. The glasses were luckily small as the meal began with a Toast and continued with toasts in between each course and at each you had to drain your glass which was then promptly filled again. We toasted our glorious Navy, the Russian glorious Navy, our victorious armed forces, the Russian victorious armed forces. We toasted Winston Churchill and Marshal Stalin, and we toasted the Second Front - whenever that was going to be! This was the most important event to them. The commissar asked us over and over again "When are you going to open the Second Front? As though we should know!

The meal itself was excellent and amongst other items consisted of Vladivostok Crab, 'Turkey of the Sea', which was a large fish from the Black Sea, and Strawberries from the Caucasus. We had barely finished the meal and were getting on together very well when our Gunnery Officer came bursting into their Wardroom saying, "You are all under arrest - return to the ship at once!" It turned out that our boat had become untied and had been spotted from our ship drifting down the inlet on the tide.

So, we had to return to the ship in ignominy but full of vodka, to be told off by the Commander. Goodness knows what the Russians thought and I don't know what happened to our boats crew.

**The Cinema.** In the evening we went ashore where they showed a film of the "Victorious Russian Navy" taking over the convoys from



Britain when they reached the dangerous waters of the Barents Sea. You can guess the response of the audience!

**The shore-side Dental Officer.** Next day, February 28, the Dental Officer from the hospital ashore Surg. Lieut. Kettle RNVR and one of the doctors came on board NORFOLK for dinner, followed by our film show which was a nice change for them having little entertainment themselves.

The following morning we heard that poor Kettle had slipped into one of the open drains, luckily frozen, and broken his leg while they were on their way back to the hospital.

In the afternoon I went up to the hospital to see how he was and found him bright and cheerful as he would be sent home in one of our ships and so get away from the depressing place.

The hospital looked to be a hastily built rough and ready affair of bricks and mortar, much of which was suffering from the frost, and the whole area surrounded by open drains. The top floor seemed to be occupied by survivors from the convoys. It was a large ward but had only one wash basin and it had only one tap which delivered only cold water, while the outlet led into a bucket! The Heads was just a large sand tray in one corner of the ward and the whole place stank to high heaven.

Surg. Lieut. Kettle was taken on board BELFAST as a cot case next day and so had a comfortable journey back to UK.

.....

## **BATTLEWAGON - RAMILLIES**

*By Lyndon Thomas*

It was precisely at the stroke of midnight on 1st January 1941 that about ten weary ratings crossed the gangway from the dockside at Devonport to the Quarter Deck of RAMILLIES. The Officer of the Watch said "Good God!! Look what the New Year has brought us!!"

RAMILLIES was freshly back from New Zealand and the Med. She had been the first British Battleship to visit that Dominion; in honour of that event, and in accordance with custom, the Maori people had come on board and blessed the ship and had given the Captain of the ship (in perpetuity) a grass skirt. This he was instructed to have with him and wear whenever the ship went to Action Stations. The blessing was that if he so did none of the ship's company would come to harm from enemy action. It proved to be effective and true.

As a bridge messenger I regularly saw the Captain with his grass skirt at Action Stations. He wore it when we chased BISMARK in mid-Atlantic; I am sure he wore it in the Med before I joined and afterwards at the bombardment of Caen at the D Day landings.

We were flagship to Admiral Syffret for the invasion of Madagascar in May 1942. Fifty Royal Marines landed on the West coast of the Northern tip of the island and crossed the narrow

strip of land to Antsiranana. Our ship went Northabout overnight to the East coast and our eight 15" guns bombarded the French gun emplacements there; the General officer commanding accepted the surrender of the harbour of Diego Suarez thus securing the whole island for allied use.

This natural and well protected harbour had only a narrow entrance. We anchored each day and at dawn and dusk moved round the harbour for Action Stations; we were there to await the arrival of a boom defence vessel from Durban.

The day before it was due to arrive, after dusk action stations, two Kamakasi Jap midget submarines crept in; the first penetrated the outer casing of the ship on the port side and so flooded "B" magazine; within a few seconds the second actually penetrated the magazine itself and exploded there. All the lights went out; the ship listed to port and the bosun's mate got a bruise on his elbow - the Captain had not been wearing his grass skirt!! After a week or so we proceeded under our own steam to Durban, accompanied by a Dutch seagoing tug which had come from Durban. In dry dock we saw the damage - a hole big enough for a double decker bus to drive through.

Shortly afterwards the BBC broadcast an Admiralty denial that a ship of the QUEEN ELIZABETH class had been torpedoed in the Indian Ocean; we were "R" class !!

Along with more than six hundred others I am grateful for a Maori blessing and for a series of Captains who were obedient to their instructions.

Earlier in 1941 at the time of the BISMARK chase we spent a couple of months in a fjord north of Reykjavik at anchor enjoying the pleasures of the midsummer continuous daylight; it was while we were there that the Atlantic Charter was signed by Roosevelt and Churchill. Winston had launched RAMILLIES in 1916 when he was First Lord of the Admiralty, as a descendant of the Duke of Marlborough who was the victorious General at the Battle of Ramillies in 1706 in Flanders. On his way back to the UK Winston stopped off at the fjord and came on board to speak to the ships company and to some of the crews on the USA warships also in the fjord.

I left the ship a year later and next saw her at the Normandy beaches just after D-Day when she was bombarding Caen and I was serving in POPPY.

In the intervening years since then the skirt has been lost; but the Maori people are to present the Ramillies Association with a second skirt later in 1994.

.....

## **MOST NORTHERNLY ACTIVE SERVICE**

*By Tom Ponder*

In September 1942, CUMBERLAND in company with SHEFFIELD carried out "Operation Gearbox II" at Barentsberg, Spitzbergen, and again in June 1943 in company with BERMUDA, a similar operation. I believe this was the most northerly active service carried out by the Royal Navy and possibly still remains so.

## IT'S THAT SHIP AGAIN - VINDEK

By Gordon Ralph (No 1729)

I recall the never to be forgotten train journey from R.N.B. Pompey. We were dished out with some sort of sandwiches, in a packet, as we boarded ..... destination completely unknown to me and my mates! Although we had been issued with all the cold weather gear, we were just as likely to be going out East.

Our arrival at Wallsend on Tyne, the march down and through the dockyard gates of Swan Hunter's yard. There, behold, silhouetted against the grey skyline, was the dark outline of VINDEK alongside. The sound of riveting hammers, and the occasional flashes from the dockyard workers' welding torches ..... interspersed with the general shouts and banging going on all around, greeted (or otherwise) our arrival ..... the commissioning crew.

After storing up etc., and sea trials, I found myself one of the 4" guns crew with its turret right on the stern. Little did I know then, that I was going to spend a great deal of my time at this spot in the very near future!

I remained with VINDEK until the end of the war with Germany. Leaving her on returning from our last trip to Russia.

It was sometime later, following a draft chit to join VENERABLE, that I saw her again, tied alongside in Woolloomooloo, Dock, Sydney, Australia.

Whilst in Sydney, with VENERABLE undergoing minor repair, I drove a jeep that had been allocated to the ship ..... doing the mail runs, taking the Officers here and there to shore establishments, and the Padre to a local hospital visiting one of the crew who had been injured.

One night, quite late, I was returning to the ship from one of these trips, and driving through Kings Cross ..... there in front of me staggering on and off the pavement, three sheets in the wind, was a matelot. I pulled up and low and behold it was Paddy Fish, a T124X Cook off VINDEK. A bloke I had known when I was aboard. And remembered for many tins of Beans that found their way into my locker.

One favour deserves another. I bundled him into the jeep and drove down to Woolloomooloo. After a long slurred chat, I bid him cheerio and watched his zig-zag, inaccurately navigated course ... .. heading for the ship's gangway. I didn't hear a 'Splash', so I presume he made it O.K.

That was the last time I saw my old ship, or any of the crew. But, that wasn't to be completely the end of the story.

As the years passed by I learned how the old VINDEK returned to the U.K., was decommissioned, and around 1947 sold back to the Port Line Shipping Company; for whom she had originally been intended before being converted into an Escort Carrier. Following her return, she was then converted back to her original form as a cargo ship .... a really lovely job it was too.

From around 1949, under her new name, MV PORT VINDEK, she ploughed the oceans again, between UK, Australia and New Zealand. She was finally scrapped around 1971. I think my association with her will continue as I am attending my first VINDEK Reunion in April.

Our president Chris Tye, reports that the reunion was a very good event at the U.J.C. on 27 April - 32 members with many wives and ladies - a Buffet Lunch with plenty of "Lamp Swinging", whilst several shipmates who had not met for fifty years had a lot of chin wagging to catch up on.

## "THREE CHEERS FROM THE ROYAL NAVY"

By Robert Gottshall (USA)

ex-J.L.M.CURRY & BARBARA FRIETCHE

There are many memories of the War, some humourous, some quite adventurous, and a few you would rather forget.

One of my fondest recollections was an invitation to come over for tea and scones aboard HMS ANSON.

After swinging at anchor for ten weeks in the backwaters of Iceland without shore leave, and winter approaching in 1942, both Merchant Seamen and Armed Guard were gratified that the Royal Navy extended these courtesies. To top it off the Admiral sent a destroyer to ferry us to his new Battle Wagon still being worked on by civilian shipyard workers, Swan Hunter personnel, I believe.

A tour of ANSON, tea, and hot cocoa, finally a morale boosting speech to the men gathered together, and assurances that ANSON, and other R.N. ships would be with us on the next convoy.

When we departed the big ship some of her crew gathered to wave us farewell. Suddenly, spontaneously, there were three rousing cheers for the U.S. Merchant Navy. It was the first, and last time I ever heard a cheer given to our Merchant Seamen. ANSON's crew will never imagine how much that simple gesture meant to us.

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## OUR MEDAL - A FOOTNOTE

Holders of the Russian 40th Anniversary Commemorative medal were, we are sure, delighted and proud that Her Majesty has granted official permission for the medal to be worn with our campaign medals. We are also pleased to know that both the Embassy and M.O.D. are still issuing medals even if only in 'small doses'. So the following letter makes alarming and disgusting news, and we are powerless to do anything about it.

From J.E.STENTON: No.1154: "I am sure, particularly our President, will be interested in my experience in Malta during the Xmas period.

I visited the Valletta Flea Market one bright Sunday morning and spotted on display our very own medals. "Where did you get that?" I demanded. The Maltese entrepreneur assured me it was genuine and confided that he had bought a job lot of thousands from Moscow! To prove this he showed me a glossy brochure in which pictures of the medal were prominently displayed.

Now, we know that almost anything can be bought on the Moscow black market, but for those of us who waited so long before receiving our precious gong, this ironic example of the new Russian economy strains the sense of humour.

"How much?" I asked. "2 Lira". I turned away disgusted. To add insult to injury the stallholder hurried after me and clutching my arm he whispered, "For you, Sir, 1.75 Lira".

Editor's note: Since preparing this letter for publication, Shipmate John Stenton has "Crossed the Bar".

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## SUBSCRIPTIONS - A REMINDER

To those members who have been wintering in the Bahamas - or where-ever - and have only just returned home, may I remind you that subs for 1994/95 became due on March 1st.

Thank you to all who have paid and, a special thank you to those who "added a bit". The extra is a great help in financing the Club, especially enabling us to help those of our members who are finding things more and more difficult.

It helps enormously if you include your address and membership number with your payment.

All cheques/P.O's should be made out to "NORTH RUSSIA CLUB" and not to individual officers. Subs remain at £7.00 - or £60 for Life Membership.

Finally, may I remind you that if "things are difficult" you should drop me a line and it will be dealt with IN ABSOLUTE CONFIDENCE.

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY'S ADDRESS IS ON PAGE 2.

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THE CLUB'S FULL BALANCE SHEET AND STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS WILL APPEAR IN THE NEXT EDITION IN SEPTEMBER, TO GIVE YOU AMPLE TIME TO SCRUTINISE THEM BEFORE OCTOBER'S ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING.

## SLOP LIST

JACK DUSTY'S LATEST LIST AND PRICES

TIES (PRINTED MOTIF).....	£7.50
BLAZER BADGES.....	£9.50
N.R.C. ENAMELLED BROOCHES.....	£3.50
U.K./RUSSIA LAPEL BADGES.....	£1.75
BLUE NOSE CERTIFICATES.....	£6.50
MEDAL HOLDERS (PLASTIC).....	£2.25
BERET BADGES.....	£5.25
WALL BANNERS (SILK).....	£5.00
WINDSCREEN STICKERS.....	3 FOR £1.00
KEY CASES (LEATHER GOLD N.R.C. LOGO.....)	£2.75
COASTERS (BOXES OF 4) BLUE OR MAROON....	£3.35
BOOKS "CONVOYS TO RUSSIA 1941-1945....."	£10.75
MINIATURE RUSSIAN COMMEMORATIVE MEDALS..	£9.50
WHITE ENSIGN OR RED ENSIGN LAPEL BADGES	£1.75
N.R.C. CHRISTMAS CARDS (PACKS OF 12)...	£2.00

PRICES INCLUDE POSTING & PACKING IN U.K. ONLY

OVERSEAS MEMBERS ARE REQUESTED TO INCLUDE ADDITIONAL POSTAGE AMOUNTS AND TO REMIT IN STERLING ONLY.

SEND YOUR COMPLETED ORDER WITH CHEQUE MADE PAYABLE TO "NORTH RUSSIA CLUB" TO:-  
SID BATEMAN, 70 NICKLEBY HOUSE, ALL SAINTS ROAD,  
PORTSMOUTH, HANTS PO1 4EL.

THANKS SHIPMATES

Syd BATEMAN

NICKLEBY

## H.M. RESCUE TUG SERVICE

The Rescue Tug Section of the Royal Navy first came into being in 1917 and was disbanded in 1919 and so it was that at the outbreak of war in 1939, the Admiralty's compliment of tugs consisted of 4 Brigant Class ocean going salvage/target towing vessels with smaller M.O.D. ships for coastal and harbour work. Deep sea rescue and salvage was, in Great Britain, the business of civilian companies.

By the end of September 1939 the Rescue Tug Section had been reinstated by the Admiralty, under the Director of Trade Division with the head of the section to be known as Captain-in-Charge of Rescue Tugs (C.C.R.T.).

The Admiralty, realizing that a much larger Rescue Tug Service was now going to be needed, took the first steps in correcting the deficiencies by requisitioning the few tugs capable of deep sea rescue which were available - some of which dated back to 1918.

The vessels were still being managed by their civilian owners (the intention being to commission and arm them later) but were now under the direction of Flag Officers in Charge and answerable to the Admiralty and Section 90 of the Naval Discipline Act.

It was obvious though that a much larger fleet would be required for the expected number of casualties, especially on the ocean convoy routes. So a serious building programme began, the necessity for which was emphasized by the sinking of the largest of the ocean going tugs, the NEPTUNIA, on 13 September 1939.

Initially the manning of the vessels was voluntary, with a nucleus of yachtsmen, fishermen, merchant seamen and about ten or twelve masters with either salvage or towing experience.

From these the rest of the crews had to learn the skills required in their new "trade". More often than not this new knowledge had to be picked up very quickly indeed since a large percentage were "thrown in at the deep end" especially as new ships began to be commissioned. With applications from volunteers as young as 15, 16 and 17 the old "sweats" had their work cut out. With a large number of recruits from the Merchant Navy each man signed on Articles at a shipping office even though he wore the Royal Navy Uniform, sailed under the White Ensign and had to abide by Naval Discipline.

To introduce the men to their new lives a base/barracks was created at the tiny fishing port of Campbeltown at the Southern end of Argyll in West Scotland. In 1941, an ex-army barracks in Campbeltown was taken over, and the Rescue Tug base became a reality and the Victoria Hall became H.M.S. MINONA, the forwarding/transit centre for all H.M.R.T. officers and men who were to man the tugs as they were being brought into service.

The base remained operational until early in 1945, when its services were transferred to Harwich, which had been the "home" for tugs serving the North Sea and East Coast Convoys.

This then was the T124T known amongst themselves as "THE TATTIE LADS".

= 20 =

The value of the service is best illustrated by Admiralty figures: Early in 1943 the Admiralty released figures showing that H.M. Rescue Tugs had brought in 1,300,000 tons of merchant shipping which would have otherwise ~~been~~ on the bottom of the sea. If warships which had been saved were added to this figure then the writer estimated that 3,000,000 tons of shipping had been saved. By the end of 1943 the total Merchant shipping tonnage saved had increased to 2,250,000 tons and was able to carry on with vital work of carrying both arms and men as a result of the gallant work of tug crews.

With more years of war ahead the final total of ships saved up to V-J Day was 3 million tons of Merchant Shipping. This excludes the British and Allied warships saved which increased in number from 185 in 1943 to 254 by V-J Day.

These figures do not reflect those "so near yet so far" cases where vessels were lost whilst under tow or afterwards - some of them tragically near to salvation.

In addition to the vessels and cargoes saved the number of Merchant Navy and Royal Navy personnel who owe their lives to the Rescue Service grew steadily throughout the war.

There was a cost to be paid for the rescue of men and materials and this sadly was paid by the loss of 20 of the Rescue Tugs themselves with some if not all of their crews.

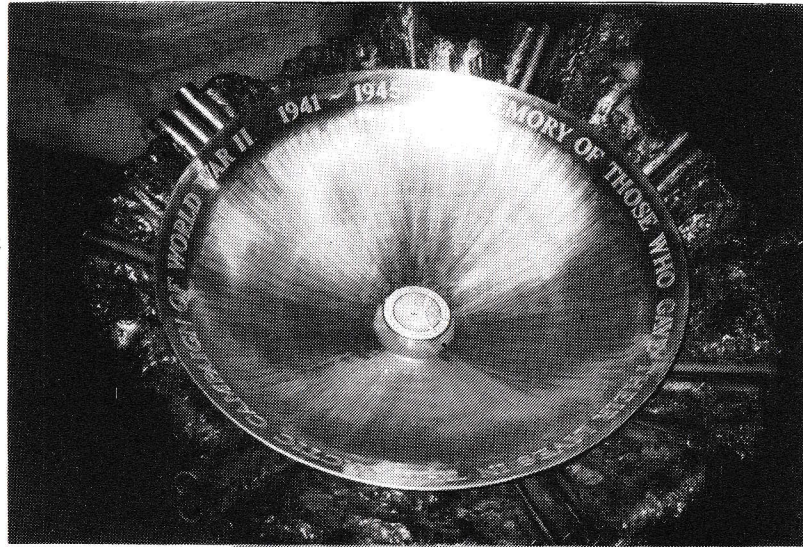
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THE "CAKE CUTTING" AT FROME - SEE REPORT ON PAGE 32  
L to R: 'Young Norman' Minter, Chris Tye, Joan Oram and 'Curly' Morris.

ARCTIC CAMPAIGN MEMORIAL TRUST REPORT MAY '94

*FOUR MEMORIALS IN TEN DAYS, THAT'S STEAMING!!!  
TWO COMPLETED..TWO STARTED..HERE'S THE DETAILS*

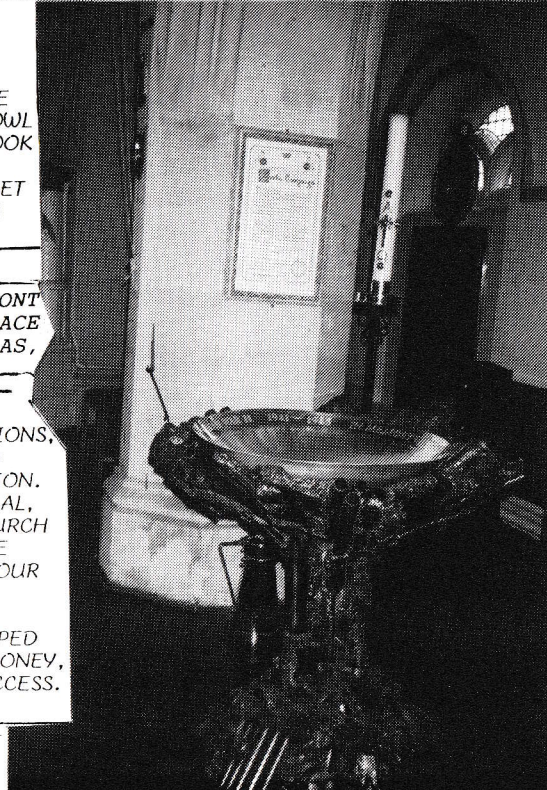


24TH APRIL 1994. PLYMOUTH.  
ABOUT 200 PEOPLE GATHERED  
IN HMS DRAKE TO ATTEND THE  
SERVICE OF DEDICATION FOR THE  
A.C.M.T FONT & CHRISTENING BOWL  
CHRISTENING OF FIVE BABIES TOOK  
PLACE IN OUR SILVER BOWL. A  
WONDERFUL SERVICE. OUR BUFFET  
IN THE SENIOR RATES MESS WAS  
EXCELLENT.

OUR MEMORIAL CHRISTENING FONT  
AND SCROLL HAS IT'S OWN PLACE  
IN THE CHURCH OF St NICHOLAS,

VETERANS FROM RCC,  
NRC, RBL, RNA, SHIPS ASSOCIATIONS,  
VETERANS WIDOWS, FRIENDS AND  
RELATIVES ENJOYED THE OCCASION.  
THE CHRISTENING FONT MEMORIAL,  
HAS ITS OWN PLACE IN THE CHURCH  
OF St NICHOLAS ALONG WITH THE  
ILLUMINATED SCROLL MADE BY OUR  
SHIPMATE STAN ROGERS.

THANKS TO EVERYONE WHO HELPED  
BY DONATING TO THE A.C.M.T MONEY,  
TIME AND EFFORT. A GREAT SUCCESS.

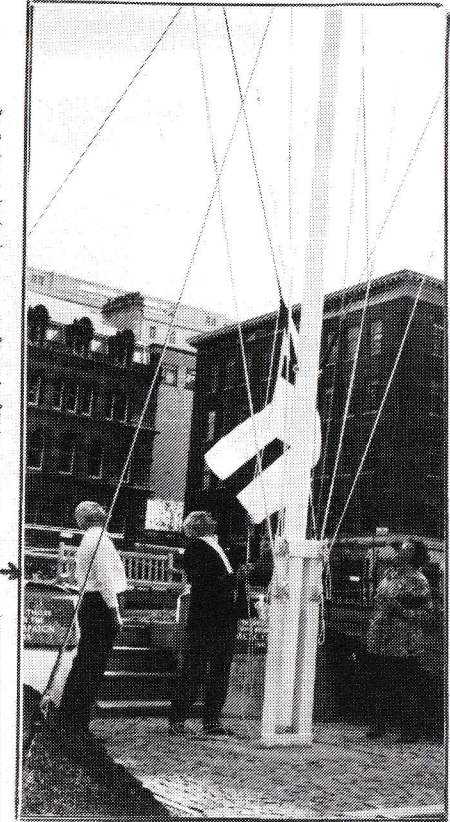


*30 APRIL 1994. ACMT LIVERPOOL MEMORIAL*

*ANOTHER SUCCESS STORY. A LOVELY OPEN  
AIR SERVICE TOOK PLACE WITH OUR FRIEND  
CANON FRAYLING CONDUCTING IT. THE  
MERSEYSIDE POLICE BAND SUPPLIED MAG-  
NIFICENT MUSIC. LIVERPOOL MALE VOICE  
CHOIR ADDED TO THE MAGIC AS DID THE  
ROYAL MARINE BUGLER WITH 'THE 'LAST  
POST''. THE CHURCH BELLS RANG OUT DIR-  
ECTED BY GEOFF SPARLING.*

*CADETS FROM TS STARLING DID A GREAT JOB  
HOISTING AND SETTING THE ENSIGNS IN A  
LIVELY WIND. PLAQUES OF REMEMBRANCE &  
THANKSGIVING WERE UNVEILED. WREATHS  
WERE LAID ON BEHALF OF; THE ROYAL NAVY;  
THE MERCHANT NAVY; THE CITY OF LIVER-  
POOL; THE ARCTIC CAMPAIGN MEMORIAL  
TRUST; NORTH RUSSIA CLUB; THE ROYAL  
BRITISH LEGION & THE WIDOWS.*

\*TESTING THE MAST, ENSIGNS & HALYARDS  
\*OUR "IN MEMORY OF" PLAQUE  
\*AND THE "THANKSGIVING" PLAQUE  
3,000,000 year old Pearl Granite has been used  
for these two lovely pieces.



PROJECT 13 LIVERPOOL continued:-  
THE SERVICE WAS ATTENDED BY MANY ARCTIC VETERANS FROM THE NRC., RCC., RNAs., MERCHANT NAVY, AIR FORCE, AND OTHER ARMED SERVICES. WIVES AND FRIENDS ALSO ATTENDED.

MA BOYLES (a local pub) LAID ON A VERY NICE BUFFET WHICH WAS ENJOYED ALONG WITH DRINKS AND GOOD COMPANY DURING THE AFTERNOON. THERE ARE SPECIAL THANKS OWED TO DICK SQUIRES, TOMMY ADAMS AND FRANK HOWARD WHO DID MUCH TO MAKE THIS MEMORIAL VERY SPECIAL.

SPECIAL NEW PROJECTS HAVE BEEN STARTED IN PLYMOUTH AND LIVERPOOL, WHICH WILL FORM OUR LIVING MEMORIALS.

THIS IS PART OF OUR OVERALL PLAN AND EXTENDS OUR ACTIVITY IN EACH A.C.M.T. MEMORIAL LOCATION.

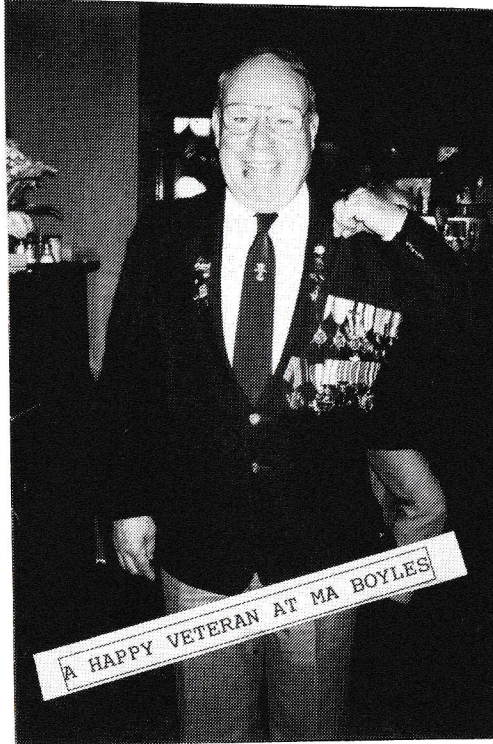
MAY 4TH 1994. COLLECTION OF FUNDS WAS STARTED IN THE CHATHAM/GILLINGHAM AREA. A MEMORIAL/COLLECTION TABLEAU, MADE BY SHIPMATES FROM SEVERAL ORGANISATIONS WAS SITED, THIS IS THE SECOND OF THESE DEVICES. THE A.C.M.T. ARE VERY GRATEFUL TO MEMBERS OF THE A.C.M.T. COMMITTEE FOR THEIR UNTIRING WORK TO HELP RAISE MONEY THAT WE NEED TO DO OUR SPECIAL WORK.

OUR EXCHANGE VISIT PLANS FOR CHILDREN FROM RUSSIA TO VISIT THE U.K. UNDER WAY NOW AND WITH LUCK THEY WILL JOIN WITH US IN THE BLESSING OF THE A.C.M.T. MEMORIAL BEING MADE FOR US FOR CHATHAM. WE EXPECT TO USE THIS AS A PATTERN FOR OTHER MEMORIAL PROJECTS AROUND THE COUNTRY SUCH AS OUR FIRST SCOTTISH PROJECT.

IF THE A.C.M.T. CAN GET THE MONEY OUTSTANDING AND NOT YET PAID IN TO OUR ACCOUNT, WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO PAY FOR EVERYTHING PLANNED, MORE ABOUT THIS AT THE A.G.M.

SOMEONE TOLD ME THAT THEY HAD NOT BEEN INVITED TO A.C.M.T.'S LIVERPOOL SERVICE BECAUSE THEIR CLUB HAD NOT PAID ANYTHING.. EVERY SHIPMATE IS ENTITLED TO APPLY FOR AN INVITATION TO ANY A.C.M.T. FUNCTION. THERE MAY BE SOME RESTRICTIONS IF NUMBERS ARE LIMITED SUCH AS THE CHATHAM PROJECT, OR COMMITTEE MEETINGS, BUT PLEASE APPLY DIRECT TO ME.

CHATHAM WILL BE IN OCTOBER, RESTRICTED NUMBERS, PLEASE STATE NAME OF CLUB.



FURTHER DETAILS ARE AVAILABLE  
PLEASE CONTACT:- RON J WREN,  
SECRETARY/CHAIRMAN OF TRUSTEES  
ARCTIC CAMPAIGN MEMORIAL TRUST  
13 SHERWOOD AVENUE, POTTERS BAR,  
HERTS. EN6 2LD. Tel 0707 655846



The A.C.M.T. Committee

Thank you all  
*Ron Wren*

## THE H.M.S. ROYAL ARTHUR MAST

From Corsham to the Sailors' Church

During the last few months the question "How did the mast come to Liverpool and Why?" The reply is given firstly by Lieut. Cmdr. G. Brinningsly R.N., the Staff Officer at H.M.S. Eaglet and finally by Dick Squires.

In 1993 the Royal Navy's main Leadership School H.M.S. ROYAL ARTHUR at Corsham became another victim of a seemingly endless round of defence cuts. Many of the school's assets were offered up for use elsewhere, this included the mainmast which for many years had seen the raising and lowering of the white ensign. How many students had stood in front of it in a cutting Wiltshire wind silently cursing it until the 'Carry On' was sounded ?"

Rather than see the structure end up rusting away in some dark corner or cut up for scrap, it was agreed that it could be a fine and fitting memorial to those who gave their lives in those terrible waters of the Arctic during WWII.

The question arose as to how a 40 foot steel pole, (with yard arm and gaff) and weighing one and a half tons, could be transported from Corsham in Wiltshire to Liverpool without cost to hard stretched budgets. As often happens, enthusiasm, goodwill, hardwork and generosity overcome all the problems and the mast was transported most of the way by that most British and traditional method, the Canal System. My 57 foot narrowboat POLBATHIC was available and there was a host of willing volunteers, both Royal Navy and Royal Navy Reserve. So we got under way and here is a brief account of the outward and loaded journeys:

First, POLBATHIC had to be moved from near Chester to Wiltshire and we set out on 19 Feb. 1993 moving from Sawley to Crich Boatyard where we arrived on 22 Feb having covered the first 62 miles and 53 locks. Here we were delayed until 13 March awaiting the Watford Locks to reopen after winter repairs. The journey recommenced and we set out towards our original destination at Devizes Wharf. By 17 March we had negotiated a further 86 miles and 60 locks of the Grand Union and Oxford Union Canals and reached the Thames at Oxford. Here, on St Patricks Day we were deserted by Lady Luck. We could go no further south as the locks would be out of action for several weeks. Other arrangements were made and M.O.D. delivered the mast to Jericho Wharf at Oxford on 22 March. Steady progress homeward and by 27 March POLBATHIC had negotiated a further 108 miles and 137 locks and reached Walsall on the Birmingham Canal Navigation system, to be informed that we would have to make a diversion due to a canal blockage. This we did, and completed the final leg of 69 miles and 67 locks mainly through the Shropshire Union Canal and, POLBATHIC arrived at Ellesmere Port on 31 March, where we were met by a team of veterans.

A Grand Total of 350 miles and 336 locks had been covered. Crewing the boat was in fact the easy part. The unglamorous work was carried out by a whole host of wonderful people. They can look on the mast with pride and in the knowledge that they all played an important part in the worthy venture.

## LETTERS FROM MEMBERS

- 26 -

At this stage Dick Squires and his team of willing helpers took over and he continues the story:- The mast, yard arm and gaff were off loaded from POLBATHIC on 2 April by the floating crane PELICAN and loaded as deck cargo on SS CUDDINGTON. The following day CUDDINGTON transported the mast via Manchester Ship Canal, Eastham Locks, the River Mersey and Mersey Docks system to the secure compound at Clarence Dock - all authorities, CUDDINGTON's and PELICAN'S owners, Manchester Ship Canal Co., Mersey Docks & Harbour Company and Mannings Marine Ltd waived all charges, (this, being a weekend operation could have incurred charges exceeding £2,000). The mast was off loaded at Clarence Dock where permission was given that it could remain 'for a few weeks'. This turned out to be exactly 10½ months (free rental). In early February '94, the mast was transported to EAGLET's lay apart store, where it could be worked on under cover. Firstly, it was sanded, metal primed, undercoated and high glossed (3 coats courtesy HMS LOYAL WATCHER). It was at the latter painting stages that committee man Tom 'Big Ships' Adams proved that he had not lost the knack - no holidays in the paint work and all hair strokes in the same direction!! All new standing rigging was made and fitted and new running rigging and ensigns were provided by the Royal Navy.

Meanwhile, contractors were preparing the memorial garth and mast foundations at the Church of St. Nicholas at Liverpool Pier Head, in very inclement weather and on land that required all digging to be done by hand. Eventually, the mast was lifted into position on 23 April and work completed well in time for the Dedication Service on 30 April which was attended by Liverpool's Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress, Flag Officer Scotland, North and Northern Ireland, Vice Admiral Christopher Morgan and Lady Morgan, Mr & Mrs Michael Kalinin of the Russian Embassy, many other dignitaries and most important, the veterans of many organisations.

Our Memorial/Mast now stands proudly in the Gardens of the Sailor's Church at Liverpool's Pier Head, in full view of the River Mersey from where many of our colleagues, particularly merchant seamen sailed on their final voyage to the waters of the Arctic. GOD REST THEIR SOULS.

Those with out whom the "Mastex '93" venture could not have been completed: Men and women of the Royal Navy - EAGLET's Permanent Staff Instructors; Mersey Division RNR; Sea Cadet Corps of TS INDEFATIGABLE at Long Eaton; North Russia Club; Arctic Campaign Memorial Trust; Royal Mail International (sponsorship); KPMG Peat Marwick (sponsorship); College Cruisers, Oxford; Lunchtime drinkers at the Bookbinders Arms, Oxford; HMS Royal Arthur Association; the Principal Supply & Transport Organisation (Navy); the National River Authority (Thames); British Waterways; Ellesmere Port Boat Museum; Owners and crews of MVs CUDDINGTON and PELICAN; Mannings Marine Limited; Pub landlords too numerous to mention; Clergy and staff of Liverpool Parish Church; Billy Sheil Refinishers (sponsorship); Manchester Ship Canal Company; Mersey Docks & Harbour Company; Employees of Ford Motor Company, Halewood; and numerous other donors, some known and many anonymous.

From C.W.BROWN (ex-Musketeer):

"Your comments in the editorial in the December '93 Northern Light has provided me with many a chuckle. It has enabled me to recall the many "Hardships" expressions which only the navy could deliver with feeling.

The expression was devalued for me during service in a four-funnelled, ex-USA destroyer by its regular use. However, after the North Cape action, on a still wet messdeck, the BBC reported (via radio) that DUKE OF YORK's action rations consisted of a PORK CHOP eaten with bare hands! At this a fellow shipmate threw his near empty tin of action rations (gum, barley sugar) across the mess. His words - "HARD \*\*\*\*\* LUCK!"

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From Jim Matthewson (ex-Naval Party 200):

Like many of our readers I served on a number of ships during the war, and I wouldn't mind betting that the majority whose ships survived the war do not know the final resting place of their ships, whether they be small or big.

This is the story of one such ship. Everybody knows that BELFAST, who lies adjacent to Tower Bridge on the Thames. She sits there proudly and resplendent in her coat of grey. She is very popular and in addition to being a Museum, she is also the H.Q. for some Naval Organisations (including North Russia Club). She served in various theatres of W.W.II.

When visiting BELFAST does anyone give more than a cursory glance across the river to the Embankment side to the insignificant looking ship tied up alongside? Stripped of her armament and certainly not looking like a hero of the Battle of the Atlantic. If you look closely you will see a nameplate marked "H.M.S. WELLINGTON". If that still does not mean anything, let me tell you that she was a sloop that served in various theatres of war during W.W.II. How many know that she was one of six who received a special award for her part in the Battle of the Atlantic? Readers of Navy News will have seen this fact in one of the issues last year.

I served aboard her as a Signalman when she operated out of Freetown as S.O. of the 42nd Escort Group, with North and Southbound Convoys.

I look at her now, and think - well at least you didn't go to the breakers yard. You were damaged during the war, but you survived to the end.

All I ask of our members is - when you are on BELFAST or strolling along the Embankment give more than a cursory glance at that insignificant ship with a distinguished history.

Editors notes: WELLINGTON (Pennant N°L65, changed to U75) was a sloop of the GRIMSBY Class, built at Devonport and launched on 25/5/34 by Lady Fullerton. 990 Tons with Twin Shaft Geared Turbines of 2000 S.H.P. 16.5 knots. Originally built for continuous service on the New Zealand Station - hence the name. She is the oldest existing Sloop, being sold on 6 February 1947 to The Honorable Company of Master Mariners for use as their Livery Hall.

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From S.G.Chambers N°1799: ex MARNE: "THIRTEEN" - UNLUCKY FOR SOME:

I joined MARNE when she first commissioned in the autumn of '41. After working up we joined the Home Fleet at Scapa Flow where we did gunnery trials - practice shoots etc., and then a couple of trips to Iceland. On one occasion berthing alongside HECLA. Early March '42 - we were part of the Home Fleet force covering PQ13. We

did another couple of trips as close cover to Murmansk and Arch-angel convoys. August 24th found us in company with MARTIN and ONSLAUGHT as a close cover for USS TUSCALOOSA returning to UK. The next day we three destroyers were detached to seek out and sink the German minelayer ULM which we found in exactly in the position we were told to expect her. After a short but fierce action ULM was on fire from stem to stern, but with the last shot from one of her 5" guns she scored a hit on our After Fire & Repair Party; this explosion killed all thirteen shipmates who were on the Quarterdeck. The ship suffered no real damage except for a few depth charges which were promptly dumped minus their detonators.

Late October 1942 we took part in escorting the many ships for the North Africa landings. A week or two later in company with VENOMOUS we headed south to meet VINDICTIVE and HECLA to escort them back to Algiers and Gibraltar. About 2300 on November 11th HECLA received two torpedo hits which brought her to a dead stop. Shortly after, she received three more hits and MARNE was ordered to stand by to pick up survivors as she was sinking fast by this time. Many of her ships company were clambering up our scrambling nets when a torpedo hit our stern blowing about 35 feet off, including the Fire & Repair Party, again thirteen of our shipmates were lost.

I STILL BELIEVE "THIRTEEN IS UNLUCKY FOR SOME".

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From Jim Spencer (N°720): I noted the 'deliberate mistake' of Dennis Grace in his 'Exploits of a Fleet Air Arm Officer' in identifying the liner lying on her side in New York harbour as LA FRANCE but I lazily left it to others to correct. Imagine my surprise when the correction in the next issue also got it wrong, saying she was the ILE DE FRANCE. The ship was the NORMANDIE. Figure 7 in my book 'Ordinary Naval Airmen' is a photograph of her passing through New York in August 1942.

There is another link with the book in the March issue. The sad story of BLUEBELL reveals that she was sunk by U-711. The U-boat sunk by 846 and 853 Squadrons on 4 May 1945 which is also described in my book. The book, based on the squadron diary, actually gives the U-boat's number as U-771, but this must be an error. After all, the U-boat's Captain Lange, who confirms the 4 May date, is unlikely to have got the number wrong.

BLUEBELL was avenged, literally, the aircraft were GRUMMAN "AVENGERS"

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MORE LETTERS FROM READERS

All are Corvette queries!

From Dennis Brooke our artist: "I expect someone else has also drawn your attention to an omission in the list of Arctic Corvettes on page six of the last number - DIANELLA was our chummy ship on many a convoy including PQ17". (Sorry Denis. I slipped up. Am I in the Rattle?)

From Eddie A Hale No 1206: Ref the article by Sub-Lieut Dick Owen and his ship RHODODENDRON. He stated that he thought she was the second ship of her class to be built. Sorry Richard, she was a long way down the line in that respect. There were 140 of this class built in British yards, the first being GLADIOLUS (K.34) built on 21 January 1940 and sunk by U-568 (Korvettenkapitan Preuss), later sunk herself on 28 May, 1942 in the Med. by ERIDGE, HERO and HURWORTH.

RHODODENDRON was the 41st of her class to 'hit the water', one of the many built by Harland & Wolff Belfast.

In the Canadian yards 80 were built for the R.C.N. the first being EDMUNSON K.106 on 22 Feb. 1940, with those built in Canadian yards RHODODENDRON would have dropped to 59th overall.

Although Flower class were built until 1944, the second group from 1942 to 1944 were 'Modified Flowers'.

Breakdown:	Built in British Yards	140.	Losses	19.	1940/41
	French crewed	10	"	04	
	R.Nor.N.	10	"	03	
	R.Hel.N.	04	"	Nil	
	Transferred USN	10	"	Nil	
-----					
	Canadian Yards	80	"	08	
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	TOTAL BUILT	220.	Original Flower class	1940/1	
	TOTAL LOST	034			
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GODITIA K.72 was the first to be lost when in collision with S.S. MARSA in the North Irish sea on 6/9/40. She was on her first voyage having been launched on 8/5/40.

VERVAIN K.190 was the last of the class to be lost, sunk by U-1208 in the North Atlantic on 20/2/45.

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From John Riley. No 866: In the last edition LOTUS (my old ship), is given as K.93 where as in fact she was K.130. I also think that the remarks against it are incorrect and probably belong to the corvette which was actually K.93. (On checking several lists including "British Escort Ships" by Lenton, and "World War II Fact Files" we find that there were two corvettes launched as LOTUS, their pennant numbers were K.93 and K.130. K.130 your ship, had originally been named PHLOX. - even the professional historians cannot get every thing right, so what chance has your poor old editor?

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BRITISH TANKS IN RUSSIA

Most of us can remember seeing all those merchant ships laden with deck cargoes of tanks, aircraft and crates. In previous issues we have featured several reports of the ensuing use of the aircraft in Russia, but never a mention of the tanks. We redress the situation with the following letter from a Soviet Veteran.

BRITISH TANKS OF THE 20TH ZVENIGORODSKY TANK CORPS IN ACTION

In violation of the non-aggression treaty, Nazi Germany unleashed a ruthless war against the Soviet Union in 1941.

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Following the aggression of Hitler's armies, Winston Churchill, the then British Prime Minister, in conformity with the will of the King and the people of the United Kingdom, proclaimed the establishment of relations of allies between Great Britain and the U.S.S.R.. Convoys with British material, food, clothes, uniforms and medicines were sent to Russia via the Northern Sea Route. Two battalions of Mk-2 (Valentine) and Mk-3 (Mathilda) tanks were supplied to the 80th Tank Brigade, 20th Tank Corps.

In 1941-1943 these tanks, as part of the Brigade, were employed in battles on the Steppes, South and Second Ukrainian Fronts.

The Brigade fought at Yelets, Oryol, Gzhatsk, Rzhev, Melitopol, Krivol Rog and in the battle of Korsun-Shevchenko.

The Korsun-Shevchenko Battle, rightly referred to as the "Second Stalingrad", holds a special place in the history of the Brigade and the Tank Corps itself. The Second and the First Ukrainian Fronts joined at the town of Zvenigorodka, Cherkassk Region, the Ukraine, thus closing an encirclement of a major German grouping. Leading the advance of the Second Ukrainian Front, the 20th Tank Corps destroyed in the course of the battle 72 tanks, 48 A.P.Cs, 41 artillery batteries, 10 aircraft, 300 vehicles and over 9,000 personnel and was later given a honorary name of "Zvenigorodsky". British "Valentine" and "Mathilda" tanks participated in fighting throughout the battle. Both models had high combat and operational characteristics and reliable shell ammunition, but the "Valentine" was especially good featuring dependable armour protection and special equipment to assist engine start-up under low temperatures.

It is worth mentioning here that in 1943-1944 the 80th Tank Brigade enjoyed patronage of King George VI and the Royal Family, which filled the tankmen, who sported quality uniforms of British make and were lovingly (and jokingly) called "the Brits", with legitimate pride.

The veterans of the 20th Zvenigorodsky Tank Corps preserve the warmest memories of British tanks and tank-makers who gave their assistance in the struggle against fascism at a most critical moment in our history. This affection towards British people is always in our hearts, and nothing can possibly shake this sacred feeling.

Time is passing by, and there are few of us, veteran "Brits" tankmen, left around, and we want veterans in Britain to know that they have true and tested friends in Russia.

On behalf of the Council of Veterans

N.F. NOKHRIN.

Chairman of the Association of Veterans,  
20th ZVENIGORODSKY Tank Corps.

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WHO ARE THE LADS WHO SERVED ON THE ALGERINES?

First of all we are survivors because we managed to survive all that 'Drafty' and Jerry threw at us, and we were here before split-atoms, lazer beams, cam-corders and the Pill.

We were here before Type 23 frigates, Fleet Chiefs, Seacat Aimers and Missile Aimers. In our day a Minehunter was an Algerine Class Fleet Minesweeper, and a Mine Warfare rating was a Killick Wireman M/S, a Sonar rating was an Asdic (Ping) rating, and a Missile rating was a Gunlayer or QR3 or 2. Caps were worn as part of the rig of the day, only pongos and bootnecks wore berets. We were here before men wore long hair and earrings - in our day, it was .... "Am I 'urtin' you, lad, I should be, 'cos I'm standing on yer bleedin' 'air. GET IT CUT!"

In our Navy, smoking 'tickler' was fashionable, 'grass' was for mowing; 'cake' was to put on the boiler and 'pot' was a utensil for cooking 'potmess'. If we had been asked to explain the abbreviations NATO or ICBM we would probably have thought it was some 'orrible 'pea-doo' served up by the NAAFI at Chatham, Pompey or Guzz. We might have thought that 'fast food' was something you ate during Lent, and that 'outer space' was the balcony at the Odeon.

Today, Wrens go to sea in frigates and carriers and wear tights. In our day they wore Lisle stockings and if one stepped over the brow, she would 'clear lower deck' quicker than the pipe 'abandon ship'. Some of us got married and lived together afterwards, not the other way round, and having a 'meaningful relationship' meant getting along with your aunties and cousins. Computer dating and gay rights hadn't been thought of. We were not before the differences in sex were discovered, but we were before sex changes - and we made do with what we had,

For us, time sharing didn't mean two weeks in an apartment on the Costa Del Sol. It meant two weeks or more on the 'oggin, clearing a minefield, with a northeaster blowing, and the northeaster having more than a touch of the 'brass monkeys'. One was wont to hear the occasional gripes, "talk about ....Hardships!" and "Roll on my bleedin' twelve".

We had never heard of FM radio, tape decks, or computers. A chip was something you put salt and vinegar on and ate with a piece of cod out of a copy of the Daily Herald. Hardware was the 4 inch gun on the focsle and software wasn't even a word. 'Solid Rock' was trying to get the baby asleep when home on a 'Friday while'. We knew what a 'nap hand' was but we thought that AIDS were helpers in Rose Cottage or hospitals.

In our Navy the in-thing was canteen messing with 'pusser's peas', 'red lead', 'herrings-in' and 'train smash', and we even made our own 'clacker'. Instant coffee was a pleasure yet to come and nothing had been decaffeinated. The mess bars and cafeteria style messing of today's sea going Navy was unheard of in our time. Today's Navy still had 'bosun's Mates', but we had 'Rum Bosuns' and 'bubbly' was still there, when 'two wets equalled one sipper', 'two sippersequalled one gulper' and a tot was for drinking and not a child.

Some may think of us ex-Algerines of World War Two as being 'square' - but we are today's OAPs and Senior Citizens, a hardy bunch when you think how the 'Andrew' and the world has changed. How about signing on for another twelve - or even 65 ?

.....

ANON.

**RE-UNIONS - WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING AND WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN.**

THE NINTH SOUTH WEST ANNUAL DINNER WAS HELD AT THE KEYFORD ELMS AT FROME, SOMERSET ON 16 MARCH. THE ORGANISER, 'CURLY' MORRIS, AFTER WELCOMING EVERYBODY INCLUDING OUR PRESIDENT, THANKED MRS JOAN ORAM WHO HAD PRODUCED AN ICED CAKE FOR THE OCCASION. (SEE PHOTO WITH THE NAVAL 'CAKE CUTTING' TRADITION BEING PERFORMED - THE YOUNGEST CREW MEMBER, (NORMAN MINTERN), CUTTING THE CAKE WITH THE SKIPPER (CHRIS TYE). OBVIOUSLY A GREAT TIME WAS HAD BY ALL. THE FOLLOWING LETTER FROM JEAN AND REG WALLER EXPLAINS: We have just returned from Frome and the S.W. Reunion Dinner. I hope you will permit us to write to say how much we enjoyed the superb dinner and company. We have managed to attend quite a few reunions these last few years and they seem to get better every time. It was good to meet our old friends and new members - the evening was so friendly and enjoyable. We look forward to 5th April next, when Curly Morris will be arranging the 10th S.W. Reunion Dinner. Jean & Reg Waller."

OUR HASTINGS DISTRICT MEMBERS HAVE CONTINUED THEIR BI-MONTHLY MEETINGS AT THE ANCHOR INN, OLD TOWN, HASTINGS, AS WELL AS OTHER FUNCTIONS AS FOLLOWS: A RUN UP THE RIVER ROTHER ABOARD THE GOOD SHIP ELSIE MAY, A MEAL AT A LOCAL RIVERSIDE HOSTELRY AND THE RETURN VOYAGE. THEN THEIR ANNUAL DINNER LAST NOVEMBER. IN JANUARY AND MARCH THEY JOINED FORCES WITH THE LOCAL R.N.A. BRANCH, WHERE THE HOSTS PUSHED THE BOAT OUT BY SPLICING THE MAINBRACE. THEN ON SUNDAY 20TH MARCH, TEN MEMBERS WERE INVITED TO JOIN THE CREW OF ONE OF THE LOCAL LIFEBOATS. A WONDERFUL OUTING ENJOYED BY ALL - IT WAS JUST ROUTINE TO COXSWAIN AND CREW, BUT UNFORGETTABLE FOR THOSE WHO ATTENDED - AND PROBABLY UPSETTING TO THOSE MEMBERS WHO WERE UNABLE TO ATTEND.

THE N.R.C. ANNUAL NORTHERN REUNION TOOK PLACE AT THE STRETTON HOTEL, BLACKPOOL, AND AS EVER, WAS A VERY ENJOYABLE WEEK END, THANKS TO OUR ORGANISER LES JONES. DURING THE EVENING OUR GUEST MR. DAVID WATKIN PRESENTED OUR CHAIRMAN WITH A CHEQUE FOR £1200.00 FROM ROYAL MAIL INTERNATIONAL - WITH A REQUEST THAT THIS BY USED ON THE MEMORIAL MAST AT LIVERPOOL PARISH CHURCH. IT IS ENCOURAGING TO NOTE THAT FOR THE FOURTH YEAR RUNNING WE HAVE HAD INCREASED ATTENDANCE AGAIN AT BLACKPOOL! IS IT THE BLACKPOOL AIR? OR IS IT THE HOTEL FACILITIES? MOST LIKELY, IT IS THE ASSEMBLED COMPANY ALL BEING ON THE SAME WAVE LENGTH, ENJOYING EACH OTHERS COMMON INTERESTS.

NO NEWS ONCE AGAIN FROM OUR RAMSGATE/MARGATE MEMBERS ALTHOUGH WE KNOW THAT THEY CONTINUE TO MEET BI-MONTHLY. WHY NOT SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCES WITH US ALL, SHIPMATES?

BY THE TIME YOU RECEIVE THIS EDITION, REUNIONS WILL HAVE BEEN HELD IN POMPEY AND SCOUSELAND (AS OUR PRESIDENT INSISTS ON CALLING IT - BUT HE DOES POSSESS A GENUINE SCOUSE PASSPORT).

WE ARE VERY KEEN TO ARRANGE REUNIONS OR MEETINGS IN OTHER AREAS PARTICULARLY IN SCOTLAND. IF YOU WOULD BE INTERESTED IN ATTENDING A MEETING UP THERE OVER THE BORDER, PLEASE CONTACT OUR HONORARY MEMBER, WHO WILL COLATE THE RESPONSE AND PASS THIS ON TO THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE. HE IS:- MR W.P.SHORT, 102 THISTLE STREET, DUNFERMLINE, FIFE KY12 0JA. Tel 0383 731889.

PERHAPS OTHER MEMBERS WOULD LIKE MEETINGS IN THEIR PARTICULAR AREA - IF SO, CONTACT YOUR NEAREST COMMITTEE MAN - WE WANT TO HELP.

**REUNION DATES 1994-95:**

The following dates are published for your information and you are asked to make contact with the club official who is arranging the particular function:

LONDON WEEKEND: Saturday & Sunday 23rd & 24th July 1994.

Please note that we have not made a block booking for the Royal Tournament at Earls Court this year. However, we can assure you that there is still ample seating available for the Friday Evening Performance on 22nd July. The main Service theme this year is the Royal Air Force.

A separate booking form for your convenience is enclosed for Saturday's Supper Dance at the Union Jack Club, and Sunday's visit the Brookwood Military Cemetery and Buffet Lunch in the Sergeant's Mess at the Brigade of Guards Depot at Pirbright Camp.

SOUTH WALES REUNION; Saturday 3rd September 1994: A Social and Buffet Evening has been arranged at the Constitutional Club, Neath, South Wales. "All In" tickets are £8.00 per person; from Mervyn Williams, 87 Olive Road, Coxford, Southampton SO1 6FT. (Tel: 0703 775875). Guests Welcome. Please send S.A.E. with your booking.

TRAFALGAR NIGHT; ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND TENTH ANNUAL DINNER DANCE: At the Swallow Hotel, Eagle Drive, Northampton. Friday/Saturday 21 & 22 October, 1994. Hotel Tariff for Fri/Sat/Sun. B & B Double or Twin £21.50 p.p. per night. Single Rooms £26.50 per night. Book direct with hotel (state N.R.C.member). Dinner Dance £21.50. Dancing to "Tempo Time". Book with Les Jones (address on page 2) Les has Booking Forms. S.A.E. please. Proposals and business for Annual General Meeting should be forward to the Hon Secretary at least 28 days before meeting.

WEDNESDAY 23 NOVEMBER, 1994: "10TH ANNIVERSARY OF FOUNDATION OF NORTH RUSSIA CLUB": SPECIAL CELEBRATION LUNCH TIME BUFFET MEETING, 1100 to 1700 Members Only. At Victory Services Club, Marble Arch, London. Full details in the next edition.

WEDNESDAY 7 DECEMBER 1994. "OGGIE LAND" CHRISTMAS LUNCH IN THE SENIOR RATES MESS AT H.M.S.DRAKE. - it's not a bit like the old Jago's Mansions!!! Full details in the September edition. Book with Peter Skinner.

**HEY NOT HAVE A GATHERING IN YOUR OWN AREA ?  
CONTACT THE HON SEC (OR YOUR NEAREST COMMITTEE MAN FOR HELP!)**

# ***WE WILL REMEMBER THEM***

By Geoff Shelton, ex-Vindex.

When we were young and in our prime we could shrug off the sub-zero temperatures and the sleepless nights. We tolerated the storms and violent seas, we accepted the low pay, the long hours and the freezing messdecks. We learned to live with fear and to control that inner feeling that screamed for you to be somewhere else. We learned to live with ears deafened by gunfire and depth charge explosions. We all recognised that like a shadowing Blohm and Voss the Grim Reaper shadowed us night and day and seven days a week. Death was never very far away, but we all believed it would be someone else but never us. But when it came to pass that we lost a shipmate we all accepted it with quiet acquiescence, a sorrowful resignation to something we couldn't change. If he had gone overboard we would say a silent prayer, if he hadn't we would have sewn him up in his hammock and with a prayerful service offer his body to the deep. For twenty-four hours the messdeck would be quiet. It was not an enforced silence, it just came to be that way, and then we would auction our shipmate's gear for inflated prices and send the proceeds to his nearest and dearest. There was sadness but no tears.

Those periods of silence were used by shipmates to ponder on their own fears and hopes and aspirations. They thought of loved ones and friends at home, they thought of the departed shipmate's family who were probably still asleep in comfortable beds not knowing as we knew that we had already slipped his body over the side.

We though young were not without feelings. We had become accustomed to the close proximity of death but what feelings do we harbour now fifty years later ?

Since retirement I have had more time to think, to ponder on the past and to meet old shipmates through the medium of The North Russia Club.

I question myself, have my thoughts changed, have my feelings altered, and the answer is yes.

I've changed to the extent that I find that I grieve for my shipmates now more than I ever did. I may not have known them but we shared our dangers together and I miss them and I pray for them and in my private moments I weep for them.

I think of the changes that have taken place since they left us, changes which I have been privileged to witness but which had been denied to them.

One of the worlds most beautiful experiences is to hold the hand of a child in yours. Our dead shipmates will never know that.

They have missed man landing on the moon, England winning the World Cup, colour television, Gigli and Pavarotti, the Two Ronnies, Morecambe and Wise, the new Queen. They know nothing of Korea or Vietnam or the Falklands conflict. They would not know that there would be a Cold War with the very people they gave their lives for. They wouldn't know about the Berlin Wall or the

assassination of Gandhi or Kennedy or Luther King. They wouldn't even know who Kennedy or Luther King were. They would never see the magic of Torvill and Dean, or watch or listen to the beautiful post war musicals. There is so much that has happened and so much to enjoy, all of which has been denied to our departed shipmates. Some died leaving families behind, others never had the chance to know the love of a young lady.

They will never see this lovely island of ours again, they will never see the sun setting over a Scottish loch or daffodils growing in a Cotswold village, even a small wild daisy will never know them, will never be picked or felt or studied by them.

These are the reasons why my grief is more profound, these are the reasons why I feel so emotional and my heart is heavy with sorrow.

I headed this article "We will Remember them", but why? The answer is simply that we cannot forget them.

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"UP SPIRITS"  
By Geoff Shelton.

THE DAY WILL COME AS SURE IT MUST WHEN THE MEMBERSHIP BOOK WILL BE CLOSED FOR THE LAST TIME, THE ACCOUNTS BALANCED AND THE PROCEEDS DISTRIBUTED WITH NOTHING LEFT IN THE KITTY. THE CHAIRMAN'S GAVEL WILL REMAIN SILENT AND THE NORTHERN LIGHT WILL BE PEACEFULLY LAID TO REST.

THERE WILL BE NO MORE MARCHES, NO MORE LAYING OF WREATHS AND NO ONE LEFT WITH THE RIGHT TO WEAR THE RUSSIAN MEDAL AND, DEAR SHIPMATES, WHEN THAT DAY ARRIVES AND THE LAST MAN TURNS OUT THE LIGHTS, WE WILL ALL BE WAITING FOR HIM AT THE PEARLY GATES TO WELCOME HIM AND IF HE DOESN'T BRING A BARREL OF PUSSEY'S RUM WITH HIM WE'LL SEND HIM BACK!

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**WANTED**  
**GOOD WOMAN**  
**MUST BE ABLE TO**  
**CLEAN, COOK, SEW,**  
**DIG WORMS AND**  
**CLEAN FISH**

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**MUST OWN A BOAT**  
**AND CAR**

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**PLEASE SEND PHOTO OF BOAT AND CAR.**

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### "CHINESE WHISPERS" in the Arctic.

By John Eldred ex-HARRIER

A few members of Naval Party 100 and the 'lucky' ones enjoying life on board and being based in or around Polyarnoe; will remember hunting for Polar Bears. I only went once with an English speaking member of the Red Fleet, as it is a very short season held only at the beginning of Spring. The method is quite simple - as the days begin to lengthen the bears begin to wander around in search of food, so that a hole is made in the ice and tinned peas scattered around it. As the bears are partial to the peas, it is not long before one is attracted and begins to eagerly eat the peas. As quick as a flash a brave member of the party dashes out and kicks the bear in the ice-hole. A net and a rope is then secured over the helpless animal and the process is repeated until the supply of bears (or peas) runs out.

Recently I was in a bar telling a friend "how I did it", and explaining that I didn't know how bear meat tasted.

A couple of days later, same bar, same friend, we heard a lady telling her friend how polar bears are caught. "You sprinkle peas around an ice-hole and when the bear bends over you kick it up the bum-hole. Perhaps she was too much of a lady to trust herself to say ice-hole, after all it was the Loughton Tennis and Bowls Club.

Since starting to write I remembered the date when the season opened - it was the feast of St. Michael - the First of April!

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### ARE YOU GOING ASHORE, BUNTS?

By Maurice Cross

I was always slightly amazed when in various wartime pubs, large hairy matelots, stoned out of their minds, loved to sing songs about their dear old mothers. The singers' mates sometimes threatening the reluctant audience with dire punishment if the didn't "Give 'im a chance, mate".

I remember one such alleged singer, a great muscular Geordie, alcoholic tears rolling down his cheeks, rendering (believe me) Mother Macree.

When he reached "Sure I love the dear silver that shines in your hair" he broke off in mid-verse and thumped a couple of unappreciative Seaman Gunners, who replied in kind - thereby creating a bit of a fracas.

We generally abandoned ship at this point to seek a quieter pub. Isn't the next line of that song "And the brow that's all furrowed and wrinkled with care?" said Sparks. "Well I shall be wrinkled with bloody care if we dont find a pub before they shut or run out of beer".

I enjoyed the pub singsongs - not the drunken shouting kind but pleasant harmonising songs like "You are my Sunshine" or "Home on the Range".

With my shore-going mates we had quite a Barbers Shop group.

Sometimes we had to cope with boozed up blokes who demanded their favourites. Hey Jimmie, I wanna hear "Bonnie Charlie's gang awa' that's what I wanna hear". "Dont take any notice of Haggis, he's as missed as a pewt" says Dai, "Let's have "There'll be a welcome in the Hillside".

"What about "My old man said follow the van and dont dilly dally on the way" demanded a Londoner.

"Ach!" says Jock, "away ye go mon, Bonnie Charlie's gang awa' that's what we want". "Shouldn't Bonnie Charlie have buggered off by now" queried the Londoner. Let's have "Yours".

"Whats 'Yours' asks Dai. "I'll have a doubly whuskey" says Jock. "No, no! 'You're still the end of Life's Story', Vera Lynn's song - or 'There'll be Bluebirds over the White Cliffs of Dover".

"Sod the Bluebirds" says Jock, swaying on his feet, "We'll have 'Carry the lad who was born to be king over the sea to Skye'. "Why dont

you shove off over the sea to \*\*\*\*\* Skye Haggis, and give us all a break"? "If it wasn't for you bluidy Sassenachs" raged Jock, awash with alcoholic nationalism, "Prince Charles Edward Stuart would be sitting on the thrones of Scotland, England and Wales!" He'd have to have a big backside for that mate" said the Londoner.

"Oh for crying out loud I shouted "this is supposed to be a singsong, not the second rising of the clans. "We'll have 'Dont fence me in', followed by 'Roaming in the Gloaming' - just to keep Bonnie Prince Charlie happy".

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