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3/89

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE NORTH RUSSIA CLUB

3/89

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EDITORIAL

The main feature in this edition, is as promised, a report on the convoys JW64 and RA64. A great deal of material was submitted by our members and I apologise to anyone who's contributions have been omitted. The article runs to six-and-a-half pages and is the most comprehensive 'joint effort' that we have made - I hope you all enjoy reading it. Next edition we want to feature the Escort Carriers and their role in the Arctic Campaign. Send your bits and pieces to me as soon as you can, certainly not later than by mid-May. Perhaps you may know of books with articles which would make interesting reading. Please let me know, so that I can obtain permission from the publishers to reprint excerpts. The following edition can hopefully feature 'Merchant Navy Stories' (copy by mid-August please) and then 'The Battle of North Cape' (mid-Nov.) But dont forget the other stories, poems and letters too - let's all keep our 'NORTHERN LIGHT' shining brightly for years to come - it's your magazine - so help it along!!

The first edition of Northern Light in 1989 and the first opportunity to show you a few of the New Year messages we received from our friends in Murmansk.

Dear Mr. Kenneth Clarke.
Dear friends, comrades-in-arms.

Our warmest greetings and best wishes for the coming 1989 year.

Please, accept our sincerest gratitude for Your noble work at the "North Russia" Club, for Your great efforts, energy and Knowledge of life.

From the bottoms of our hearts we wish You strong health, happiness to Your families, Peace to all. Merry Christmas, bright moods, joyful New-Year tree.

Soviet War Veterans Committee,
Murmansk Branch

Маргарита Клевер

Antonina Shabayeva

Please, accept my warmest greeting and wishes for the 1989 year.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year, Good Health, good friends, success in all Your Efforts.

Antonina Shabayeva
Presidium Member of the SWVC, Murmansk

Thank you very much for what you have done for our country during the World War II. The only thing which we can do now is to remember about your heroic deeds. To remember about you is our duty for the whole world.

The students of the teacher-training college of Murmansk.

To the "North Russia Club" Members

Dear Friends,
- Happy New Year 1989 -
Every success and luck in all your deeds, best wishes to your families. Please, keep well and fit to keep the peaceful North Russia Campaign Line going, alive, bringing you to Murmansk, the city that suffered but survived, the city that welcomes you and loves you.
May the Coming Year be peaceful, fruitful in achieving good-willed political goals.
Much respect and love - Julia Ostashechenko

Compiled from Admiralty Operations Reports, Nazi Archives, United States Navy signals, the Imperial War Museum correspondence, various British and Norwegian newspaper reports and more important, the personal recollections of club members Bill Looker (ex 'Denbigh Castle') and Len Phillips (ex 'Opportune').

The war against the Nazis, on both Western and Eastern Fronts was reaching its climax. In order to conserve manpower it had been decided to close down Loch Ewe as a convoy assembly point in favour of the Clyde. Convoy JW64 consequently sailed from Greenock on February 3rd 1945, the convoy and the return leg RA64 were to meet the last desperate threats of the U-boats and JW88 air arm. To add to the dangers, Mother Nature gave a final display of the Arctic weather with storms and hurricanes.

The convoy, under the command of Rear Admiral McGrigor, comprised of 26 merchant ships escorted by the destroyer 'ZEBRA' and elements of the 7th and 8th Escort Groups of Western Approaches Command, destroyer 'WHITEHALL', sloops 'CYGNET', 'LAPWING' and 'LARK', and corvettes 'BAMBOROUGH CASTLE', 'ALNWYCK CASTLE', 'BLUEBELL' and 'RHODODENDRON'. On 5th February the oiler 'BLACK RANGER' escorted by 'SERAPHIS' and 'DENBIGH CASTLE' joined the convoy. During the forenoon of the 6th the large fleet escort force rendezvoused this comprised of 'CAMPANIA' (Capt. K.A. Short) flying Rear Admiral McGrigor's flag, 'NAIRANA' (Capt. V.N. Surtees), 'BELLONA' (Capt. G.S. Tuck) and eight destroyers 'ONSLow', 'ONSLAUGHT', 'OPPORTUNE', 'ORWELL', 'SIOUX', 'ZAMBESI', 'ZEST' and 'ZEALOUS'. At this stage 'ZEBRA' was detached to the Faroes with defects.

An hour or so later the convoy was sighted by an enemy aircraft making a routine meteorological flight from Trondheim, and that afternoon the first shadower was sighted. This plane, a JU88, was quickly destroyed by two Wildcats from 'CAMPANIA', one of which was lost in the fight, with its pilot Sub Lieut. Smyth; from then on the convoy was shadowed day and night, until the day before Kola was reached.

Early next morning 7th Feb., the convoy was being shadowed and Rear Admiral McGrigor, anticipating a dawn torpedo attack, ordered the escort to continue in its night cruising screen disposition. (In his report the Rear Admiral stated....."which had proved very suitable with its two concentric circles of escorts"). A number of JU88 torpedo bombers were engaged at 0745, one was shot down by 'DENBIGH CASTLE' (Lieut. Cmdr. G. Butcher RNVR.). The convoy's course was altered 90° to starboard towards the dawn, so bringing the enemy's most favourable attacking sector astern. Radar indicated two groups of about 12 planes to the north-west and south-west, but no attacks were launched and they withdrew at 0900. Low cloud and bad light prevented two of 'NAIRANA's' Wildcats from intercepting them, but they later set a shadower on fire.

During the 8th and 9th February, shadowers were much in evidence and were making homing signals for U-boats. An attempted attack during the evening of the 8th by the only night fighter with the force failed, due to the extreme darkness and poor R/T communication. The fighter - an old Fulmar - was damaged beyond repair whilst landing on 'CAMPANIA'. But no attacks, either by submarines or aircraft materialised. Continuous air searches for U-boats failed to provide sightings. This was probably due to the convoy passing round the northern flank of the submarine patrol line, as the Rear Admiral had steered slightly to the northward of the route before turning eastward. Late on the 9th all flying was stopped due to extreme weather conditions, but the following morning (10th) the situation changed rapidly.

Shadows appeared at 0340, when the convoy was just short of Bear Island and only about 250 miles from Bardufoss. Shortly before 1000 an aircraft was reported closing from the southward. This was thought to be a Soviet plane, on the strength of a corrupt message from the Senior British Naval Officer's base at Polyarnoe!! But 'SIOUX' recognised it as a JU88 and drove it off with one engine on fire, but not before it had dropped its torpedo. this was the only warning received of the forthcoming torpedo attack; the Rear Admiral subsequently remarked, "That it was fortunate, as it gave the screens time to start moving into their anti-aircraft positions and brought everyone to the alert".

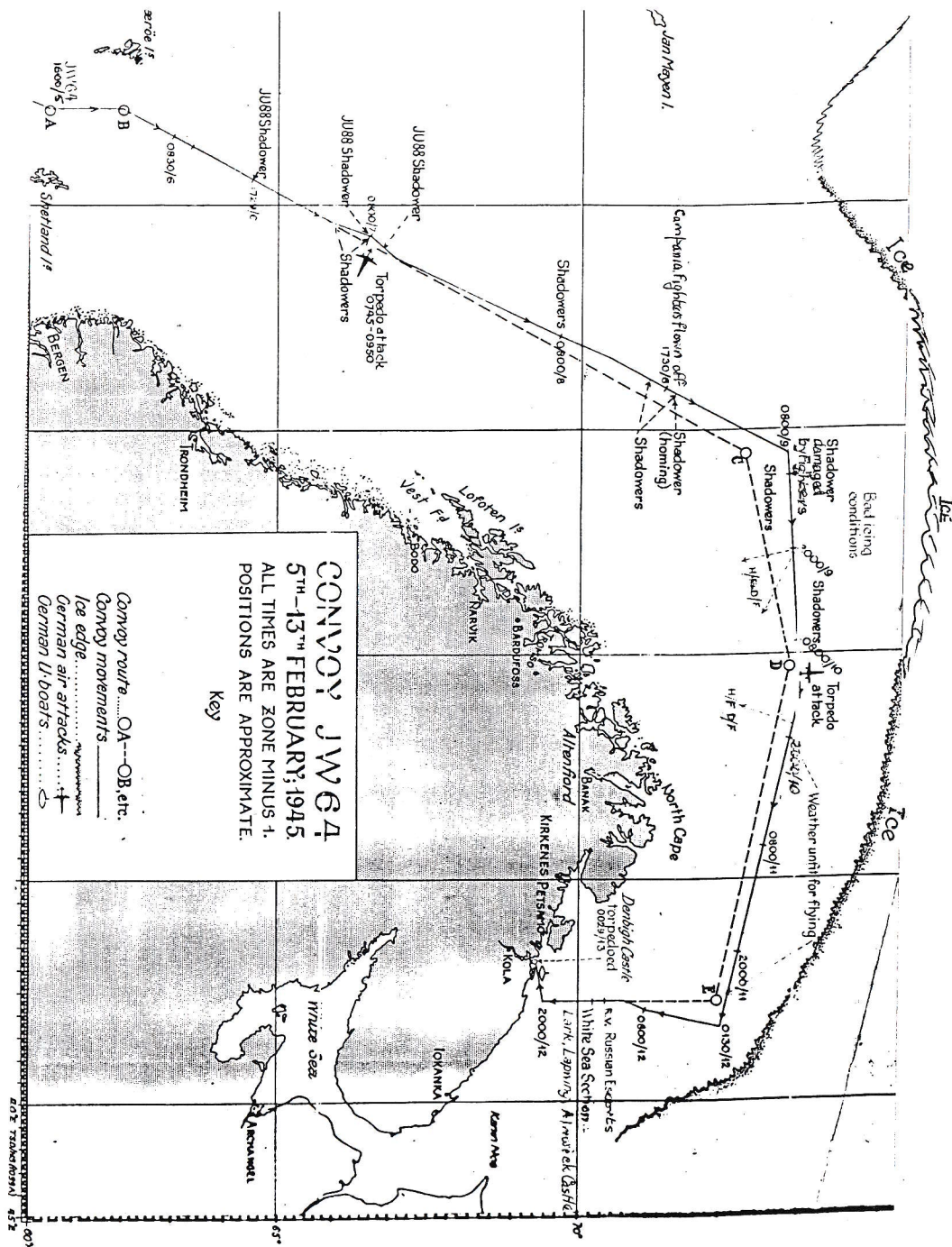
The weather and light were poor with 10/10ths cloud, rain squalls and between whiles visibility of about 5 miles. At 1019 the main attack started to appear on the radar screens, approaching from the starboard bow. 'WHITEHALL' (Lieut-Comdr. P.J. Cowell), the right hand ship of the extended screen ahead, sighted two groups of eight JU88s ahead, each closing at sea level. One group was coming straight for her. She and 'LARK' (Comdr. H. Lambton), broke up this formation with their gunfire, causing it to take evasive action. The Rear Admiral's report to the Admiralty included:-and then when three aircraft detached themselves to attack 'WHITEHALL' with torpedoes, she sent one away damaged, shot down the second, shared the third with 'LARK', and successfully avoided all torpedoes. Fine work by a veteran destroyer from 1916 with a close armament of only two Oerlikons each side".

'ORWELL' and 'NAIRANA's fighters also shot down aircraft; the latter with 'CYGNET', 'SIOUX' and 'ONSLow' got 'probables' or inflicted damage. Meanwhile the convoy had turned 90° away from these attacks by emergency turns, and more fighters were flown off the carriers. Further attacks developed from all directions, the most concentrated from the starboard bow. These torpedoes were 'combed' by more emergency turns, some of them exploding in the wakes inside the convoy. The reports received from the outer screen of approaching torpedoes was of paramount importance.

These attacks cost the enemy further aircraft. 'CAMPANIA's fighter got one 'probable' and damaged another; 'ONSLAUGHT' (Comdr. The Hon. A. Pleydell-Bouverie) shot down one, and the port wing of the convoy with the help of 'CAMPANIA' and escorts "dropped their JU88 neatly amongst the rear ships of the convoy"; further aircraft were also damaged by other escorts. But, unfortunately, some of our own aircraft returning to the carrier were also fired on by both escorts and merchant ships, in spite of a warning about them on convoy R/T. The Rear Admiral subsequently stated "This showed a quite inexcusable lack of fire discipline even taking into account the bad visibility low cloud and pace of events. There is little resemblance between a JU88 and a Wildcat and none with a Swordfish".

After 1100 there was a lull, but at 1130 more JU88s arrived. One was shot down by 'NAIRANA's fighters and that finished the attacks. The total score was assessed at seven shot down, four 'probables', eight damaged out of 20 - 25 which took part. We suffered the loss of one fighter, the pilot of which was saved and we suffered no damage to ships. A good morning's work! The Nazis, in an attempt to cover up these losses, made sweeping claims of successes.

There is little more to say about the convoy before it reached the entrance to Kola Inlet. No further air attacks were occurred, but icing, heavy snow showers and short visibility hampered air operations; but whenever the weather permitted anti-submarine patrols were flown. On 12th February the Russian escort was met and the Archangel section of the convoy departed under the escort of 'LARK', 'LAPWING' and 'ALNWICK CASTLE', as extended screen as far as entrance to the White Sea. The remainder arrived at the Kola Inlet in pitch darkness and the merchant ships proceeded up the Inlet in snow squalls and poor visibility. Soon after midnight 'DENBIGH CASTLE'



was struck by a torpedo from U-992 (Lieut Falke), her position was reported as 69°20'N - 33°33'E, just outside the entrance. Greatly to the credit of her officers and ship's company she was kept afloat, and 'BLUEBELL' (Lieut. G.H. Walker) did excellent work in towing her in. She had, however, to be beached before reaching the anchorage, and later turned over on her side and became a total loss. The casualties on 'DENBIGH CASTLE' were one Petty Officer killed, one Telegraphist died of wounds, seven seamen and two telegraphists 'missing presumed killed' and six other survivors wounded.

So, convoy JW64 had arrived despite the enemy and the weather. It was at this time that it was decided to despatch destroyers to evacuate Norwegian civilians from the island of Soroy. See previous issues of Northern Light to remind you of Len Phillips's story.

A further sequel, again supplied by Len, is published on the right. It was first published in the London Daily Mail. Len has brought this episode to a very happy ending, in that he has now located this 'baby', he is now a 43 year old man, living in Hammerfest, Norway. He is now known as Johannes Olsen (all the rest would be quite a mouthful!)

Following the arrival of JW64 at Kola Inlet, two merchant ships arriving from Archangel under Russian escort, were torpedoed by U-968 almost in the same place that 'DENBIGH CASTLE' had been struck. It was apparent that the enemy were massing their forces to meet the return convoy RA64!!

The Rear Admiral, in his report, said, "It was clear, that on sailing RA64 would have to force its way through a strong concentration of U-boats..... at least one U-boat was working right in the entrance, where three ships had been torpedoed in the last three days, while HF/DF fixes and Russian reports showed that others were clustered along the first 40 miles of the convoy route and could not be avoided".

In these circumstances he decided to send all suitable escort vessels to hunt the approaches as far as 35°E the night before sailing, and arranged for Russian aircraft to flood the area on the day of sailing so as to keep the U-boats down; Russian escorts were to follow the convoy till dark to take charge of any damaged ships and Russian tugs were to stand by. Accordingly, 'CYGNET' (Cmdr Thorold), 'LARK', 'LAPWING', 'ALNWICK CASTLE' and 'BAMBOROUGH CASTLE' sailed at dusk on 16th February. 'LARK' and 'ALNWICK CASTLE', who were sweeping off Kildin Island, sank U-425 and picked up one German survivor - this was most welcome as the U-boat had fired the current Russian signal of recognition just before its final disappearance.

Thirty four merchant ships sailed the following morning 17th. The leading ships passed Toros Island at 0745, but the convoy was very slow getting out, and two hours later eight ships were still in the Inlet. It was not long before trouble started. At 1024 the 'LARK', then sweeping ahead of the convoy, was torpedoed by U-968 (Lieut. Westphalen) and had her stern blown off. She was kept afloat and eventually towed back into harbour. At mid-day the same U-boat had a further success, torpedoing the U.S. merchantman 'THOMAS SCOTT'

Baby Born as U-Boat, Planes Attack Ship

The trans-Atlantic edition of 'The London Daily Mail' tells the story of a baby born on a United States Liberty ship in the midst of U-boat attacks, dive-bomber raids and one of the worst storms that has ever battered a convoy around the North Cape.

The child's mother was one of 500 Norwegian men, women and children of the little Island of Soroy who were snatched from the Germans by the British Navy. From a destroyer the young woman of nineteen was transferred to the Liberty ship Baron Russell Briggs.

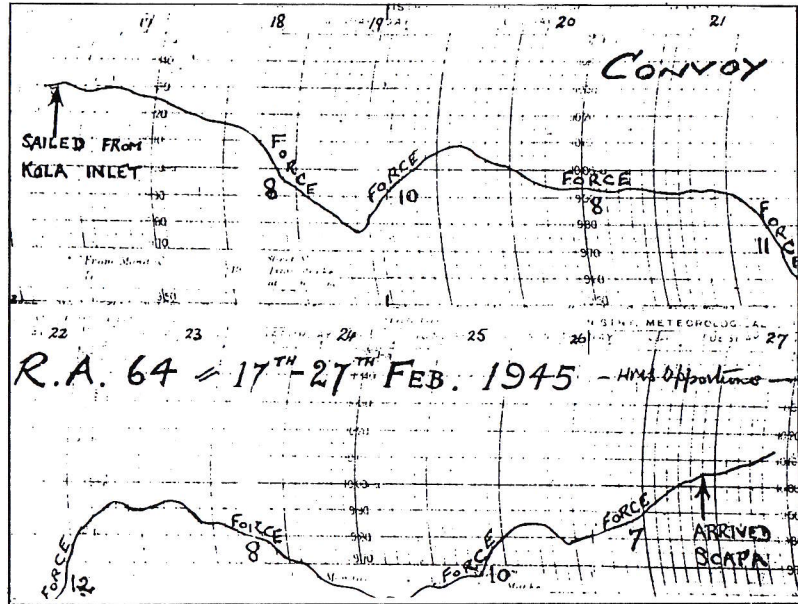
The child, brought into the world by the pharmacist's mate with the assistance of two Norwegian women, was christened Lee Baron Russell Briggs Olsen. Now six weeks old, the child with its mother is safe in a hostel in Scotland.

within sight of 'LARK'. The crew immediately abandoned ship although she was still floating on an even keel with little sign of damage, in a calm sea and surrounded by escorts. The Rear Admiral considered that she could have been saved but for the premature abandonment, However, she later sank whilst under tow.

Next followed the tragic sinking of 'BLUEBELL' which has been well chronicled in previous Northern Lights. At this time the escort was short handed as Comdr. Thorold with four escort vessels were still standing by the damaged 'LARK'. The Russians eventually took over at 1740, and succeeded in towing her into harbour; and Cmdr Thorold's vessels overtook the convoy early next morning, 18th February. That day was uneventful and there were no signs of U-boats. In the afternoon the weather deteriorated, and all flying had to be stopped, and that night a gale blew up, with a big swell and sea and a wind of 60 knots between gusts from ahead. By the morning of the 19th the convoy was scattered; the gale continued throughout the day, moderating to Force 8 about 2300. (See 'OPPORTUNE's barograph trace on following page). At first light in the morning of the 20th the task of reforming the convoy began. This was a matter of urgency, as enemy aircraft had started shadowing at 0420 and a torpedo attack was expected to follow. The escorts did well, Some idea of what this work entailed comes from Captain Allison's report on 'ZAMBESI's activities at this time - 'It is noteworthy that it took 'ZAMBESI' 12 hours continuous steaming at the highest possible speed over an area of 1,000 sq. miles to round up nine stragglers'. Also, for the rest of the voyage only one more vessel was sunk - the 'HENRY BACON'. Two stragglers were not rounded up - the 'EMPIRE CELIA' and 'WARREN DELANO' safely reached the Faroes under their own steam. The hard pressed escorts were reinforced on the 20th by 'SAVAGE', 'SCOURGE' and 'ZEBRA'. ('MYNGS', 'SCORPION' and 'CAVALIER' joined the force, arriving from Scapa on 23rd).

At 1000 on 20th groups of aircraft were detected approaching from the port bow and right ahead of the convoy which was steering 270°. The sea was still very rough with strong winds, but 'NAIRANA' flew off fighters to intercept. The convoy's course was manoeuvred to the southward to bring the aircraft on the quarter and it was from this direction that most of the attacks came, Though a few came from ahead. A large number of torpedoes exploded through breaking surface in the trough of the rough seas, and there were no casualties, either to the convoy or the stragglers, one of which was attacked. By 1140 the last enemy plane had been driven off by Wildcats. Over 25 planes had taken part, of these 'ONSLOW', 'ZEALOUS' and fighters had each shot down one; the fighters and 'BAMBOROUGH CASTLE' each got a probable, and four were damaged by 'RHODODENDRON', 'SIOUX' and 'LAPWING'.

By this time in the war a great deal of information was being released to the media, and we conclude the story from the transcript of part of a broadcast on B.B.C. Home Service by a war correspondent..... "the 'NAIRANA' sent up four fighters: in spite of the most appalling seas she got them into the air somehow. Those fighter pilots risked their lives even before they went into battle, and what's more they knew that landing afterwards was going to be even more risky. Throughout the action the wind increased rapidly. By the time the fighters returned there was a seventy-mile-an-hour gale blowing. The 'NAIRANA's bows were dipping under the huge waves; her screw almost clear of the water each time she pitched. Everyone with glasses was watching the aircraft and the heaving flight deck. The first fighter came in; it looked as though the stern would touch her wheels. Then the deck canted the other way; it looked as if the fighter would hit the deck in the middle. At the last moment the ship steadied, so the plane made a perfect landing. The pilot and the batsman on deck had timed it perfectly. Only one of the four planes crashed, and even she landed on alright, but the pitching bounced her over the arrester wires and she hit the barrier. The pilot was unhurt. And to crown it all, these fighters had shot down one JU88 for certain, and another probable.



JW64/RA64 continued. Another hurricane, lasting 24 hours, scattered the convoy for a second time. The furious seas were exhausting for us in a 16,000-ton ship, but in the destroyers and smaller escorts it must have been a thousand times worse. In the 'CAMPANIA', it was almost impossible to stand without support. Men walking along the alleyways looked like drunks staggering from side to side. I tried going from the bridge to a ward-room aft: one moment I felt like a fairy with my feet hardly touching the ground, and the next I was like an elephant with feet of lead. I could hardly get my feet off the ground. To get to the ward-room required almost as much effort as walking three miles. I just got there when the ship gave a terrific roll from side to side. She went through 81 degrees, officially recorded. Tables screwed to the deck were wrenched from their fixings; chairs, crockery, books, settees - everything was slung in a heap of debris in one corner, and on top of the mound of struggling officers. It was amazing no one was hurt. Yet even more amazing, everyone was laughing. The Germans would have cursed; Italians probably have wept; but these British men were laughing. In the alleys and messdecks it was the same. The sailors were laughing, and in the operations room a few minutes later I found Captain Short. He was standing with a mug of cocoa in one hand and a huge sandwich in the other. He was talking to the Admiral and they were both grinning as though they had paid a bob to ride on a non-stop switchback.

After twenty-four hours the wind began easing and we started reforming the convoy for a second time. We began to take stock of the situation. It was not very encouraging. One merchant ship reported a split deck, as a result of the bad weather, another was steering with block and tackle because her steering gear had been smashed. Others could move no quicker than walking pace. Destroyers reported smashed boats and wrecked gear. Then once again the JU88s arrived. But instead of the convoy they chose a single straggler - the 'HENRY BACON' - nineteen of them attacked her. She didn't have a chance, but she fought for a quarter-of-an-hour and damaged two aircraft before she went down. I'm glad to say our destroyers picked up most of her gallant crew.

For the rest of the dreary voyage we rolled and rocked along at three or four knots, an occasional hour or two at six knots was a luxury. Then, when we were almost in sight of Britain the sun came out, a pale watery sun that showed up the salt-caked funnels of the merchant ships and escorts against the wintry sky, like black shadows on a back cloth, but to us, this sun was a symbol of home. Bone weary and exhausted though we all were. Admiral McGrigor had got us home.

THE PEOPLE - Page 5

NAVY DELIVERS THE GOODS TO STALIN'S ARMIES

Convoy Beats Planes, U-Boats, In 90 m.p.h. Gale

CONVOY FIGHTS THE ENEMY IN 80 m.p.h. GALE

CONVOY'S BATTLE IN ARCTIC SUPPLIES DELIVERED INTACT

U-boat packs smashed in Arctic battle
By VERNON BROWN, the Navy Correspondent

CONVOY FIGHTS THROUGH TO RUSSIA
Fierce German Air and U-Boat Attacks and Violent Weather

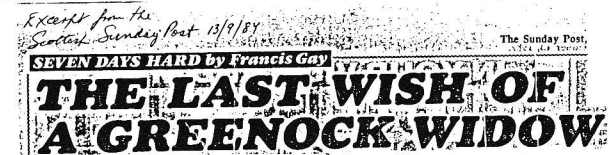
WRECKED CONVOY IN ARCTIC BATTLE
Planes Beat Luftwaffe In 70 M.P.H. Gale

THE DAILY MIRROR, FEBRUARY 17, 1945

The battle of seven days that all were nights

FROM DECKS OF SNOW THEY FLEW TO BEAT HUN

A more recent headline with a story worth reading:-



IT was a bitter night in November, 1942. The SS Empire Sky was sailing off Bear Island in the Arctic Ocean, her holds packed with ammunition, heavy tanks lining her decks, when she was hit by a torpedo from a German U-boat. The crew rushed to the lowered lifeboats and were rowing away when a second torpedo struck and a massive explosion lit the night sky. There were no survivors among the lifeboats and even the U-boat was damaged in the blast and had to limp home. Among the sailors who perished that night was James Carr. Back home in Smith Street, Greenock, his sorrowing widow Kate was left with three bairns to bring up. Many a time she went hungry herself to

make sure the children were fed. She made a good job of raising the three and instilled into them the difference between right and wrong and the importance of keeping promises. Several times she told them something else. That when her time came, she wanted to be beside her man. Sadly, Kate passed away in July and her daughter began the task of fulfilling her mother's dying wish. So, some weeks later, from the Hull-based Arctic Corsair, the captain and crew reverently scattered the ashes on the cold waters off Bear Island. After 45 years, Kate was united again with her husband.

YOUR LETTERS

From Bill Johnston, (ex N.P.100 & 'Tracker').

Seaports we knew!! Think back to yesterday, and the ports from which the convoys sailed, how well we knew them and the people ashore. Over the long, long years, they had so many varied dealings with both the Royal and Merchant Navies. They knew the men, their habits and their ways. They knew the ships too. Great liners, warships of all descriptions, aye even the humble trampships and lowley coasters.

How well, the men who manned those self same ships had regard for these places. Liverpool, Belfast, Southampton, Glasgow and the wide expanse of the Firth of Clyde, Bristol, Hull, Tyneside, Pompey, Guzz and the Forth with it's mammoth railway bridge. Each and every one can conjure up nostalgic and happy memories of bygone times. The runs ashore, or going on leave from them to our homes elsewhere.

Oh yes, we all have so many memories of those harbours, so often a welcome sight, after the long spells at sea, and all the rigours that wartime voyaging entailed.

So, when we make our annual pilgrimage of reunion linking all those, who like myself recall the ports from which we sailed those many years gone by. I wonder why we do not pay them a visit on some of our annual outings and conjure up old times, old places once again.

After all, we knew them well, and their people shared with us so many bonds, that, even yet, are still recalled. So, to the powers that be, think about it, and let's stroll down Memory Lane, for old times sake! Perhaps every second or third year, we should tread their streets again.

Next, another 'Johnno', this time John Johnson (ex 'Mahratta') and 'Inglefield'.

I write to you in the fond hope that you will publish this in Northern Light, in the hope that I will be able to contact some of the many shipmates with whom I served on various ships during 1942 and 1945.

I commissioned 'Jamaica' at Barrow in 1942, then in November of that year I was drafted to 'Inglefield' and served aboard until February 1943, then I joined 'Mahratta' in March and stayed aboard until August of the same year, only leaving her two days before she sailed on her last tragic voyage. From October 1943 until January 1945 I was aboard 'Searcher'. From that you will see that I know a little of the Arctic Campaign and northern waters. I was a time serving Leading Seaman throughout that time. I am now endeavouring to write a book of my Naval Service and experiences.

I have, in the past few months been fortunate enough to contact a shipmate - Jim Duckworth - who was a survivor of 'Charybdis' and is now the secretary of the Charybdis Association. I travelled to Plymouth last August my first visit since demob in 1946. I met up with Jim for the first time in 46 years. It was a striking and emotive

YOUR LETTERS (continued)

meeting I assure you.

To revert to H.M.S. 'Mahratta', there were a total of three 'Johnsons' on board her, Two left before she sailed on her last voyage, the third, I met in Glasgow some three months later. He was one of the fifteen survivors. I can only recall that he was a Scot. I hope that Northern Light will be of assistance in my search for shipmates and friends.

John Johnson

From Merlyn Noble, (ex-'Boadicea')

Your request for anecdotes of happenings brings to mind a request to Commander Broderick of M.M.S. 'Boadicea' for something to ease the strain of Murmansk Convoys. We had a suggestion box, and Walter Housely - a Yorkshireman - had the idea that we should pipe down each night to the tune of Gounod's 'Ave Maria'. So, it became regular routing each night for the 'Pipe Down' call to be accompanied by that soft and soothing music, of which we never tired. Which shows the difference between established and well loved music and what we hear from the 'Pop Scene' today!

From our Secretary, Chris Tye.

Never be lonely at Christmas! If you are in N.R.C. get yourself off to the Union Jack Club!!

Three widowers, Harry Baker, George Harman and I experienced a most enjoyable Christmas, with five days at the Union Jack Club, Waterloo. We met and spent considerable time in the company of 18 couples, all ex-Service, all over 60. There were ex-Matelots, Royal Marines, Army and RAF with their wives. The three of us were not alone from the moment we walked into the club and welcomed into the company of the couples.

The 'Three Must-get-beers' arrived at noon on the day before Christmas Eve (23rd), and were allocated En-Suite Single Rooms for five nights. After Morning Service At Westminster Abbey on Christmas Day, Christmas Dinner, as much as could be eaten. Followed in the evening with an excellent Buffet. A superb Social and Buffet on Boxing Day, and of course breakfast each morning. The catering throughout the five days was excellent. Many ex-Service friends were made who, on parting were but 'Ships that pass in the Night'

The cost for 5 days was £97 for members and £108 for non members! Why be lonely at Christmas?

Chris

Calling all Coders.

Dear Editor,

A re-union of all Coders will be held on April 22nd 1989 at Lowton St Mary's, Leigh, Lancashire. This is the 4th. bi-annual re-union which also includes the ships company of H.M.S. 'CABALA', and WRNS Communicators. Join us and make the lamps swing. Details from J. Wilcock, 37, Henry Vernone Court, Pier St., Hull, H11 1UZ. Tel: 0482 26738. S.A.E. please.

Thanking you in anticipation,
Joyce Wilcock.

Joyce is an ex-'Jenny Sparker' married to an ex-Coder.

H.M.S. 'Forester'?

Dear Richard,

Does any of our members know of any books outlining the exploits of H.M.S. 'Forester' 1942-1944? I am interested in buying a copy or copies.

(Name and address included in the 'Welcome Aboard' list enclosed with this Northern Light)

Best Wishes

Ken Godwin.

U.S.S. 'Alabama' and 'South Dakota'.

Dear Dick,

Reference S.F. Tiffin's recollections when these two Yanks joined the Home Fleet in '42. Signalmen from 'Furious' were asked to volunteer for duties onboard these Battlewagons, needless to say, no-one volunteered, so some were detailed off! Their duties being to help speed up the reading of messages passed by signal lamp. The message soon got back of luxury living, good food and 'Goffer bars' in the Rec. Space. O.K. for some, too late for others who now wished to volunteer! Those signalmen who had been in Philadelphia in 1941/early '42 should have known better.

Yours,

Neville W. Rogers.

Neville supplied two snapshots of these ships taken in 1943 off Spitzbergen, using a Kodak Brownie Box Camera. Unfortunately, they were not suitable for printing in N.L.

Hullo again and welcome, particularly to our latest intake of new members, most especially to four more from Australia and two more from Canada. Our membership stands at 776 - another healthy increase.

NEWSLETTERS. Hitherto there has been a separate Newsletter between issues of 'Northern Light'. However, following a lot of discussion in committee it has been decided to dispense with this - but the Newsletters issued with 'N.L.' will be more informative and newsy. It will always be found as the removable centre pages of the publication and will always be distinctive in a different coloured paper - as this one is! The reasons for these changes are numerous, but mainly to cut down on the many hours spent on additional Newsletters and to cut out the additional mailings which cost approximately £115 each time! This means that notifications of special functions with the required booking forms will be received well in advance of the relevant dates. Please keep a note of dates and don't lose your forms. To avoid 'Willy-Nilly' acceptance of these bookings and remittances please take special note of the opening dates for sending in your forms. We need your continued support to make the functions viable. I now refer to the first big week end in London.

FRIDAY 28th JULY 1989. 'THE ROYAL TOURNAMENT' AT EARLS COURT: We are making block booking for the Friday Evening performance. The Friday and Saturday shows are very popular and are quickly booked up. So if you wish to come (with or without wives and guests) fill in the form and send it to Dick, NOW! Bookings will close on 20th April. The charges for tickets include a 10% discount.

SATURDAY 29th JULY 1989. THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING FOLLOWED BY A 'MEMBERS, LADIES AND GUESTS, BUFFET SUPPER DANCE AT THE VICTORY SERVICES CLUB, SEYMOUR STREET, MARBLE ARCH, LONDON W2: The A.G.M. commences at 1345, the ladies may attend if they wish some of your lasses may find it interesting and in any case it will keep them out of those boring shops in Oxford Street!! Then, from 1730 to midnight, the "Big Do"! Dancing (and singing) to the Alan Bannister Cabaret Show Band. That's the same band that we had last year.

By the way, if any member has anything that he wishes to be placed on the agenda for the A.G.M. he must forward this in advance to Dick. Accommodation :- as the 'Ladies Nights' are held at the Victory Services Club, we occasionally encounter accommodation shortages. So why not join that club? Membership from 1st April is £7.50, after that you can reserve a Single Room from £9.72 or Double from £26 exclusive of breakfast. You then have your hotel problems solved whenever you are in London! However, for reunions and functions held there, N.R.C. members can get a few rooms for special booking - we have a provisional booking for the above event of 10% of the projected attendance (18 rooms) - details from Chris. Alternatively, the Union Jack Club at Waterloo has a Temporary Honorary Membership for ex-Servicemen at similar prices. There is also a small hotel near Victoria Coach Station - the Lime Tree Hotel, 135/137 Ebury Street, London SW1W. with a special rate for N.R.C. members for Double Room with bath/shower/WC at £25 per person inclusive of breakfast for the night of 29th July - their phone number is 01 730 8191, tell them you are a member of N.R.C.

THANKSGIVING WEEK END TO MARK THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE OUTBREAK OF WAR ON SATURDAY 2ND AND SUNDAY 3RD SEPTEMBER NEXT: On the Saturday forenoon we will visit Brookwood Military Cemetery to place a wreath on the Russian Memorial. This memorial is enscribed with the names of all Commonwealth servicemen from two world wars who are interred in Russia. Brookwood is in Surrey and is a short train journey from Waterloo Station. On the Saturday evening we will hold a Special Members, Ladies and Guests Buffet Dance, with the theme being "The Day War Broke Out" with 1939-1946 music and dancing. This will be held at the Victory Services Club, London W2. BOOKING SLIPS AND FURTHER NEWS WILL BE PUBLISHED WITH THE JUNE EDITION OF NORTHERN LIGHT. On Sunday 3rd September at 1030a.m. we are holding a Thanksgiving Service on the Quarterdeck of H.M.S. 'Belfast' by kind permission of the Imperial War

Museum and Captain F.A. Collins, R.N., our Vice President who is the Keeper of H.M.S. Belfast. We are pleased to tell you that the service will be conducted by one of our members. He is Canon Colin Craston, B.A. B.D., Chaplain to H.M. The Queen and Area Dean of Bolton. Order of Service sheets will be printed and eventually sent to all members as a souvenir. In case of inclement weather we have arranged that the awnings will be spread and side-curtains rigged. Music will be provided by the East Malling Youth Band. Following the service a cold buffet will be available

It promises to be a really great week-end and more details will be published in June.

Dont forget we will also be planting our 'Poppy Crosses' in the Garden of Remembrance at Westminster Abbey on Thursday 9th November 1989 - get all of the forementioned dates into your diaries, if you havn't already done so.

We are also 'dreaming up' specialities for our Annual Dinner at South Normanton next October. The date coincides with Trafalgar Day this year. Have you any ideas?

We very much regret to announce that members V. A. Paul of Maidenhead and T. J. Mansfield of Swindon have recently 'Crossed the Bar'. We have taken the requisite steps that are a trade mark of our club.

ANOTHER NEW 'CONVOY' CLUB. News has been received from Queensland, Australia, of the formation of the "Arctic Convoys Club". A letter of congratulation has been sent to the Founder, Harry Simpson, 60 Mapleton Road, Nambour, Queensland, Australia 4560. There are now three clubs who have similar and unique backgrounds; our own North Russia Club, the Russian Convoys Club and now the new one 'Down Under'. For the benefit of our newer members we will explain why our club title does not include reference to 'Convoys'. Quite simply, the club was founded by persons who served in Naval Parties 100 and 200 ashore in North Russia. By popular demand membership was soon extended to all who served on land, sea, or in the air in the Arctic Campaign. Equally, by popular demand the name has not, and will not, be altered. We wish the new club success.

HONORARY MEMBERSHIP. Your committee have approved an Honorary Membership for Mr Chris Darge of Gillingham. According to our Constitution the committee decision will be submitted to the A.G.M. Chris, although of a younger generation, is a wonderful asset and supporter of our club. Many of you have met him at our functions, especially when he is acting as 'minder' to your Hon. Secretary.

CHRISTMAS CARDS: Our 'Art Artificer' has done us proud by producing an abundance of samples for committee choice. After discussion it was unanimously decided to print just one design this year, we feel sure you will like it. A sample card will be available at the A.G.M. and a reprint will appear in a future publication of Northern Light.

SLOP CHITS: We had a fantastic response to the questionnaire that was sent to you with the last Northern Light. We have found it necessary to form a "Jack Dusty's" sub-committee, to decide what items to order first. And thank you for your suggestions of items not included on our list. This includes the wag who suggested that we stock Ladies Frilly Knickers, embroidered N.R.C.!! The N.R.C. being short for 'Not Removed Casually'. None of us thought that it referred to North Russia Club! DONT ORDER ANY ITEMS UNTIL YOU RECEIVE THE OFFICIAL 'SLOP CHIT' ORDER FORM. It will then be strictly cash with order.

MEMBERSHIP LIST & SHIPMATES ROLCALL

NEW MEMBERS. "WELCOME ABOARD SHIPMATES"

AINSWORTH	Eric.	19 Queens Drive, Glossop, Derbyshire SK13 8RD.
ALLEY	Eric E.	Farthings, Gembung, Drifffield, North Humberside YO25 8HS.
BARRETT	Henry S.	15 Penally Road, Ely, Cardiff CF5 5PD.
BONE	George.	8 Longfield Avenue, New Barn, Longfield, Dartford, Kent DA3 7LF.
BOUCH	Cecil.	9 Gresham Close, Gorleston-on-Sea, Great Yarmouth NR31 7DY.
BUCKLER	Albert N.	14 Hargood Road, Blackheath, Kidbrooke, London SE3 8HR.
CARTER	Cyril.	4 Knightstone Court, St Stephens Place, Trowbridge, Wilts BA14 8AH.
COLE	Stanley.	Green Pastures, Llanfihangel-y-Creuddyn, Aberystwyth, Dyfed.
CRAIG	David B.	6 Holmes Crescent, Kilmarnock, Ayrshire, Scotland.
CURD	Albert L.	35 Nottingham Avenue, Shepway Estate, Maidstone, Kent ME5 7PS.
FISHLOCK	Alfred W.	6 Somerford Gardens, Bushbury, Wolverhampton, West Midlands WV10 8DU.
FOGG	Jack.	Site 33, Box 38, MacAulay Road, RR1, Black Creek, Vancouver Island, B.C., Canada.
GODWIN	Ken.	370 Whirlowdale Road, Sheffield, S11 9NJ.
HARDY	Fredk. H.	1 Woodacre Road, Rivacre, Ellesmere Port, Cheshire L66 1RR.
HARMAN	Dennis.	151314 Inkerman Street, Balaclava, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia.
HARRIS	John.	72 St. Leonard's Caravan Park, West Moors, Wimborne, Dorset.
HARRISON	S.	43a Hawthorn Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire SK9 5DG.
HIGNETT	Harold.	5a/36 Albyn Street, Bexley, N.S.W. 2217, Australia.
HOLLORAN	Owen.	4 Aberdeen Road, Blackburn South, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia.
LONG	Gordon.	148 Lowbrook Road, Ilford, Essex IG1 2HL.
MADDOCK	L.	9 Theodore Road, Port Talbot, West Glamorgan SA13 1SW.
MALLETT	P.G.	Rowan, Stone Street, nr Sevenoaks, Kent TN15 0LT.
PREECE	Arthur J.	48a Holm Lane, Marston Green, Birmingham B37 7AL.
REED	James A.	61 Charlton Street, Maidstone, Kent ME16 8LB.
RILEY	John H.	4 Linden Grove, Bramhall, nr Stockport, Cheshire SK7 1HT.
ROBINSON	Robert A.	24a Parkside Avenue, Long Eaton, Nottingham NG10 4AN.
SIBBALD	Peter.	43 Franklin Street, Scarborough, N. Yorkshire YO12 7JU.
SMALE	Bob.	Moss Nook Farm, West Hill, St. Hillier, Jersey, Channel Islands.
SMITH	Arthur.	15 Susan Grove, Moreton, Wirral, Merseyside L46 0TZ.
SMITH	George W.	19 Court Close, East Cosham, Portsmouth, Hants PO6 2LU.

TINCELLO John. 2 The Avenue, Oakleigh 3166, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia.
 TREGELLIS Ernest a. 79 Woodham Park Road, Woodham, Weybridge, Surrey KT15 3TJ.
 TROUTT Arthur J. 7 Blake Street, Kogarah, New South Wales 2217, Australia.
 TWORT Arthur D. Unit 4, 665 Waverley Road, Glen Waverley 3155, Victoria, Australia.

WALDRON William. 11 Convent Road, Ashford, Middlesex TW15 3TJ.
 WOODCOCK William. 61 Stanfield Street, Blackburn, Lancashire BB2 2NH.
 BIRKETT Maurice. 2 St Pauls Villas, Birkenhead, Merseyside L42 3XJ.

CHANGES OF ADDRESS:

BARRETT A. 32 Knights Court, Canterbury Gardens, Eccles New Road, Salford, Lancs.

FRANKLIN Cecil. 2 The Mews Cottages, Woodlands Vale, Ryde, Isle of Wight.
 FILDES John. 6 St Marys Villas, Battel, East Sussex, TN33 OBY.
 GROUTAGE Samuel. 7 Wilton Glebe, Hawick, Roxburghshire, Scotland TD9 8BB.
 GUNNER Godfrey. 5 Cumberland Avenue, Clayton-le-Moors, Accrington, Lancs.
 PETERS Gordon. 27 Odo Street, Hafod, Swansea SA1 2LS.
 RENYARD Charles. 98 Highfield Road, Landport, Portsmouth, Hants PO1 1LL.
 TAYLOR Andrew. 4 Lancelot Gardens, East Barnet, Herts EN4 8JY.
 WALSHAM H.J. 59 Ansell House, Mile End Road, London E1 4UX.

AMENDMENTS:

BURT Eric. Address should read Moulton, not Noulton.
 BEILEY L.V. Address should read Danes Way not Danos Way.

DELETE WITH REGRETS "CROSSED THE BAR":

MANSFIELD T.J. 229 Whitbourne Avenue, Swindon, Wilts.
 PAUL V.A. Flat 13a, Shifford Crescent, Maidenhead, Berks.

ADD TO "SHIPMATES ROLL CALL" LIST:

ALNWICK CASTLE: A.J.Preece. ALYNBANK: S.I.Cole. ANTELOPE: A.L.Curd.
 BLACK PRINCE: A.J. Troutt. BELLONA: E.A. Tregellis. BICKERTON: A.J. Preece.
 BULLDOG: J.H. Riley. BURDOCK: J.H.Riley. CAIRO: J. Harris. CAPRICE: D. Harman.
 CASSANDRA: M.Birkett. DUKE OF YORK: A.W. Fishlock. DENBIGH CASTLE: O. Holloran.
 DOVER HILL: D.B. Craig. EMPIRE PICKWICK: A. Smith. EMPIRE SCOTT: G. Long.
 EMPIRE MORN: P.G. Mallett. ELORIENTE: Smith G.W. FITZROY: W.Woodcock.
 FENCER: L.Cutting. FORESTER: K. Godwin. HUNTER: C. Carter. INTREPID: E. Alley.
 LONDON: A.D. Twort. LOCUS: J.H.Riley. MONTCLARE: C.Carter. NABOB: L.Cutting.
 NORTHERN SPRAY: R.A.Robinson. NENE: J.Fogg. OFFA: E.Ainsworth. OXLIP: P.Sibbald.
 OCEAN VERITY: F.H.Hardy. QUEEN: J.Tincello. RHODODENDRON: D.Brooke.
 SHEFFIELD: A.N.Buckler. STRIKER: J.A.Reed. SAVAGE: C.Bouche. TRINIDAD: C.Waldram.
 TRUMPETER: L.Cutting. WESTCOTT: R. Smale. WHEATLAND: S. Harrison.

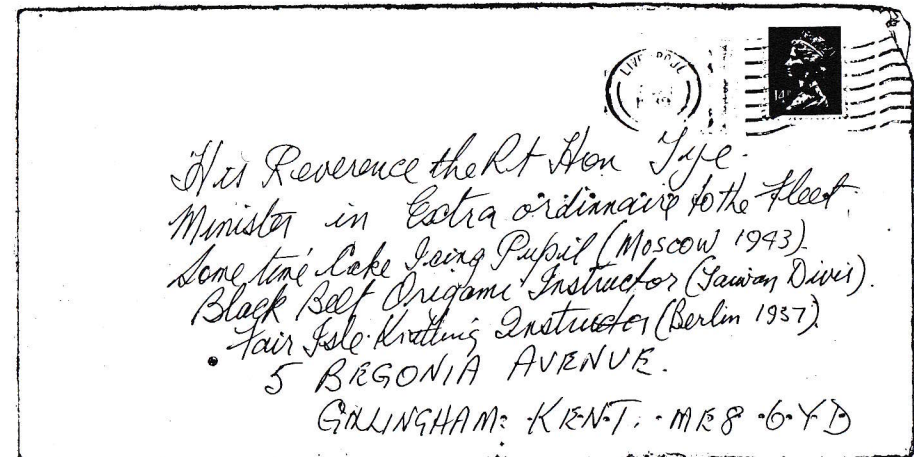
NOTICE TO NEW MEMBERS

WE ARE TEMPORARILY OUT OF STOCK OF THE MEMBERSHIP BOOK. THESE WILL BE SUPPLIED LATER.

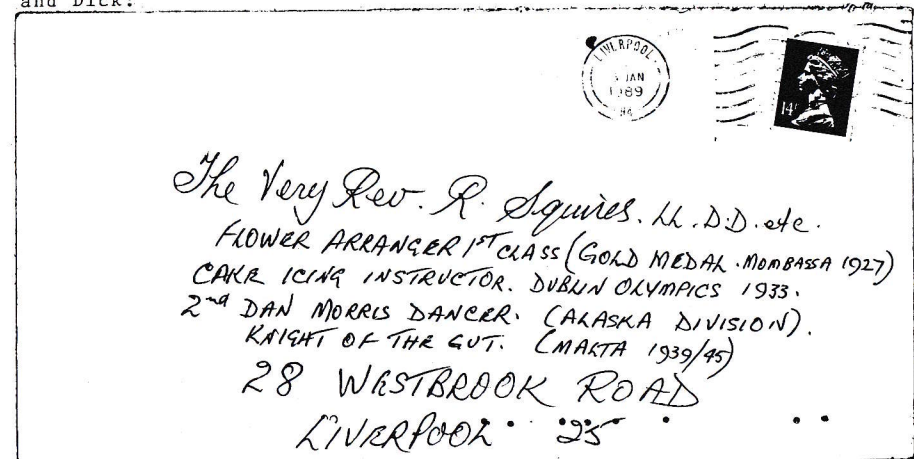
LAUGH OF THE MONTH

EVEN THE POSTMEN HAD A GIGGLE

So did Chris:



and Dick:



I have received an English translation of the above book. It has a lot of interesting comments concerning the Arctic Convoys. Admiral Golovko was the Commander of the Soviet Northern Fleet during the years of the convoys. I intend to publish excerpts from time to time and I invite your comments. Here are a couple to start you off!

On agreement with the representatives of the British Naval Command the convoy route was divided into two operational zones. (In the middle of July a group of British naval officers headed by Rear Admirals Vian and Miles arrived by air in Polyarnoye.) One operational zone extended from Great Britain across Iceland to Bear Island. In this zone the convoys were protected by escorts wholly made up of British combat ships. The other zone stretched from Bear Island to Arkhangelsk. Here the convoys were protected by British ships and Soviet forces—submarines, surface ships and the fleet air arm.

..... In the early period of the war the Soviet Union arrived at an agreement with Great Britain and the USA on waging a joint struggle against Hitler's war machine. As soon as this happened, the command of the Northern Fleet was sure that the external communication routes would play a special role in the Northern theatre of operations. I repeatedly recalled what Stalin said to me when I was appointed to the Northern Fleet in 1940. In the first world war, he said, our country's ties with the outside world were better ensured through the North than through the Baltic or the Black Sea. A similar situation was taking shape now.

In any case, this was the only conclusion to be drawn from the arrival of the Vian-Miles group for talks, although the latter dealt with convoys only insofar as the delimitation of the operational zones was concerned. In addition, Captain 1st Grade M. Vorontsov, Naval Staff officer who accompanied the British naval group, conveyed to me the instructions of the People's Commissar of the Navy to acquaint them with the situation in the North and with the base facilities for British ships in the Kola Inlet. Among the questions raised in this connection were: would we be able to supply British ships with vegetables, what was the quality of the vegetables and could they take a look at them; could we supply their ships with fuel oil and what was the quality of this oil; could we open a prison (guard house) for British seamen ashore; and did we have any brothels? I gave them proper answers: as far as vegetables were concerned we would share with them what we have, there were no brothels in our country and would never be any, and we would not open a prison for British seamen.

Such conversations went on for two days. It was Rear Admiral Vian, a tall lean man of about 50, that asked most of the questions. In the beginning of the war (between Great Britain and Germany) he was in command of a destroyer flotilla and distinguished himself in the release of British prisoners-of-war from the transport vessel *Altmark* off the Norwegian coast. His manner was a bit blunt, emphatically independent. He spoke in a loud voice and abruptly. His colleague Rear Admiral Miles, ex-captain of the *Nelson*, one of the mightiest battleships, limited his remarks to ascertaining the details of questions Vian raised. In general he produced a more pleasant impression. Slightly shorter than Vian, but perhaps of the same age, his manner was totally different from the former's. He was courteous and his sentences were carefully worded.

The final interview boiled down to the following.
"Admiral," Vian said, "what aid would you like the Royal Navy to render you?"

I do not know, if he expected the answer I gave him:

"We are short of aircraft, and it is necessary to attack the enemy bases in Kirkenes and Petsamo. I would like you to know that the operation may be of use to you, if your detachment proceeds to the Kola Inlet. It would be desirable to execute the operation before the arrival of British ships in our waters."

Vian replied that the matter was beyond his competence. However, he personally thought such an operation possible and that he would report the matter to his superiors accordingly.

Further talks were conducted in Moscow, and I was not informed about them. But shortly after that an order was received from the People's Commissar to recall all our submarines from their patrol zones west of the Kola Inlet. The air arm was not allowed to bomb ships at sea. I did not know what kind of operation was being planned, but I could guess that the British were going to launch the attack on the nazi bases I had discussed with Vian and Miles.

It proved to be the case. At about noon on July 30 our batteries and observation posts on the Rybachi Peninsula reported:

"An air engagement is being fought over Petsamo and Kirkenes. Aircraft of unidentified classes are bombing both targets."

And now, the days immediately preceeding the Battle of North Cape..... According to information from the British

Naval Mission, the latter covering force is headed by Admiral Sir Bruce Fraser*, Commander of the British Home Fleet, in the battleship *HMS Duke of York*. Why he? Does he wish to see for himself the conditions in which the convoys are being escorted through the North Atlantic? The mission is in a turmoil. Archer, Senior British Naval Officer in Polyarnoye—an arrogant man, not at all like his predecessor Fisher, has tried to take advantage of Fraser's visit to ask me a host of irrelevant questions. In particular, he has demanded information on our air arm to report to his commander. He obviously expected the title of "Commander of the Home Fleet" to stupefy us to such an extent that we would give him whatever he asked for. This Archer is a very unpleasant type.*

The battleship *HMS Duke of York*, the cruiser *HMS Jamaica* and four destroyers are expected to arrive the day after tomorrow. Two days later a cruiser squadron is to arrive here. And the convoy is to come on the twentieth.

What is the real reason for Fraser's visit?

December 16. *HMS Duke of York*, *HMS Jamaica* and four destroyers have arrived at the appointed time. The British battleship has already flashed a signal asking the time Admiral Fraser can make a courtesy visit to the commander of the Soviet Union's Northern Fleet. I replied that I was prepared to make a call myself at his convenience. An invitation following immediately, I proceeded to the battleship's anchorage. Of course, I looked up the information on Fraser. He is a worldly-wise sea dog, an old salt, a pillar of the British Admiralty. I know his record. Therefore, when an officer I was speaking to (Fraser's chief of staff) asked me if I knew that the admiral had been to Russia, we had a brief, but curious, exchange.

"I do," I replied.

The officer asked with an air of mystery:

"And that the admiral fought against the Bolsheviks?"

"I do," I said again. "That was in autumn 1918, in the Caspian together with General Densterville."

Though surprised, the officer nevertheless wished to amaze me:

"And that the Bolsheviks put the admiral into prison?"

"I do," I replied again.

Then the officer decided to astound me, saying:

"And that Admiral Fraser is grateful to the Bolsheviks for this?"

This surprised me indeed. And the triumphant chief of staff then explained to me:

"Because the prison Admiral Fraser was in served very poor food which cured him of ulcer he had so badly suffered from."

Admiral Fraser who was present at the exchange smiled and confirmed the story.

I had to admit that I did not know this detail which was the cause of the British admiral's peculiar gratitude to the Bolsheviks.

As a gracious host Fraser showed me the whole battleship which was impressive. He even took me to the ship's bakery where we were treated to rather tasty buns fresh from the oven.

Having sampled one I praised it and the bakers. As a result, the courtesv call ended up in a surprise. When I was leaving the battleship, a rather big sack was loaded onto my barge. It was full of buns.

This was super-hospitality, so to say.

I still do not know why the commander of the British Home Fleet has arrived here in the depth of the polar night.

December 17. Today Fraser and his staff have returned the call. We invited our guests to luncheon. After the meal our fleet song and dance ensemble gave a performance. By the long-standing tradition, the first item was an excellent song by Nikolai Bukin, a Northern Fleet poet, and Yevgeni Zharkovski, a composer who joined the fleet soon after the war broke out. Just like all officers and men of the fleet I have heard many times this stirring song, "Farewell, Rocky Mountains", dedicated to the sailors of the Northern Fleet. But every time I hear it it moves me. Particularly at grave moments. I know it by heart and always sing it silently together with the singers:

"...I know, friends, I cannot live without the sea,
"And the sea cannot live without me..."

The guests were in rapture, especially after the dancing items and several songs the singers performed in English. They even asked me to "lend" the ensemble for a fortnight so that the artists could entertain at Scapa Flow and Rothsyte.

I think we gave our British guests a welcome worthy of real Allies.

December 19. Having received a radio signal from the sea last night, HMS *Duke of York* and her escorts weighed anchor and set sail from the Kola Inlet. They left in such haste that Fraser conveyed his apologies through the Mission, saying that he was returning to England. Strange, what's the hurry? Where have they left for in such haste? To meet the convoy? To cover it?

Finally, the Admiral's recollections of Victory Day in Polyarnoe.

Victory Day has above all been marked by good weather. The sun is shining brightly over Polyarnoye, over the mirror-like surface of the Kola Inlet, and over us too. The people of my generation entered adult life in the 1920s to endure the hardships of the 1930s, the calamities and character-tempering experience of the war against nazism with the faith that it should be this way and that the good cause would triumph.

I inspected the men assembled on the jetty together with the member of the Military Council. Then I addressed the rally from the rostrum:

"Many of our comrades-in-arms who have given their lives for the solemn Victory Day, for our Homeland, for our people are not with us. They sanctified our Colours with their blood. This hour of triumph, this hour of great Victory will be the best memorial to them..

The granite slopes of the hills surrounding the jetty are crowded with people from Polyarnoye. The ships are rainbow dressed. Even the masts ashore are flying flags everywhere. The bands are playing with enthusiasm. The seagulls are soaring over the roads and the sun is shining brightly from the blue skies...

It has been a good day.

POET'S CORNER

THIS IS HOW IT WAS!

I landed in North Russia, early January '42,
Just newly 19 years of age, as well,
Naval Party 100, eighteen months my home from home,
To serve ashore in that vast frozen hell!

The convoys battled through midst deadly fury,
As 'Edinburgh' and 'Trinidad' were lost,
And 'PQ17' of tragic story
The endless struggle waged, at fearful cost!

Murmansk ablaze, with fire and bombs a'crashing,
Survivors, whom we helped as best we might,
The Northern Lights that filled the skies with wonder,
Whilst Ack Ack guns blazed loud in angry fight!

That pantomime ashore we ran for laughter,
'Jack in Joe's Land', that's what we called it, so,
The long dark winter days, chill, cold and gloomy,
And endless summer ones, with daylight glow!

And then mid '43 my time was ended,
You're going home, North Russia, adieu,
Yes, even Scapa Flow looked green and pleasant,
When once again I saw it's shores anew!

Then back to Chatham, leave, another draft chit,
An escort carrier, 'Tracker', happy ship,
And Polyarnoe just a fading memory,
Oh No! We're on a flaming Russian trip!!!

COMING HOME !

Where'er you've been,
Whate'er you've seen,
Wherever you might roam,
There's nothing yet
Beats the thrill you get
When coming home!

From sun-kissed sands
Or cold, dark lands
Cross distant foam -
The scenes you know
Call out, 'Hello',
When coming home!

In other climes,
In other times,
'Neath chilled or tropic domes -
How bright the day
When you could say
I'm going home!

And oh the smile
As each last mile
Across familiar loam -
Makes a welcome sight
To cause delight
When coming home!!!

Poems by Bill Johnston, ex- 'Tracker' and N.P.100.

At the age of 18 years in 1917 I joined the Royal Engineers, after initial training I went on active service to France and Belgium. After the armistice our company was kept behind to help repair the damaged rail line between Bologon and Germany, bridge building etc. That job finished and we were sent to a rest camp at Hazebrook. Whilst their volunteers were asked for, to take their discharge, then to re-enlist on a two year short term engagement. A few of us volunteered, then after two months leave we were sent to Bordon Camp, near Aldershot to receive extra training, to take part in the formation of the new "North Russian Expeditionary Force" - a hush hush affair. There were about 300 volunteers from all over the U.K.

On 8th August 1919, we set sail from Tilbury Dock, London on H.M.S. 'WILLOCHRA', landing in Murmansk on August 24th. Our company - the '55th Field' were disembarked, the rest going on to Archangel etc. Our task was to join up with the remnants of the White Army who were holding a line some 200 miles inland, a train had been prepared for us consisting of a log burning engine, a couple of coaches for the ranks, then four or five box wagons each of which had a shelf from side to side and up each side. Next to that was a workshop and three flat, logging trucks loaded with railway materials, lines etc, then a box wagon loaded with explosives, shells etc. Lastly, another flat wagon on which was mounted a field gun - I also recall that the engine pushed the train.

We eventually caught up with the Russians after having to repair broken lines and clearing away a lot of derailed rolling stock. A day or two after advancing we were halted again by a wooden bridge which was on fire and had to be rebuilt. Then off we went again, gaining more ground until 17th September, when the ammunition truck got a direct hit from a Bolshevik's gun, all hell was let loose, everybody scattered in the woods, hiding behind trees. In the meantime one brave soldier worked his way back to the train and uncoupled the sleeping wagons. The engine then pulled away and so saved our means of escape.

On 26 September, the top brass decided we had had enough, and secretly from the White Army we quickly made our way at night to the train. Off we went and on reaching the southwest corner of the White Sea we disembarked from the train and were ferried out to H.M.S. 'SCHLESWIG' a captured German vessel at anchor. The contingent from Archangel joined us and 3rd October we sailed for home, disembarking at Newcastle, then for leave. I finished my time in Constantinople.

Ernest Mitchell.

(Editor's note) I was very interested in this story for two reasons. First, my father was also in the North Russian Expeditionary Force - he was in the Royal Marine Light Infantry and landed in Russia on the day I was borne, 19th September 1919. Secondly and more importantly, Ernest is our oldest member, he is now in his nineties and does not get out much. Why not drop him a few lines, he would be delighted to read your letters. Long may you continue to be a member Ernest.)

American Four Pipers Under the White Ensign

By Robert S. Parkin

Submitted by Emile Boudoin of Quebec, (ex-HMS Burnham). First Published in 'The Tin-Can Sailor'

On 3 September 1939, when Great Britain and France had declared war upon Nazi Germany in response to her invasion of Poland two days previously, Great Britain's Royal Navy was the largest in the world. However, at that time, she only had 184 destroyers in commission, of which many were relics from World War One, or had been constructed during the early 1920's. Despite this seemingly large numbers of destroyers, not all of them were combat ready, since several were in dockyard hands undergoing repairs or alterations.

By mid-1940, the destroyer situation was critical. Some twenty were under repair after the Dunkirk evacuation, and, since the opening of hostilities, 40 had been sunk. When France surrendered in mid-June, Britain stood alone; the last bastion of democracy remaining in all of Europe. Without adequate escorts to guard her merchant ships, her mercantile fleet would be unmercifully subjected to devastating air and U-boat attacks.

In desperation, England's prime minister, Winston Churchill pleaded with President Franklin D. Roosevelt for assistance, primarily in the form of arms, ammunition, aircraft and relief goods; but most importantly, the loan of 30 or 40 of the old destroyers that had been held in reserve in the "Red Lead Rows" at San Diego and Philadelphia. Unfortunately, the president's hands were tied as a result of America's neutrality laws, then in effect.

As the war progressed, the Royal Navy had lost 11 more destroyers within a two-week period in June. Again, Churchill wired Roosevelt stating that the destroyers were urgently needed and, for the second time, despite Roosevelt's sympathetic feelings toward Great Britain's plight, he had to reluctantly decline.

Then Churchill brought forth a proposal of which he was certain that Roosevelt would not refuse. That being offered the rights to build and maintain naval bases located on British possessions located in the western hemisphere. Yet, despite this tempting morsel, the President was compelled to refuse. Then, when over 400,000 tons of shipping had

been sunk by the marauding U-boat wolfpacks, Churchill promptly dispatched another urgent appeal for the destroyers, which read, in part:

"Mr. President, with great respect, I must tell you now, that in the long history of the world, this is the thing to do now."

Now, firmly convinced of England's critical situation, Roosevelt, during mid-August, had called an emergency meeting with his advisors. What had transpired during these conferences, is too extensive to convey here, however, it was agreed that the destroyers in question were of no vital use to the defense of the United States, due to their obsolescence, and, a "loophole," dating back to President Andrew Jackson's administration, was discovered, which allowed the president to make the "swap" of 50 destroyers in exchange for the bases offered by the British, by going over the heads of Congress, thus proclaiming this action as an executive order.

Needless to say, the majority of the members of Congress; anti-war groups and liberals, were furious, as they were certain that this transaction would bring the United States into the war. However, with events moving so swiftly during that period, the destroyers for bases "deal" was soon forgotten, and, in the minds of most Americans, the destroyers had sailed into oblivion.

But had they? No, quite the contrary. True, most of them had been relegated to monotonous escort duty, however, just their presence among the merchant convoys had given many a U-boat commander second thoughts before unleashing a torpedo assault against the cargo-men under the protection of the old four stackers.

Once in the hands of the Royal Navy, many alterations were effected, such as the sacrificing of one or two boiler rooms, which were utilized as fuel tanks in an effort to increase their steaming ranges; the removal of the two amidships 4-inch guns in favor of anti-aircraft guns; the installation of depth charge projectors ("K" and "Y" guns), which, in some instances, replaced the 12 torpedo tubes, to name a few.

After lying in reserve for almost two decades, these old four pipers had many defects which had caused their new owners many headaches and frustrating moments. Leaky boiler and condenser fumes as well as leaky fuel oil lines and perpetual electrical failures were not uncommon. Over the years, the rubber gaskets around doors, hatches and port holes had dried out or deteriorated, thus resulting in sea water entering the living spaces, causing the decks to be awash in ankle-deep water. One destroyer had so many defects, it never reached England, nor ever served on escort duty. Handed over to the Canadians, she was utilized as a ferry for passengers to various Canadian ports. In one instance, one of the four pipers had lost its foremast in a stiff gale while enroute to England and had to return to Halifax, entering port, towing a sister destroyer, which had experienced an engine breakdown. These were only a few of the "felonies," that the British had to put up with, however, in due time most of the problems had been corrected either in U.S. or British shipyards.

It would be a note of interest to mention that several of the four stackers serving under the White Ensign had quite a history of mishaps and accidents. Fifteen were involved in collisions; four had run aground; four had sustained severe storm damages; ten were war losses and six suffered battle damages. Nine were handed over to the Russian Navy; seven were acquired by the Canadians. At times, a few were manned by

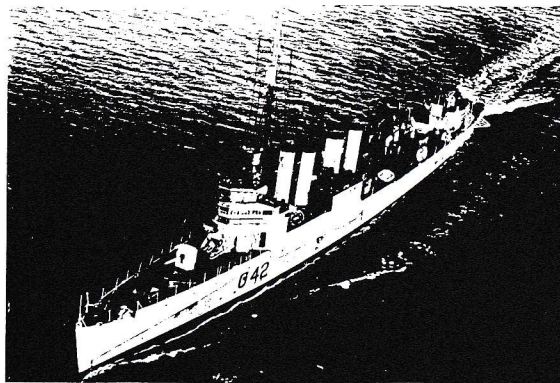
Norwegian, Polish and Dutch crews and one had a mixed bag of Allied naval personnel all at one time that she was nicknamed a "Floating United Nations."

Yet, despite the problems and the spartan living conditions these old four stackers had to offer, many of the Jack Tars managed to cope and surprisingly, "fell in love" with them. To this author's knowledge, only the HMS Burnham H-82, ex-USS AULICK (DD-258), has organized the HMS Burnham Association, which holds its annual reunions in Burnham-on-Sea, England, usually in April. Recently, it was rumored that an crewman from the HMS Churchill I-45, ex-USS HERNDON (DD-198), is seeking former "Churchillians," in an effort to organize their own association.

On the following pages, is a list of the four stackers which had served under the White Ensign, depicting their commissioning dates and their final disposals. In closing, it would be a note of interest to mention the remarks from the Admiral of the British Fleet Sir Admiral James Somerville's memoirs, which in part, reads:

"Had there been no American four stacker destroyers available, and, had they not gone into service escorting trade convoys when they did, the outcome of the struggle against the U-boat and the subsequent outcome of the European War itself, might have been vastly different."

In other words, as one American historian declared: "The old four pipers that were transferred over to the British Royal Navy were: 'The fifty ships that saved the World.'"



HMS 'LINCOLN' ex USS 'YARNALL'

HMCS ANNAPOLIS (I-04) ex USS MacKenzie. To RCN on 24 Sept '40. Paid off 1 April '45. Scrapped in USA.

 HMS BATH (I-17) ex USS Hopewell. To R.N. on 23 Sept '40. Sunk by U-boat 19 Aug '41 whilst manned by Norwegian Navy crew. Lost with all hands.

 HMS BEVERLEY (H-64) ex USS Branch. To R.N. 8 Oct. '40. Sunk by U-boat on 11 Apr. '43. Four survivors from crew of 152.

 HMS BRIGHTON (I-08) ex USS Cowell. To R.N. 23 Sept. '40. Transferred to Soviet Navy 16 July '44 as ZHARKY (Ardent) Returned to R.N. 4 Mar. '49 and scrapped.

 HMS BELMONT (H-46) ex USS Satterlee. To R.N. 8 Oct '40. Sunk by U-boat on 31 Jan. '42. Lost with all hands.

 HMS BROADWATER (H-81) ex USS Mason. To R.N. 8 Oct. '40. Sunk by U-101 on 18 Oct. '41. No details of survivors.

 HMS BROADWAY (H-90) ex USS Hunt. To R.N. 8 Oct '40. Paid off 9 Aug. '45. Broken up 1947.

 HMS BURNHAM (H-82) ex USS Aulick. To R.N. 8 Oct '40. Paid off 1 Dec. '45. Scrapped in 1948.

 HMS BURWELL (H-94) ex USS Laub. To R.N. 8 Oct '40. Paid off 29 Jan. '45. Scrapped 1947.

 HMS BRADFORD (H-72) ex USS MacLanahan. To R.N. 8 Oct '40. Paid off 3 May '45. Scapped 1946.

 HMS BUXTON (H-96) ex USS Edwards. To R.N. 8 Oct '40. Paid off 2 June '45. Scrapped in USA later that year.

 HMS CAMPBELLTOWN (I-42) ex USS Buchanan. To R.N. 9 Sept '40. Sacrificed to destroy Normandie graving dock, St Nazaire, France. 28 March '42.

 HMS CASTLETON (I-23) ex USS Aaron Ward. To R.N. 9 Sept '40. Paid off 13 Mar. '45. Scrapped late 1948.

 HMS CALDWELL (I-20) ex USS Hale. To R.N. 9 Sept '40. Paid off 24 Feb. '44. Scrapped March 1945.

 HMS CHELSEA (I-35) ex USS Crowninshield. To R.N. 9 Sept '40. Transferred to Soviet Navy 16 July '44 as DYERSKI (Saucy). Returned to R.N. 23 June '49 and scrapped.

 HMS CHESTERFIELD (I-28) ex USS Welborn C Wood. To R.N. 9 Sept. '40. Paid off 15 Jan. '45. Scrapped 1947.

 HMS CLARE (I-14) ex USS Abel P Upshir. To R.N. 9 Sept '40. Paid off 16 Aug. '45. Scrapped 1946.

 HMS CHARLESTOWN (I-21) ex USS Abbot. To R.N. 23 Sept '40. Paid off 15 Jan. '45. Scrapped 1948.

 HMCS COLUMBIA (I-49) ex USS Haraden. To RCN 24 Sept. '40. Paid off 12 Jun. '45. Scrapped in Canada.

 HMS CHURCHILL (I-45) ex USS Herndon. To R.N. 4 Sept '40. Transferred to Soviet Navy 16 July '44 as DYEYATELNI (Active). Sunk by U-boat off Cape Tereberski, Russia whilst manned by Soviet personnel.

 HMS CAMERON (I-05) ex USS Welles. To R.N. 9 Sept '40. Severely damaged in drydock during air raid on Portsmouth, 5 Dec. '40. Salvaged and used as test ship for underwater shocks. Paid off 5 Oct. '43. Scrapped November '44.

 HMS GEORGETOWN (I-40) ex USS Maddox. To RN 23 Sept '40. Transferred to Soviet Navy 10 Aug. '44 as DOBLESNYI (Glorious). Returned to R.N. 5 Sept '52 and scrapped.

 HMS/HMCS HAMILTON (I-24) ex USS Kalk. To R.N. 23 Sept. '40. Transferred later to R.C.N. Paid off 8 June '45 and scrapped in U.S.A.

 HMS LEWES (G-68) ex USS Conway. To R.N. 23 Oct. '40. Paid off in Sydney, Australia 12 Oct '45 and scuttled.

HMS LEEDS (G-27) ex USS Conner. To R.N. 23 Oct '40. Paid off 10 April '45.

 Scrapped 1948.

HMS LUDLOW (G57) ex USS Stockton. To R.N. 8 Oct.'40. Paid off 7 Sept. '45.

 Scrapped later that year.

HMS LANCASTER (G-05) ex USS Philip. To R.N. 23 Oct.'40. Paid off 30 June

 '45 and scrapped later that year.

HMS LEAMINGTON (G-19) ex USS Twiggs. To R.N. 23 Oct.'40. Transferred to

 Soviet Navy 16 July '44 as ZGHUCHY (scorcher)
 Returned 30 Jan '50 and scrapped.

HMS LINCOLN (G-42) ex USS Yarnall. To R.N. 23 Oct.'40. Transferred to

 Soviet Navy 26 Aug.'44 as DRUZHNY (Friendly).
 Returned to R.N. 23 Aug.'52 and scrapped.

HMS MONTGOMERY (G-95) ex Wickes. To R.N.23 Oct.'40. Paid off 23 Feb.'45.

 Scrapped later that year.

HMS MANSFIELD (G-76) ex USS Evans. To R.N. 5 Dec.'40. Paid off 8 July

 '45 and scrapped later that year.

HMS NEWMARKET (G-47) ex USS Robinson. To R.N. 5 Dec. '40. Paid off

 4 July '45 and scrapped.

HMS NEWPORT (G-54) ex USS Sigourney. To R.N. 8 July '45. Paid off

 mid-1945 and scrapped 1947.

HMS NEWARK (G-08) ex USS Ringgold. To R.N. 5 Dec.'40. Paid off mid-'45

 and scrapped that year.

HMCS NIAGARA (I-57) ex USS Thatcher. To R.C.N. 24 Sept '40. Paid off

 2 Mar.'44 and assigned as torpedo trials ship.
 Scrapped May 1946.

HMS RICHMOND (G-88) ex USS Fairfax. To R.N. 5 Dec'40. Transferred to

 Soviet Navy 16 July '44 as ZHIVUCHI (Lively).
 Returned 23 June '49 and scrapped.

HMS ROXBOROUGH (I-07) ex USS Foote. To R.N. 23 Sept.'40. Transferred to

 Soviet Navy 10 Aug.'44 as ZHOSTKYI (Hardy).
 Returned 8 June '45 and scrapped.

HMS RAMSEY (G-60) ex USS Meade. To R.N. 26 Nov.'40. Paid off 30 June

 '45. Scrapped 1947.

HMS ROCKINGHAM (G-58) ex USS Swasey. To R.N.26 Nov.'40. Sunk by mine

 off Aberdeen, Scotland 27 Sept.'44.

HMS READING (G-78) ex USS Bailey. To R.N. 26 Nov.'40. Paid off 16

 July '45 and scrapped.

HMS RIPLEY (G-79) ex USS Shurbrick. To R,N, 26 Nov.'40. Paid off 23

 Feb.'44 and scrapped.

HMCS ST CLAIR (I-65) ex USS Williams. To RCN 24 Set.'40.Paid off in

 Aug.'44 to serve as fire fighting training ship.
 Sunk while under tow to USA for scrapping.

HMS ST ALBANS (I-15) ex USS Thomas. To R.N. 23 Sept '40. Transferred to

 Soviet Nave 16 July '44 as DOSTOINY (Worthy).
 Returned 4 March 1949 and scrapped.

HMCS ST CROIX (I-81) ex USS McCook. To RCN 20 Sept '40. Sunk by U-boat

 in Bay of Biscay 20 Sept.'43. Only one man
 survived.

HMCS ST FRANCIS (I-93) ex USS Bancroft. To RCN 24 Sept '40. Paid off

 1 Apr.'45. Sunk while under tow by freighter
 SS Winding Gulf off Rhode Island, USA.

HMS SALISBURY (I-52) ex USS Claxton. To R.N. 5 Dec.'40. Paid off 10

 Dec. 43. Scrapped in USA.

HMS ST MARYS (I-12) ex USS Doran. To R.N. 23 Sept'40.Paid off 6 Sept

 44 and scrapped.

HMS STANLEY (I-73) ex USS McCalla. To R.N. 23 Oct.'40. Sunk by U-574.

 Sixteen survivors.

HMS SHERWOOD (I-80) ex USS Rodgers. To R.N. 23 Oct.'40. Paid off 23

 May '43. Scrapped 1945.

HMS WELLS (I-95) ex USS Tillman. To R.N. 5 Dec.'40. Paid off 24 July

 '45 and scrapped.

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Edited by Sir John Hammerton

JUNE 25, 1944

An excerpt from "THE WAR ILLUSTRATED" dated 23 June 1944. Supplied for Northern Light by Norman Bramhall who served aboard 'INCONSTANT'. The story of the struggle was told by Sub-Lieut. A. C. List, R.N.V.R.

We Wrestled at Sea with a 100-m.p.h. Gale

We were escorting a northbound convoy when we ran into the gale, which eventually reached 100 miles per hour. The convoy was scattered. We battered down all hatches and it was impossible to get from one end of the ship to the other. I was on the bridge with the commanding officer, Lieut-Comdr. J. H. Eaden, D.S.O., of London, and the navigating officer, Lieut. R. S. S. Ingham, D.S.C., R.N.V.R., of Wigtonshire. The waves were coming right over the bridge, and we were up there for about ten hours before we could get safely away.

Suddenly, the depth charges amidships started to break loose. The Gunner (T), Mr. R. P. Burgess, R.N., of Carshalton, Surrey, was below when he heard the depth charges rolling around the deck over his head. He went on deck and tied a lifeline round his waist. Leading Seaman T. A. Pryce, of Plymouth, paid out the line while Mr. Burgess scrambled to the depth charges.

All this time the waves were crashing down on the ship and Pryce tied the line to a stanchion. It was a good job he did, as one wave washed Mr. Burgess through the guard rails, and but for the lifeline he would have gone overboard. Mr. Burgess called for volunteers, and Able Seaman C. Pemberton of Blackpool, Able Seaman R.D. Wilde of Mansfield and Able Seaman J. Ambrose, of Liverpool, went up to help. They hadn't been working long before the ammunition locker broke away under another wave and trapped them all underneath it.

The First Lieutenant, Lieut. M. Hayward-Butt, R.N., of Bude, went to their assistance, but another wave tore away the iron ladder leading up to one of the gun platforms. As it swung round, it hit the First Lieutenant on the forehead and knocked him unconscious. When the men under the locker were released, they were all suffering from severe injuries to their legs. Eventually we got all the injured below. Meanwhile, the ammunition locker had been washed over the side as though it had been matchwood.

We were pretty badly knocked about when we reached harbour, both the whaler and the motor-boat being smashed as well. We collected the remainder of the convoy, and carried on to our destination. We were in harbour just about long enough to refuel when we went out to help another convoy which had been coming up behind us.

There was a pack of U-boats waiting to attack but we got there first.

(Norman Bramhall remembers that he was one of the four-handed party who stretched 'N° 1' ashore to hospital. He looked up and remarked that, "anyone who bumped his head would receive 14 days IOA"!)

ARE YOU ENJOYING READING THIS EDITION??

HAVE YOU PAID YOUR SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR 1989??

THE JUNE EDITION WILL NOT BE SENT TO DEFAULTERS!!

THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY'S ADDRESS:-

Les Sullivan, 2 Broadlawn, Woolavington, Bridgwater, Somerset.

If you enrolled later than 15-10-1988 please ignore this.

MOTORING PHRASES FOR USE ON CONTINENTAL ROADS.

For those of you contemplating road travel in Europe in future,
here are some very useful phrases for you.

INDICATORS: Die Blinkenlightermitticken fur turnenen.
BONNET: Der Fingerpincher und Kopfchopper.
EXHAUST PIPE: Das Spitzenpoppenbangentuben.
SPEEDOMETER: Der Egobooster und Linenshooten Backeruppen.
CLUTCH: Das Kuppleinverk mit Schlippen und Sticken.
AIR HOSE: Die Votderhellvosdet Klakonfarteren.
PUNCTURE: Das Pflatt mit Dammenblasten.
LEARNER: Dumkopf mit Elplatz.
G.T. Der Elluvalotta Gajit mit Dumkopftfollerin.
ESTATE CAR: Der Schnogginwagon mit Bagzerroomfurrompin-
inderbacken.
MINI: Der Buzzboxen mit Trafficveer infistenshaken
und Fingerraizen.
PETROL: Das Kostlijooze fer Geddinzegreesofendertrouzers.
MOTOR CLUB Der Mettinhaus fur Wagennatter und Elbowraizun,
Chaddenupzeebirds und Hedlampen Swinggun.
MAGISTRATE: Der Kortfuhrer mit Sahuten Zweihundertmars
und Lizenzendorsen.
PARKING METER: Der Tannerpinscher Klockenwerks.
WINDSCREEN WIPERS: Das Flippenfloppermukspredunsticken.
ROUNDAABOUT: Das Hehoohezitatislozcht.
BRAKES: Schtoppeninhurrie mit Edbangenondervindskreen.
LEVEL CROSSING: Der Flattenbitt und Puffpufftracken.
LOW BRIDGE: Das Makengrossenbus ein Singeldekker.