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3/94



H.M.S. POPPY  
By Denis Brooke

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North Russia Club

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FROM THE CHAIRMAN

THE FIRST NORTHERN LIGHT OF THE YEAR, DUE TO BE PUBLISHED EACH MARCH, SEEMS TO BE RATHER LATE TO WISH YOU ALL GOOD FORTUNE AND GOOD HEALTH FOR 1994. HOWEVER, ON BEHALF OF THE OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE I SEND YOU ALL SINCERE GREETINGS FOR THE COMING YEAR. MY WIFE PEGGY, AND I, ALSO OFFER OUR BEST WISHES AS WELL AS OUR THANKS, FOR YOUR FRIENDSHIP AND SUPPORT. WE TRUST THAT YOUR CONTINUED MEMBERSHIP OF OUR UNIQUE CLUB WILL BRING YOU MORE ENJOYMENT AND SATISFACTION. A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO ALL WHO SENT CHRISTMAS CARDS AND CALENDARS TO US - ALL 289 OF YOU! WE HOPE THAT YOU ALL RECEIVED OUR CARDS IN RETURN, BUT SHOULD ANY OF YOU HAVE MISSED OUT, PLEASE ACCEPT MY APOLOGIES AND PUT IT DOWN TO OLD AGE AND MY INCREASING FORGETFULNESS!

I CAN ASSURE YOU THAT YOUR COMMITTEE REMAIN DEDICATED TO THE NEEDS OF THE CLUB. OUR MEETINGS ARE LIVELY AFFAIRS - JUST AS THE MESS MEETINGS OF THE GOOD OLD, BAD OLD DAYS USED TO BE, THE ONLY DIFFERENCE IS THAT THE BUCK ALWAYS FINISHES WITH THE CHAIRMAN, INSTEAD OF THE MESS CATERER! SERIOUSLY THOUGH, WE ARE ALWAYS OPEN TO SUGGESTIONS (AND CRITICISMS!) AND WILL LISTEN TO, OR CONSIDER ALL OF YOUR VIEWS PROVIDING THAT THEY ARE IN THE CLUB'S BEST INTERESTS. IN THE LAST TWELVE MONTHS WE HAVE LOST TWO OF OUR STALWART MEMBERS, BOTH WERE AMONGST THE SMALL BAND OF FOUNDER MEMBERS. FIRSTLY, THE SUDDEN DEATH OF ERIC RATHBONE, OUR TREASURER, AND QUITE RECENTLY (see page 31), THE SAD PASSING OF ERNIE SKELTON OUR VICE-CHAIRMAN. WE MISS THEM AS COMMITTEE MEMBERS, WE MISS THEM AS FRIENDS, WE MISS THEM AS SHIPMATES. BUT THANKFULLY WE ARE ABLE TO CONTINUE OUR LINKS WITH THEIR WIDOWS, DINAH AND BIDDY.

RUNNING OUR CLUB IN THE WAY THAT WE DO, IS AN EXPENSIVE AFFAIR, BUT OUR NEW TREASURER RON PHELPS, AND OUR MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY LES SULLIVAN, ARE AN EXCELLENT PAIRING, BOTH KEEPING A FIRM GRIP ON THE PURSE STRINGS. SO MUCH SO, THAT WE DO NOT, AT THIS TIME EXPECT TO INCREASE THE SUBSCRIPTION RATES - WHICH BRINGS ME TO THE CRUNCH REMINDER - SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE DUE ON MARCH 1ST! LES IS READY TO RECEIVE THEM. BUT WE DONT WANT A SINGLE PERSON TO DROP OUT BECAUSE OF THEIR LOW PENSION OR INCOME. CONTACT LES SULLIVAN AT ONCE - HE HAS SOMETHING TO TELL YOU IN STRICT CONFIDENCE.

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FROM THE EDITOR

I have now got one of my different hats on, the Editor's pattern and size. But again the message is the same - "Thanks a lot shipmates, your continued support with stories, letters and memories, makes this job one of absorbing interest and pleasure.

On the ensuing pages you will find some very good articles by the 'corvette lads'. There are seventeen pages of 'Flower Class' stories for you to read, Particularly the mystery behind the sole survivor of H.M.S. BLUEBELL. Was it a cover up, a cock up, or just a mix up of fact? I have spent hours just reading through the reams of copy on the episode and I am no nearer to solving the intriguing story! Can you? I will be very surprised and somewhat disappointed if there is no response from our readers.

There is also a good mixed bag of other articles and it is very pleasing to have the continuing steady flow of stories from our American members. Well done, you guys, keep it up.

Our next edition is dedicated to "The Big Ships". Hopefully, we will have responses from our "Battle Wagon" members, also the "Flat Tops" and maybe a Cruiser or two. Your copy please. By 15 April.

## THE MEDAL

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## Queen gives old soldiers right to wear Russian medal

By Peter Almond  
Defence Correspondent

THE QUEEN yesterday gave permission for thousands of British ex-Servicemen who took part in the Russian campaign in the Second World War to wear a Russian medal issued nearly 10 years ago.

The Russian Commemorative Medal, marking the 40th anniversary of the end of the war, was struck in Moscow in 1985.

But permission for British citizens — largely those involved in Russian Arctic convoys — to wear it was withheld by the Government because of a general rule against the wearing of foreign medals and because the Cold War was at its height.

Yesterday, however, an announcement in the *London Gazette* said the Queen was "graciously pleased" to approve the medal.

It added that Her Majesty "has had in mind the changing circumstances in Russia since the medal was first issued and the improvement of relations".

But the announcement said permission was not envisaged for other commemorative medals issued more than five years after the event, the rule applied by King George VI in 1951. The Government is said to be concerned about possible new 50th anniversary D-Day and end-of-war commemorative medals issued by foreign countries.

The Queen's decision marks a victory for a long campaign by the North Russian Convoy Club, which applied in large numbers for the medal in the belief that RCM stood for "Russian Convoy Medal".

In fact the medal was also available for RAF fighter and bomber squadrons which operated from bases in Russia.

The above cutting is from the Daily Telegraph of Wednesday 5th January, 1994.

So, you can now wear your medal, with pride, but without barbs from those messdeck lawyers who have continuously said, "You're not allowed to wear that!"

We also continue to try to obtain medals for those who have not yet received theirs. It's a long and uneasy process, bearing in mind the situation in Russia and at M.O.D. Please be patient - we won't rest until we do succeed!!

## Ambassador of the Russian Federation

13, Kensington Palace Gardens, London, W8 4QX

Mr R.D.Squires MBE,  
Chairman,  
North Russia Club,  
28, Westbrook Road,  
Gateacre,  
Liverpool L25 2FX

11 January 1994

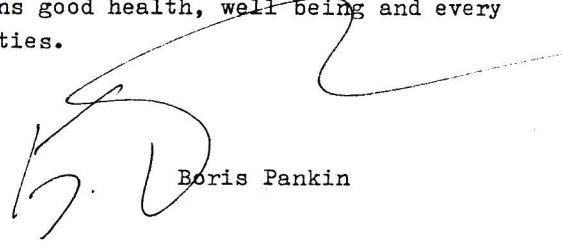
Dear Mr Squires,

May I request you to convey to the members of your Club and to all British veterans who participated in the Nordic Convoys to Murmansk and Archangel in 1941-1945 that the decision of Her Majesty the Queen with regard to the Commemorative Medal to mark the 40th Anniversary of Victory in the Great Patriotic War is welcome by the leadership of the Russian Federation and its people. We, in Russia, sincerely value a great contribution made by the heroic British Convoy veterans to our common Victory.

It is really one more vivid example that the relations between the Russian Federation and the United Kingdom have improved substantially since political changes took place in Russia.

Taking this opportunity I would like to wish you and all British war veterans good health, well being and every success in your activities.

Yours sincerely,

  
Boris Pankin

The Flower Class corvettes will always be remembered as "the" work-horse of the naval escorts. These best-known escorts were based on a design of SOUTHERN PRIDE, a whaler, submitted by Smiths Docks Ltd.

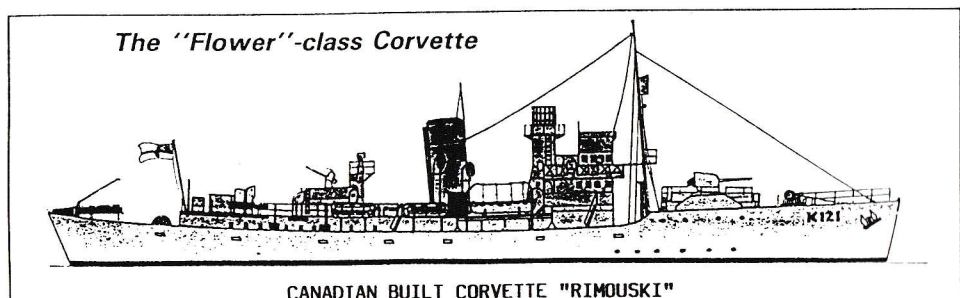
Under the 1936 Estimates fifty-six units were ordered, and following the outbreak of war orders were placed for a further sixty units in the U.K. and fifty more in Canada under the 1939 Emergency Programmes. More orders followed during 1940/41/42. The French Navy also placed orders in 1939, some to be built in U.K. others in France.

In all three hundred corvettes were ordered: one hundred and sixty-four to be built in U.K. (sixteen for France), one hundred and thirty in Canada (twenty-five for U.S.A. under Lease-Lend), and six in France. Not all were named after "Flowers", particularly those built in Canada.

"Convoys to Russia" and Lenton's "WW2 Fact Files" show that twenty-one "Flower Class" took part in Arctic Convoys, others in the Norwegian Campaign. They were:-

ACANTHUS (K01) transferred to R.N.N. 1941-46 and renamed Andenes in 1946;  
BERGAMOT (K189) sold to Greek Merchant Navy 1947 and renamed Syros;  
BLUEBELL (K80) torpedoed by U-711 on 17 February 1945;  
BORAGE (K120) transferred to Eirean Navy 1946 and renamed Macha, scrapped Passage West 1971.;  
BRYONY (K192) transferred to R.N.N. 1947 and renamed Polarfront II;  
BURDOCK (K126) scrapped at Hayle 1946;  
CAMELLIA (K31) sold to merchantile owner in 1948 and renamed Hetty W Vinke;  
CAMPANULA (K18) scrapped at Dunston 1947;  
EGLANTINE (K197) transferred to R.N.N. post war and named Soroy;  
HEATHER (K69) scrapped at Grays 1947;  
HONEYSUCKLE (K27) scrapped at Grays 1950;  
HYDERABAD (K212) ex NETTLE. Scrapped at Portaferry 1948.  
LOTUS (K93) transferred to French Navy as Commandante d'Estienne d'Orves 1943 to 1947, then scrapped at Troon.  
LA MALOUINE (K46) ex French Navy scrapped Gelleswick Bay 1946.  
OXLIP (K123) transferred to Eirean Navy and renamed Maeve, scrapped Passage West 1971.  
POPPY (K213) sold to merchantile owner and renamed Rami, hulked 1955.  
RHODODENDRON (K78) sold to merchantile owner and renamed Maj Vinke.  
SAXIFRAGE (K04) transferred to R.N.N. 1947 and renamed Polarfront I  
STARWORT (K20) sold to merchantile owner and renamed Southern Broom, scrapped in Belgium 1966.  
SWEETBRIAR (K209) sold to merchantile owner and renamed Star IX 1949, scrapped in Belgium 1966.  
WALLFLOWER (K44) sold to merchantile owner and renamed Asbjorn Larsen 1949, scrapped in Norway 1966.

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## THE "FLOWER" CLASS CORVETTES

### H.M.S. "BLUEBELL"

What better way to start our "Flower Class" edition than with the ill fated and much loved ship of the Arctic Runs - BLUEBELL. And an interview with the man who was responsible for sinking BLUEBELL. (Courtesy Eastern Daily Press, September 24, 1993.

Two years ago, Paul Kavanagh, a retired oil executive from Sheringham, was searching the times for an in memoriam notice.

He did this every year on the anniversary of the sinking, in February 1945, of his ship, HMS BLUEBELL. This time the notice had an unexpected addendum: Also recalling Fregettencapitaen K-H Lange and the crew of U711, sunk 4 May 1945.

"Not what one would expect immediately," recalled Paul. "But why not? Some sympathy for the U-boat Captain and his crew, also dead."

The grass grows green over the battlefield, even upon the cold waters of the Barents Sea off Murmansk. For the torpedo which sank BLUEBELL while on convoy protection duty, with the loss of all but one of her 90 crew, was fired by U711, on the orders of the captain, Hans-Gunther Lange.

Paul Kavanagh was not aboard. Thirty hours before BLUEBELL sailed from the Clyde, he had been taken to hospital in Greenock through the grace of an infective throat.

Moreover, former Kapitanleutant Lange was not dead, but living in Kiel.

This he was to learn at the Battle of the Atlantic 50th anniversary gathering in Liverpool. Among the assembled veterans and historians from both sides of the conflict was Professor Jurgen Rohwer, a German expert on U-boat warfare. Rohwer, a meticulous researcher, had logged every torpedo fired from the U-boat fleet.

Noting Paul's BLUEBELL lapel tag, Rohwer was taken aback. He thought that all hands had been lost, except for Acting Petty Officer A.E. Holmes, who had been rescued, but of whom all subsequent trace has been lost.

Professor Rohwer gave Paul, Lange's address. The man who had missed death now set out to meet a former adversary who had survived it.

BLUEBELL was Kavanagh's first ship when he was called up in late 1944. The Flower Class corvette was a veteran of the Russian convoys, she had had a hard war. "A corvette is a workhorse, slow, maximum 15 knots, and without doubt the most uncomfortable escort vessel going." recalls Paul.

Among the guests at the BA gathering was Ludovic Kennedy. Paul later approached him, asking for his observations. "I hope the meeting goes well," replied Ludovic. "I had a similar one with Captain Hoffman, the captain of SCHARNHORST, when she sank my father's ship, RAWALPINDI. I was rather nervous about it, as you are, but it all went off splendidly. After all, with naval warfare there is no personal element."

Kavanagh went ahead. It was, he said, a difficult letter to write. "How should I begin? Captain Lange might not have been interested any longer. Perhaps he didn't want to talk about it."

"In the end I photostated the in memoriam notice and said that as an ex-member of BLUEBELL I thought he would be interested to read his obituary; that I knew from Professor Rohwer that he was alive and handsomely well, I said that my daughter was in Germany, and might I visit him?"

Lange replied warmly, and shortly after Paul crossed over to Kiel. "When I arrived at his home, he welcomed me handsomely at the door. 'I'm Hans-Gunther and this is my wife,' introducing her by her first name. Now this is very unusual for Germans; they are not into Christian name terms; you have to know them."

Lange is 76, 10 years older than his British guest. He joined the German navy in 1937 and, after taking command of U711 in August 1942, had completed 13 operational patrols in the North Sea, Kala Sea and Siberian waters. One of the most successful commanders against the Soviet navy, his courage and endurance had combined with seamanship of a high order.

Sitting in the Langes' home, it suddenly occurred to Paul that his host had no idea why he had contacted him. "I might have been going with some black heart." As he asked Captain Lange how BLUEBELL had met her fate, another cold thought stole across him. Frau Lange may have known nothing of the incident.

"My daughter later told me that she might have been apprehensive for her husband, being on the defensive. Here after all was this English sailor who had come from the ship her husband blew up."

In fact, Frau Lange, listening intently throughout this strange, moving occasion, asked only one question of their guest. "Did Lieut. Walker (BLUEBELL's commander) have any family?" "I liked that question," said Kavanagh.

The former U-boat commander told Paul what had taken place that February day off the Russian coast. Kavanagh listened, fascinated.

Close to the convoy, Lange had been worried by BLUEBELL which was on a constant bearing with him. "She was coming at me

and she had got me. She knew where I was."

U-boats normally left escort vessels alone, concentrating on the merchant ships. But Captain Lange knew that he "had to do something." He fired an acoustic torpedo and the BLUEBELL blew up. Taking the U-boat down, Lange "heard the explosion and the breaking-up, which told him that depth charges had been primed to go."

Convalescing in England, Paul Kavanagh heard of BLUEBELL's fate in an Admiralty announcement on the radio. "I never had any sense of shock. As you get older you might reflect a little, but you are a young fellow, 18 years of age, and I never had any feelings about it. All my friends had gone, but I can't recall having any hate. It was coming to the end of the war and I was given a new ship, and you had to start all over again."

Three months later, on May 4, Fleet Air Arm planes attacked a U-boat station near Narvik. Among the fatalities were 32 members of U711. Captain Lange and 11 crew members, who were on the conning tower, survived.

They went to a nearby U-boat memorial, commemorating the 36,000 German submariners who lost their lives in U-boats during the two world wars. "It was the highest attrition rate of any arm of any service. These men were brave fellows."

"As Ludovic Kennedy so rightly says, war at sea is impersonal. I know of a case where a U-boat commander who was rescued asked one of our men to paint a picture of his U-boat for him."

Paul turned to a photograph of his old ship. "HONEYSUCKLE, PERIWINKLE, SWEET BRIAR, BLUEBELL .... such beautiful names. The one thing they did not carry was flowers. Captain Lange liked that when I told him."

Submitted by Don Kirton N°521. With thanks to Eastern Daily Press.

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THE MYSTERY OF THE SOLE SURVIVOR OF BLUEBELL A/P.O. HOLMES

Many of us over the years have been mystified regarding the "Was there? Wasn't there?" question regarding survivors from BLUEBELL. Don Kirton has, over the last decade, investigated the situation and has supplied the following information which certainly suggests that the answer could be Yes and No! YES, because Acting Petty Officer A.E.G. Holmes was a member of the crew at the time of the sinking and NO, because he was elsewhere on the fateful voyage!

Read on:

(1) The complement of Seaman P.O's on BLUEBELL was normally two, i.e. the Coxswain and the Chief Bosuns Mate. Any others would be supernumerary for various reasons as in the case of - Horace G. Crouch. P/J 112657 Royal Fleet Reservist H.S.D. (Higher Submarine Detector); who joined BLUEBELL as L/Seaman H.S.D. and was the third change of H.S.D. during BLUEBELL's career, being rated P.O soon after joining from R.N.B. The duties of Horace were care and maintenance of Asdic equipment from Dome to Asdic Office, in addition to training and organisation of the three A.B. Submarine Detectors constantly on watch in three watches whilst at sea. As this was one of the most important functions of BLUEBELL, Horace was constantly occupied in the running of the Asdic Department with an appointed officer as A/S Officer. Horace was classed as a Specialist P.O. (not Seaman!). His official number suggests that he joined the Royal Navy prior to Invergordon in 1931. He was listed as "Missing presumed Killed" in The Times on Saturday March 17, 1945.

(2) The only Seaman Petty Officer in the Missing presumed Killed list was William S. Stockwell P/JX 183391, who in some capacity was engaged in the general running of the ship and was probably Chief Bosuns Mate.

(3) The other Seaman Petty Officer was the sole survivor from the crew of BLUEBELL, A/P.O. A.E.G. Holmes P/JX 217490 who stated to the C.O. of ZEST that he was Chief Bosuns Mate. But I suspect that he was probably Coxswain, and was not on BLUEBELL at the time of her demise, but instead had been transferred to BELLONA, probably in cells awaiting charges of misbehaviour whilst serving in BLUEBELL. This is backed up by two letters, one in particular from Lionel (Bill) Searle, Chief Shipwright, dated 30 November, 1984, written to Allan Marchant, from Rochester, Kent, where Bill still lives in retirement. Allan had written to Navy News asking if anybody remembered his brother, Coder John E Marchant P/JX 343179, who was killed in action on BLUEBELL. Bill Searle wrote immediately with some amazing unsolicited detail viz, BLUEBELL was tied up alongside BELLONA prior to leaving for U.K. Whilst there the Coxswain of BLUEBELL was taken aboard BELLONA under arrest for "being too friendly with the Rum" (quote). He goes on to state "He was the only one of BLUEBELL's crew to survive, a cruel twist of fate". Imprinted on Bill's mind was "to see a ship vanish in just one brilliant orange flash so that nothing and nobody remained seemed beyond belief". He goes on as follows "I know that this may not be a very helpful letter, but I thought it would be of interest to you and give you a bystander's view of the last days of your brother's ship. How fate must have smiled at the twist which saw that the only member of BLUEBELL's crew was the arrested Coxswain in our cells. He was I recall, taken ashore and not charged. There

was nobody to give evidence. I would imagine that he lived all his days with the awful feeling that he failed to play his part".

(4) The other letter was from ex-Master of Arms, S.D.Conley, of Orpington. Kent of 4/12/84, written to Allan Marchant. "I was serving as M.A.A. on NAIRANA, and BLUEBELL was steaming very close on our port side when she was hit. She simply disappeared off the surface of the sea after a terrific explosion of bluish purple flame. I searched the surrounding sea for sight of survivors or wreckage, but there was nothing - just as if BLUEBELL had never been there.

After leaving R.N. I joined Inland Revenue, Woolwich Tax District, London S.E. engaged on paying out of Post War Credits to those not able to receive their cheques by post. One claimant could not climb the stairs, so I went down to hand over the cheque. Proof of Identity showed that this man was ex-R.N. and so conversation drifted to the fact that he was a survivor of BLUEBELL who was steaming alongside NAIRANA and together with an A.B. and 'Subby' RNVR were blown off the bridge and swam ashore, thence repatriated to U.K."

NOTE: Neither of the above two letters bears the name of P.O. Holmes (all part of the mystery or secrecy!!!!)

(5) Another letter from ex-L/Seaman Arthur J Willis of Shepperton, Middlesex, serving in BELLONA, states, "that he was cognisant of the fact that the cell was occupied and years later was informed by a friend that the occupant was a Petty Officer from BLUEBELL who was accused of 'interfering' with other ratings in a homosexual nature. It was said that he was not proceeded against as there was no evidence and no one surviving to testify. His name was not mentioned. He also suggested that the only factual clue to this man's identity would show in the log of BELLONA, as he was in custody when handed over to the authorities, probably in Scapa at the end of the voyage".

(6) Don Kirton, our contributor, now supplies a SECRET report from the Commanding Officer, HMS ZEST. All items in brackets are Don's additional comments and observations.

From: The Commanding Officer H.M.S. Zest.  
Date: 26 Feb.1945. Ref.R14: SECRET: (9 days after sinking. Why.  
To: Captain (D), 2nd Destroyer Flotilla HMS Zambesi. SECRET?

Sinking of HMS Bluebell. (Only inquiry into the sinking?)

The following account of the event is forwarded.  
About 1522A, 17 November 1945 whilst "Zest" was moving from the port beam, position P on Close Screen, to the port quarter of the convoy, Extended Screen, my attention was called by the Midshipman of the Watch to the above ship, approximately in position P, by the remark that she appeared to be increasing speed and altering course. I agreed but thought nothing of it until about half a minute later I saw her blow up. (1522 to 1522½).  
2. It immediately occurred to me that the ship must have already been in contact with and was moving out to attack the U-boat at the moment when the latter sank her. It seemed therefore that there was a good chance of detecting the killer and I ordered the relevant information to be passed to D.17. No trace of this signal can be found in Zest's R/T Log and it seems regrettably certain that it was never passed, (Opportunity had not been informed, no trace of original signal) probably due to the fact that I.B.S.

Watch whilst leaving harbour and forming up in Convoy had been kept in the W/I Office and was being turned over to Bridge Control at the moment the signal should have gone. A rather similar signal was, however, passed to Opportune at 1547. (24½ minutes passed before signal to Opportune. A very casual approach under the circumstances).

3. Zest reached the scene of the sinking at about 1536 when cries were heard from about a dozen men who could just be discerned in the failing light. Although various floats and rafts were drifting in the vicinity, none was near enough to be of use and I therefore dropped more, though it seems certain that none of the few survivors had the strength even to reach them. (After 13½ minutes in water of that temperature, fingers ears, eyes, nose and all extremities would have been badly effected by frost bite) (Most other witnesses did not see anything left of BLUEBELL). If I could have stopped then it might have been possible to rescue the majority of these men but instead I regretfully continued my course to carry out an 'Observant' in the hopes of detecting the U boat.

4. The course to start this from the Datum Point was 300°, the course on which HMS BLUEBELL appeared to have altered immediately prior to being sunk. Whilst on the second leg of the search "Zest" was joined by "Opportune" and on the latter's orders I returned to the sinking to pick up survivors. The whaler was lowered at 1553 at which time there were still 3 or 4 voices to be heard, but from scattered sources. (31 minutes after sinking, after trauma of explosion and icy conditions) I shouted encouragement to them but it was not possible to pick up more than one at a time. Three were actually recovered in an unconscious state, but only one revived, although artificial respiration was continued for nearly five hours on the other two. (37 minutes. Still voices! Those picked up still without real attention, yet one survived!)

5. The whaler was hoisted at 1630 (1 hour 8 minutes in that water and yet one remained conscious throughout!) and "Opportune" and "Zest" then proceeded to rejoin the screen. (But "Opportune" had ordered "Zest" to pick up survivors - it was not a dual effort! No inquiry report from "Opportune" D17!!)

6. I spoke to this survivor, A/P.O. A.E.G. HOLMES, Official Number P/JX 217490 next morning, who had been standing on the starboard side by the Engine Room when the ship was struck. He agreed that the ship was increasing speed and said that he had just been sent by the Captain, possibly to pipe Action Stations. (BLUEBELL had automatic alarm bells! and how ridiculous, a P.O. walking around blowing a Bosun's Pipe. Incredible. They would have been 'Closed Up' at this time anyway). He retained consciousness throughout, was with his Captain in the water, but did not remember being picked up. (A miracle man!).

7. As reported in my 180905, the two dead men, Able Seaman W.H. BUTCHER, Official Number not known and another, believed to have been Chief Mechanician W.K. EDWARDS, Official Number not known, were buried next morning with due honours. The sum of £13/0/6d was found on the former and taken on charge in the Contingent Account. The latter had an unusual cigarette lighter from which Petty Officer HOLMES later deduced his identity. (Petty Officer Holmes(?) obviously did not know his shipmates - a Leading Stoker Ivan Edwards had this unusual lighter and the whole ship knew it! It never left his person, it was storm proof with a medal award for bravery in saving a young boy's life welded on to the body of the lighter. It would have been in the overall pocket which Ivan always kept buttoned!)

(Signed) R.Hicks, Lieutenant Commander R.N. Commanding Officer.

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The next twist in the mystery is, was there a link or mix-up between survivors of DENBIGH CASTLE and the supposed three survivors from BLUEBELL, which were reported to Sid Conley by the person receiving his Post War Credit cheque? Remember that DENBIGH CASTLE was torpedoed, grounded and capsized whilst entering the Kola Inlet on 13 February, 1945 and BLUEBELL was sunk whilst leaving the Inlet on 17 February, just four days later on 17 February, 1945. Excerpts of a letter from the late Ted Matthews, ex P.O. Tel. of DENBIGH CASTLE and a close friend of Don Kirton, certainly suggests that some survivors from the first sinking were rescued by BLUEBELL....."The voyage continued with no abatement in the weather. Conditions on all vessels were atrocious, especially in the destroyers but worst of all in the corvettes"....."Early on 13 February (0005) DENBIGH CASTLE was struck on the port side, the watches were still changing"....."BLUEBELL soon came alongside on the Port Quarter. A Russian tug came alongside on the Starboard side. When all the wounded and most of the remainder of the crew were transferred to BLUEBELL she took DENBIGH CASTLE in tow stern first. She towed her to shallower water, where it is thought that the bow struck the bottom"....."BLUEBELL cast off the tow. Orders were given to abandon ship"....."all through the night there was a heavy snowfall, gale force winds and it was bitterly cold"....."The wounded were taken to the Russian hospital, the rest of the crew were split among the larger warships, the P.O. Tel went to BELLONA"....."Just before sailing (RA64) he was called aboard CAMPANIA and asked about the Confidential Books he had placed aboard BLUEBELL. He was sent by boat to collect them, BLUEBELL was at stations for leaving harbour, he collected the books and carried out the required formalities, then left BLUEBELL as she was moving slowly towards the sea, took the books to CAMPANIA and returned to BELLONA"....."later that afternoon BLUEBELL was sunk and it was said at the time that three bodies were recovered, but only one survived".

.....

DON KIRTON'S CONCLUSIONS

- (1). The sinking of BLUEBELL was a god-send to the P.O. in the cells on BELLONA. All evidence disappeared when she sank
- (2). Who ever he was, he was free from the threat of court martial, etc. Due to the fact that no actual charge was made, merely a request that he be kept in cells until a hearing could be arranged. He needed only to keep quiet and suggest that the 'trumped up' charges were made for some reason or other, which of course, he could deny.
- (3). There were obviously no charges at this point or they would have been held in BELLONA. This P.O. was still on BLUEBELL's books. He would be wise enough to know that no charges could arise without evidence.
- (4). One would imagine that the one survivor from such a popular little corvette would be heralded as a 'hero', throughout the Navy and by the media. But it appears to have been completely ignored, (or, hushed up, from the time he landed back in U.K.)
- (5). One thing is certain - the exposure and trauma of the sinking suffered by any survivors - temperatures at that time of the year suggests that nobody could last more than 10 minutes in that water.
- (6). Any charges, etc. and information would have been written up by BLUEBELL's Coxswain. But what if he had been the accused? What then? A Quandary!
- (7). The very fact that one is innocent until proved guilty, in



this case, would have the day for the P.O., but have created a poster or two making reports. No wonder there appears to be so many inaccuracies.

(8). DENBIGH CASTLE was torpedoed in the inlet during the arrival of the outward convoy and was assisted by BLUEBELL. On return of these survivors to U.K. they, including P.O. Tel. Ted Matthews were retained aboard DUNLUCE CASTLE, to attend the Board of Inquiry on HMS ZAMBESI into the loss of DENBIGH CASTLE. This was normal procedure after the loss of one of H.M. Ships. There is no mention of the survivor (mentioned in ZESI's C.O's report), attending a Board of Enquiry - anywhere!

(9). The writer, (Don Kirton) would like to hear from anyone who served with or knew Petty Officer Holmes, PJ/X 217490 after the war. Possibly at Whale Island as he was not a qualified Coxswain, but possibly Acting Coxswain as was usual on corvettes. He was known as "Sherlock" by his known contemporary, who died some eighteen months ago, who told me, on several occasions that Holmes' background was never a subject of conversation whilst they were friendly.

(10). Holmes joined BLUEBELL shortly before I left her in 1944. He was wearing the rig of a confirmed P.O. and informed me that he was acting Coxswain and acting Petty Officer! This gave him a little more authority as agreed by his superiors. I was the Supply Petty Officer at the time and, as usual worked in with the Coxswain re victualling, etc. His knowledge of Coxswain's duties were very sketchy and I could envisage future problems regarding paper work etc.

.....  
Since editing (and re-editing!) the foregoing, we have received the following communication to Paul Kavanagh. It is a response from J.D.Brown, the Head of the Naval Historical Branch at M.O.D., Whitehall, note that it is dated as recently as 15 November 1993!

Dear Mr Kavanagh

Thank you for your letter of 10 November 1993.

The survivor of HMS BLUEBELL was Acting Petty Officer A.E. Holmes, who was picked up uninjured. HMS WHITEHALL reported that an Able Seaman from the ship was taking passage in the BELLONA: if your recollection is correct, it would appear that the Cox'n had already been summarily disrated - certainly there is no mention of the man (whose name is known but deliberately withheld) in the appropriate Court-Martial returns.

Yours sincerely

(signed J.D.Brown.

.....  
Don Kirton's response on 20 December 1993 was: "The A.B. from the ship was John Hurrell who took passage in BLUEBELL from U.K. to join a ship or establishment in Russia. However, it was decided to return him to U.K. in BELLONA. Regarding disrating the Cox'n, there was insufficient time for Court Martial to be arranged.

.....  
Editor's note:.....After reading, editing and typing the foregoing, I am completely baffled by it all.

HAS THERE BEEN A MIX UP BETWEEN SURVIVORS OF DENBIGH CASTLE AND BLUEBELL?

SURELY, SOME CASE HISTORY OR DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE WOULD HAVE ACCOMPANIED THE PRISONER WHEN ESCORTED TO BELLONA?

WHY DOES THE HISTORICAL BRANCH EMPHASISE THAT THE MAN'S NAME IS KNOWN BUT DELIBERATELY WITHHELD?

.....

E.B. (Tom) COX, THREE BADGE ABLE SEAMAN, SEAMAN TORPEDOMAN.

In saluting Tom, we salute all who perished on BLUEBELL.

The life of a three-badge Able Seaman was a comfortable one, a satisfactory one, for men of Tom's calibre, which would have probably have fallen apart by the responsibility of promotion. To be even Leading Seaman meant disturbing all the comfortable habits and routine acquired over Tom's nineteen years of service.

All he wanted was to go steadily along performing his allotted duties, gaining neither credit or discredit, neither promotion or punishment, and reserving to himself the right to feel that he knew much more about seamanship, electrics, depth charges and throwers etc, mines, cooking, laundry, mess catering including mess accounts, uniform smartness and general tidiness than the quickly promoted "whipper snappers" of the war years.

Tom and his superiors (?) knew that he was performing his duties with perfection and pride and imparting his knowledge throughout H.M.S. BLUEBELL to both junior and senior ranks, therefore we can add another qualification to his capabilities - 'Teacher to the Navy's Greenhorns' of those years. Tom, with good humour, gave his knowledge freely even to the most naive and for the above reasons he was respected throughout the ship. I was privileged to serve with Tom from 'standing-by' in April 1940 to leaving her in April 1944. Four years of being a member of Tom's family and a friend.

Tom commanded respect without badges or gold braid, a true 'Brit' by any standards and a superbly trained individual without whom BLUEBELL would have found it unsafe to proceed unless we could have found a similarly qualified person to take over his duties.

WHAT MORE CAN WE SAY IN PRAISE OF SUCH PERFECTION OTHER THAN HE AND HIS SHIP DIED TOGETHER AFTER FIVE YEARS OF LITTLE KNOWN HELL AND DANGER. THEIR 'WINGS' WERE ANGELIC.

Don Kirton N°521



DON KIRTON  
Aged 23, Spring 1941.

A reporter from the American "Time Life" magazine took this photograph in the forward messdeck of BLUEBELL during an Atlantic "cruise". He was most unhappy because it was a quiet voyage with no action! But Don did not share his unhappiness!

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"PQ 17 ABOARD A FLOWER CLASS CORVETTE"

(An account of a BBC Radio Interview in July 1962)

John Beardmore HMS "POPPY (N°235)

Question - - - - What were your feelings on board your ship POPPY when the order to scatter the convoy were received from the Admiralty?

Answer - - - - Initially it was one of profound shock. To scatter a convoy is the very last action to be taken, and then only at the discretion of the Senior Officer present, when the convoy is in peril of imminent destruction (as was the case of the JERVIS BAY.

We were not even aware that the TIRPITZ and her escorts were at sea. The Admiralty signalled "due to threat of surface ships convoy is to disperse". Now this implied (or at least to us) that an enemy force of superior strength was at least at sea heading in our direction. And the signal "Convoy is to scatter" sent thirteen minutes later, implied that the enemy was even nearer than we had first thought. Obviously the Admiralty was in possession of fuller information, that it was withholding from us; otherwise why should it take such a potentially disastrous step?

In these circumstances it was our distasteful duty to carry out that order. Captain Broome quite rightly formed up his destroyers on our side of the convoy and headed off in the direction of the enemy. It would clearly have been a "death or glory end" for his flotilla, had he met them. As he headed away at high speed he signalled "Sorry to leave you like this. Good luck. Looks like a bloody business".

As our Yeoman of Signals handed this signal to our Skipper on the bridge he muttered "Poor buggers, we'll never see them again".

Within an hour there was no convoy for us to escort as it was already spread out in all directions in a completely bewildered state. It must be remembered that none of the Merchant ships, not even the Commodore, were equipped to receive any of the Admiralty signals. They did not even know why they had been scattered. We in the small escort vessels retired mostly to the eastward (what would our single 4" guns and 14 knots do against the main armament and 40 knots of the largest battleship in the world?).

At the same time we could not help feeling in our bones that we should stand a better chance if we had stuck together. But ours was not to reason why! It was not until some hours later when no battle between the capital ships had developed, that we begun to suspect that something had gone seriously wrong, by which time it was clearly too late to do anything except pick up the pieces,

It is not without good reason that the smallest ships of the Navy (corvettes, trawlers and such lesser fry) were known as "Harry Tate's Navy!" They did not have quite the same eye towards Royal Naval procedures and discipline as the big ships, being manned almost entirely by reserve officers and ex-civilians. It was so much easier for us to bend the rules. We were thus able to use our own initiative and gather together what ships we could from the holocaust.

In particular the corvette LOTUS and the trawler AYRSHIRE showed exemplary bravery and tenacity in turning back contrary to orders into the path of the enemy in order to help ships in trouble, and rescue survivors. It does not take much to prejudice the average sailor against the shore-based hierarchy who give the orders but do not fight the battles, and they quickly began to suspect that this was another case of gross interference. The average sailor is not a stupid man as an onlooker might sometimes mistakenly imagine. There can be few secrets aboard ship and he soon realised what he had already suspected, that the Admiralty was prepared to write off this convoy of war supplies in order to preserve its precious battle fleet against a superior enemy, rather than risk its destruction against what they considered to be a more powerful force.

The crews of our ships and the survivors finally realised the extent to which they had been let down and abandoned by someone in authority two thousand miles away. I need hardly tell you how bitter was their rage.

Subsequent post-war opinion (and how easy it is to be wise after the event has shown that the battleships available at the time - our own DUKE OF YORK, the U.S.S. WASHINGTON, the carrier VICTORIOUS, several cruisers, and 14 heavily armed modern fleet destroyers, all of whom formed the Battle Fleet and were hovering some miles away to the westward, might very well have been a fine match against the German naval strength had they been allowed to meet them - and I have not the slightest doubt they would have shown themselves to good account had they been engaged.

The whole operation of PQ 17 could be summed up briefly by an absolute understatement made by our own Yeoman of Signals when we finally crawled into Archangel with the remnants of PQ 17, a total of 11 Merchant ships and over 1200 survivors, many frost-bitten and who subsequently lost their limbs in Russian hospitals. The Yeoman turned to our Skipper and said, "IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME FOR SAYING SO, SIR, BUT I THINK THERE'S BEEN A BALLS UP". The Captain breathed heavily and replies, "YEOMAN, - I THINK YOU'RE RIGHT!"

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U.S.S. "FURY"

The Flower Class Corvette LARKSPUR was loaned to the U.S. Navy on 17 March 1942 and was renamed FURY. Her first C.O. was Lieut. N. Adair, Jnr. and she escorted convoys between Key West, Florida and Norfolk, Virginia, then she was based at Tomkinsville, Staten Island, N.Y. escorting convoys between New York, Key West and Cuba. Then, in February/April on anti-submarine patrols off New York. Eventually LARKSPUR returned to the Admiralty on 22 August 1945, before being sold to Hong Kong shipowners Wheelock Marden & Co. and was scrapped in Hong Kong in 1953.

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DONT FORGET YOUR SUBSCRIPTIONS!!!  
(Les Sullivan is waiting!!)

ABOARD RHODODENDRON

By ex-Sub Lieut Dick Owen.

(Written in 1946 for Radio New Zealand but not used)

Many stories have been told of the Russian Convoys, of blood and thunder, but this is a story which will enable readers to appreciate the humorous as well as serious side of various situations.

Stories have been circulated as to the age of RHODODENDRON, and I believe in all truthfulness that she was one of the earliest corvettes built, possibly the second off the stocks. I joined her in October 1943, as a sub-lieutenant.

Our home port was Greenock, and in the two years in which I served in her, our main job was escorting convoys to and from North Russia. The particular convoy about which I am going to relate would have been just another ordinary convoy, had it not been for one brief humorous interlude. I say 'humorous', but at the same time realise how serious the situation could have been.

For several days we had been chased and attacked by U-boats. The convoy was originally routed at about 9 knots, but as soon as depth charges and a few torpedoes started flying most of the merchant ships found they could squeeze out about 11 knots, and so for the last three or four days of the trip the convoy pressed on at 11 knots. However, one merchant ship found it could not maintain this speed, and so, when just one day off Kola and heavily besieged by U-boats, it began to drop astern.

Naturally the convoy couldn't wait for one ship, and the S.O, Close Escort decided that as night was drawing in LOTUS, should drop about 5 miles astern of the convoy to escort this ship to Russia. This, we on board were all very pleased with because we had imagined ourselves being detailed off, and had no wish to be astern of the convoy, especially in the midst of these U-boats. But our luck didn't hold, for in the afternoon of this particular day we were detailed to go back to help LOTUS with the merchantman.

My particular watch that night was the first watch, and strangely enough the weather was fine, visibility was good, and the sea reasonably calm. With me on the bridge was Sub-Lieutenant P.J.Marden. "P.J.", as he was known to the rest of the officers, was a young man who had set out to make the Merchant Navy his career; however, this career was interrupted by hostilities and he found himself with a commission in the R.N.R. "P.J." was busy in the chart room and I was leaning on the edge of the bridge next to the voice pipes thinking of all the things one doesn't associate with war - what I was going to do on my next leave, thinking of everybody at home, and wondering how long the war was going to last. We were doing our steady zig-zag and listening to various chatter on the radio telephones, when suddenly LOTUS - who was our senior officer at the time - came up with a signal telling us to investigate a light bearing so-and-so. Being two or three hundred miles off the Russian coast, a light at sea was the last thing we ever imagined; however, we immediately swung our glasses on to the bearing. At the same time our radar operator, who had been sweeping all round with his set, made an emergency call to the bridge that he had obtained a surface echo on a similar bearing. We had been trained well, and so remembered the old adage which ran -

"Both in danger and in doubt,  
Always call the old man out."

Our Commanding Officer was Lieutenant O.B.Medley, a farmer from Oxfordshire. We immediately called up the Captain, and at the same time rang

the general alarm bells. I went down aft in charge of the depth charges, and Sub-Lieut. Marden to his familiar position as navigator in the chart room. Other officers, disturbed from their sleep, rushed to their positions Lieut. F.Bull, R.N.V.R. to assist the Commanding Officer on the bridge; Sublieut. D.Clarke, R.N.V.R. to his position as anti-submarine control officer and Lieut. C.J.McCalvey to his position as gunnery control officer.

When we found the echo about 5 or 6 miles astern of the convoy we supposed it to be a U-boat on the surface. LOTUS continued to escort the merchant ship, so there was no alternative but stay and fight it out. We closed to about 4,000 yards range, and the C.O. ordered the target to be illuminated by star shells ..... the target came into sight. On the bridge, and even down aft where I stood, we could see a sleek silhouette - a U-boat! The gunnery officer then proceeded to plaster it right, left and centre with five or six H.E. shells whilst the target was illuminated. We had to take all precautions because of the U-boat danger. The C.O. manoeuvred our little ship at will, and finally, decided to run in on this U-boat. The radar kept giving us the range....4,000,,,3,000 yards....still the 4" gun was pumping H.E. shells. At 2,000 yards we expected the U-boat to dive, but this was not done. At 1,500 yards our two-pounder opened fire. At 1,000 yards the oerlikons opened fire and shots from all guns were observed to be hitting - or at least going close to the target.

At this stage, everyone on board, from the C.O. down to the Chief Engineer, believed this to be a U-boat. For my part down aft, I would have bet three months pay on it, (or if I had known I would get one - my War Gratuity!)

As this was going on our wireless operators - on the C.O.'s instructions were just keeping the S.O.Escorts informed of our doings, and instructions were flashing backwards and forwards from his ship to ours and vice versa. I am sure that other ships of the convoy, some 9 or 10 miles ahead of us, were sure that a battle to the death was being carried out.

At 800 yards the C.O. decided that something was amiss and ordered the Cease Fire. At 600 yards he took a bold step, and with all guns ready, ordered the starboard searchlight to be turned on. This indeed was a bold step, as to show a light was almost a fatal step. However, he must have considered that our guns would have already given our position away, so that this was the only course open. It was a tense moment. Imagine our surprise, and I might say, indignation, when we perceived the outline, not of a U-boat, as we had hoped for and had visions of capturing, but that of an ordinary fishing trawler.

To stop engines might be fatal, and yet in the interests of mercy and humanity what else could the C.O. do? Here was a fishing trawler, whether it be German, Russian or British, a defenceless craft that had been shelled and battered, lying adrift in mid ocean. Orders were given that we were going alongside to pick up survivors, and at this stage we all, probably wished that we were back home tucked up in bed, not stuck out in the middle of the Arctic Ocean with our engines stopped. It took a few minutes to manoeuvre alongside in the swell, but ropes were made fast and the craft was brought alongside our starboard side. As the two vessels pulled together signs of life began to appear on the trawler. In all, we took fourteen survivors, men, women and children. Most had to be assisted aboard, their nerves had completely gone. The stern had been completely blown off, their main mast had been shot off, their wheelhouse was battered and we could see where cannon shells had ripped up the deck. Most of the survivors collapsed on deck as we took them on board, and it was a while before we realised they were Russians. Imagine our surprise! The Russian captain could speak no English, and we could speak no Russian.

The amazing part of the whole story, and probably one of the most amazing episodes of the whole war, was that not one Russian was even wounded. This was not bad shooting on our guns' crews parts either. As we learned later, four out of the first five shots were hits or very near misses. As Lieut. C.J. McCalvey later remarked, it was one of the best shoots we had ever put up. The amazing part of the whole story is yet to come. The C.O. realised that such a craft would be a menace to shipping and could not be left afloat, so at 400 yards range ordered the vessel to be sunk. With open sights and our layer and trainer both 'on' a shot was fired. Lo and behold it missed! The gunnery officer was naturally disgusted, but the C.O. could wait no longer.

I believe to this day that the only way that the thirteen Russians (5 men, 4 women, 2 boys and 2 girls aged from 9 or 10 upwards) saved their lives was by hiding below or lying flat on the deck. In fact, when we came alongside we noticed several on the deck and believed these to be killed. Some people to whom we have told this story scoff at our bad shooting, but this was not the case. We hit our target alright, and how or why these people escaped injury God alone knows.

Well, off we set to rejoin our solitary merchant ship. By this time we were 18 or 20 miles astern of the convoy and almost out of radio telephone range.

The trawler had obviously been home to two or three Russian families. By signs and fingers, and general symbols which anyone would understand, we found that they had been 28 days adrift in the Arctic Ocean, the last 10 of which had been without substantial food. Our leading supply assistant Lane, did a great job, He rummaged and found bread, butter and other commodities which we ourselves did not even know we carried, and finally put before them a very tasty meal indeed. Another problem was where exactly could we put these people until the end of the voyage? There's not much space on a Flower Class corvette! The lot fell to the petty officers, who readily assented to give up their own mess so that the survivors could be comfortable.

Daylight came, and once again we were with our one ship convoy .... very disappointed at not sinking a U-boat, but nevertheless quite happy that we had rescued the survivors, from what must have been a slow death by starvation and exposure. On this day we were due to arrive at Kola, and everybody was relaxed and feeling secure. At last we would be able to take our boots and life jackets off, and this was a big thing after 9 or 10 days at sea in weather that only persons who have experienced the Russian convoys can understand.

We steamed down the Kola Inlet, all eyes were on RHODODENDRON, all ships staring at us and wanting to know the ins and outs of the previous night's engagement. We received several signals when we got in, mostly from our good friends in other corvettes. Many signals were, "Request pleasure of company for a glass of gin", from ships eager to know our fortunes.

While I am on the story, another amusing incident was the fact that by the time we joined our merchant ship after this action we were at least 20 miles behind the main convoy. However, by cutting corners and by various other dodges known only to the old sea dogs, we steamed into Kola Inlet with the main convoy barely visible on the horizon several miles astern of us!

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**WHAT HAPPENED TO NETTLE AND HYDERABAD.**

Submitted by Cyril Elles, Memb. N°125.

A normal Flower Class corvette except that she was fitted with a "LL" Sweep aft and an Acoustic Sweep at the bow. The "LL" was eventually removed to allow for more depth charge stowage.

She was built at Halls Yard, Aberdeen and named NETTLE. During the building, the Nizam of Hyderabad (India) offered the Government the equivalent of £250,000 to build and equip a warship. The offer was accepted and NETTLE was chosen. Hereafter, the ship was HMS HYDERABAD, as a gesture to the Nizam.

In due course she was handed over by the builders, commissioned and given sailing orders. In accordance with those orders, she left her berth at 1700 on 15 March, 1942 and proceeded down the channel for the sea. After a short distance HYDERABAD touched bottom - again and again finally grounding by the north breakwater.

Hurried checking and rechecking confirmed that we were in mid-channel, heading marks nicely in line, so, as the old rhyme recommends, we "threw out an anchor". The lifeboat EMMA CONSTANCE came out and stood by, just in case, and at about 2000 the tug BRUNO arrived to tow us off. However, whilst attempting to get a line aboard HYDERABAD, she rammed her and also became grounded.

EMMA CONSTANCE managed to get a line on to BRUNO and eventually pulled her clear - only to get rammed herself! It was then found that in grounding, BRUNO had lost her rudder.

By this time HYDERABAD had worked herself clear on the rising tide and returned to the builder's yard under her own steam. Fate still hadn't finished with her though, because a second tug, sent to assist in docking, also rammed HYDERABAD.

A grounding and two collisions led to an immediate Enquiry. HYDERABAD emerged unscathed because it was found that the Sailing Orders had been based on the Tide Tables of the previous year.

After repairs, HYDERABAD sailed on 17 April for Tobermory and left there on 5 May for Liverpool. Hereafter she operated as follows:-

RUSSIA: PQ 16, 22 May 1942. Rescued twenty-six from EMPIRE PURCELL and thirty from EMPIRE LAWRENCE. Carried out a "delivery service" of ammunition from ammunition carriers to those ships in the convoy that had fired all their issue. Returned to Greenock with QP 13 and thence to Liverpool for "Arcticisation" 9 July.

FREETOWN: On completion of "Arcticisation", convoy to Freetown arriving 27 September '42 and returned to Greenock via Clyde and Londonderry on 5 November '42.

GIBRALTAR: with convoy from 6 Nov. arriving 24 Nov. returned to Clyde 6 December '42.

RUSSIA: JW 51B, 21 Dec. '42, returning to Clyde 9 Feb. '43 with convoy RA 52, thence to Tobermory. After repair of defects, left Tobermory 28 Feb. '43. Thence various movements until arrival at Gibraltar on 31 May with Convoy OG 90/KX 10. During passage, HYDERABAD sank U-436 in position approximately 400 miles west of Finisterre - no survivors.

HYDERABAD returned to U.K. for repairs and went back to the Med. in July 1943 where she stayed until 10 June '45. During this time she escorted convoys and did patrols from Gibraltar to Haifa calling at Algiers, Bone, Malta, Oran, Port Said, Alexandria, Bizerta, Phillipville, and Casablanca. HYDERABAD also picked up survivors from HMS TYNDALE, torpedoed in the Med. in Dec. 1943.

On 16 June 1945, HYDERABAD arrived at Portsmouth and after calling at Clyde, she left for Londonderry arriving on 20 July 1945, where she paid off. She was eventually scrapped at Portaferry in October 1948.

I am indebted to Steve Attwater, HYDERABAD's historian for the above details. The information comes from copies of official records, so, assuming they are correct, you can give the usual hand signals to Messdeck Lawyers.

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THE ILL-FATED CONVOY SL125

Submitted by Ray Ratcliffe N°1570

Editor's note: This article missed the deadline for N.L.34, the "Away from Kola" edition. But as the convoy had an escort of six corvettes, we include it in this edition:

No one has mentioned the ill-fated convoy SL125, sailing to U.K. from Freetown, Sierra Leone. This was a convoy of 36 ships of which only 25 reached their destination. SL125 left Freetown on October 16, 1942, with an escort of six corvettes as ocean escort, two of which left the convoy before it ran into a line of eight U-boats, which were lying in wait.

The battle continued for five days during which time 11 British ships were sunk with a loss of 166 lives. Also sunk was the French ship PRESIDENT DOUMER, which was under the management of Bibby Line of Liverpool. 260 went down with her. This great loss of life was due to panic when it was torpedoed amidships. It was dark, all the lights failed, and the ship settled down by the stern immediately. Lifeboats fell from davits into the sea full of survivors and were never seen again. Other boats also crashed into the sea and were also lost.

The escort screen was so ineffective that the U-boats were in the midst of the convoy and in some cases ships were torpedoed on each side.

I was also serving on another Bibby Line ship MV STAFFORDSHIRE and had accompanied PRESIDENT DOUMER up the West African coast, moving troops up from the various ports for the invasion of North Africa. I had been on board PRESIDENT DOUMER on numerous occasions. We were both fast troopships of 17 knots yet sometimes finished in very slow convoys.

Months later it was learned that the ships and men of Convoy SL165 had been "sacrificed" so that the North Africa landings could go ahead. The poorly defended merchantmen had, unknowingly, drawn the U-boats away from "Operation Torch". In Volume 4 of Winston Churchill's "The Second World War" he states that 40 German and Italian U-boats were stationed to the South and East of the Azores. They were successful in sinking 13 ships of a homeward convoy from Sierra Leone. In the circumstances this could be borne.

I do not suppose that this sentiment was shared by those who survived.

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Which corvette took part in most Arctic Convoys? Was it POPPY?; LATHS?; RUFFELL?; RHODODENDRON? or another? Answer on last page.

A RUM STORY  
(Geoff Shelton, ex VINDEX)

It's an ill wind that does not do somebody some good, and how true that is.

On the 11th January 1945, RA63 left Kola Inlet to return home. We experienced no problems with enemy aircraft or U-Boats, but when we were somewhere north east of the Faroes we were hit by a storm. It was not just a storm, it was a gale, in fact it was more than a gale, it was horrendous. There were no lookouts closed up, there was no one manning the guns. These positions were just not accessible, and the only people on deck were the Skipper and two others.

The rest of us were battered down below hatches, with only one small hatch open and the mess decks awash with sea water, which, as the ship rolled from side to side broke against the bulkheads covering anyone near with spray. When you climbed into your hammock you took your sea boots with you and tied them to the clews in readiness for getting out. The sick bay was full of casualties as a result of the conditions, in fact there were 26 injured men. I had the wind up because I thought we were going to capsize. The convoy just broke up and scattered. We were on our own and the Admiral signalled WESTCOTT (I believe), to join us, only to be told that they were steaming into the gale and were in fear of capsizing were they to present their beam to the elements. How they survived in the smaller ships I'll never know. Anyway, the Admiral sent out orders for all ships to proceed to the Faroes and regroup.

Now we get to the best part. Imagine a mess deck two hours into the middle watch, the hammocks swaying in unison, in the dim light of the emergency lamps. The water can still be heard sloshing about from side to side. The gale force winds tending to stifle the snores and the grunts and groans emanating from the hammocks.

The duty watch, fully clothed, but unable to carry out their duties, played cards in the dim light. A furtive figure swung down the hatch. "Quick" he said, "the barrels in the Rum Locker have burst open and the Officer of the Watch has ordered that it is pumped overboard in case of fire". A look of horror spread over their faces, they were in shock. We had survived thus far everything that the enemy and the elements had thrown at us, but this, it was too much! I have never seen so many men at one time so near to tears, and then suddenly it changed. For they leapt to their feet and grabbed any object they could lay their hands on that would hold liquid, and then they acquired any cloth that would assist in mopping up the liquid gold.

The Officer of the Watch was surprised that so many were desirous of protecting their ship and the thoroughness with which they were kneeling down, with filthy swabs soaking up the rum and with it the dirt and grime of many years standing, not to mention the accumulation of flakes of red lead and other coloured paints.

Retiring to the mess deck with fannies full of contaminated rum they proceeded to filter the liquid through clean handkerchiefs.

When we dropped hook in the Faroes there was no ship as happy as VINDEX.

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ENJOY YOURSELF. THESE ARE THE GOOD OLD DAYS YOU'RE GOING TO MISS  
IN DAYS TO COME.

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**WHAT DO YOU MEAN, THE BRIDGE IS OUT OF BOUNDS?**

By Bill Ryan our Liaison Officer in U.S.A.

During the latter part of 1942, I was making my second run to Russia. I was still a very young and stupid sailor. Being a member of the engine department, I had never been on the bridge of a ship.

One day after getting off watch, I decided to take a look at the bridge of this brand new Liberty ship. I walked up the ladders, leading to the bridge, as if I didn't have a care in the world. On entering the bridge, the Second Mate gave me a quick cursory look and turned away. The A.B. on the wheel acknowledged my presence with a nod of the head. So far so good!

I stood behind the A.B. and was looking at our compass heading. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw our Captain approaching from the direction of his cabin. (Captain Richardson, from Panama, was the first BLACK Captain to command an American merchant ship). As he got closer to me, he asked "Are you a member of the deck department?" I immediately replied, "Hell no, I'm Billy Ryan, a member of the engine room."

When he heard this, for want of a better word, he went BALLISTIC! He started to scream at the top of his voice something like, "Get off my bridge. Who the hell do you think you are?" I turned and attempted to get out of the port door. Unfortunately, it was 'dogged' shut, because of the bad weather. I then crossed in front of the steering wheel and made a dash for the starboard door. All this time, and it seemed like an eternity, the Captain is chasing me, swearing at me and in general, trying to get his hands on me.

Just as I lifted my leg to step over the bottom of the doorway, the Captain kicked me square in the bottom of my spine. I managed to get out, and started down the ladder to the boat deck. The Captain was right behind me, swearing and kicking. I made it to the boat deck and ran like hell for the after ladder. The Captain remained on the boat deck, ranting and raving, while I headed for my cabin. I stayed there until I was called for my next watch. I was afraid to leave the cabin, for fear that the Captain was waiting outside for me.

I never again set foot on a bridge of a ship, until last December 1942, when I visited the SS JOHN W. BROWN, the last Liberty ship, on the East Coast of U.S.A.

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**YOU OPENED THE WRONG VALVE, STUPID.**

By Robert Gottshall (N°1277)

Liberty ships burned 'Bunker C' (sometimes called N°6) fuel oil, in their boilers. Cold, it had the consistency of road tar, heated to 180° it pumped, and burned quite well in the four burners in each of the two boilers.

Normal procedure at sea, called upon the 12 to 4 watch to transfer fuel oil from the deep tanks or double bottoms to either the port or starboard settling tanks located behind the boilers. This approx. 16,000 gallons was good for 24 hours steaming.

The settling tanks had two suction valves, one high, the other was the low suction. It was the custom to use only the high suction, because 'Bunker C' contained a lot of crud, sand and grease-globs which gravitated to the bottom of the tanks.

J.L.M.CURRY was heading north in Convoy JW 51A towards

**A SPONSORED PARACHUTE JUMP FOR OUR WELFARE APPEAL**

In the last edition we announced that a member had offered to carry out a sponsored event for us (we said it was more a 'feat' than event! - THIS IS IT!! A veteran jumping from 10,500 feet (sorry, he's an ex-submariner so we should possibly say a jump from 1,750 fathoms!!)

Last September, Gus Britton jumped on behalf of the Submarine Old Comrades Association and being 'brain-dead' like all ex-two badge bunting tossers, he landed on his head and loved the sensation so much that he wants to jump again. Being a member of N.R.C. he has offered his services and we have accepted them! There is no need to wait for the jump you can start rounding up your oppos and families for sponsorship. Your cheques should be made payable to North Russia Club (Para Appeal) or if you require forms to list your various donors please phone the chairman/editor (051 487 9567). All cheques and collections should be sent to the editor's address. Gus has requested that the funds raised be used to help our distressed members and/or descendants. This will be done, so please help in any way possible. Your donations, no matter how small or large will be gratefully accepted.

Being one of the handful of submariners in our club, we now introduce him. He says, "I am a bit ashamed of my qualification for membership because we saw little or nothing of the nastiness. I was on HMS/M TRIBUNE and we were long range screen for PQ17 and PQ18 and apart from seeing HIPPER, KOLN and other ships rushing out of Lofoten on 10 September, we saw little excitement, I am a bit embarrassed about this, the convoys getting the stick while I was in my bunk! I joined up at GANGES in 1938, I was at sea in NELSON on the day that war broke out, and when she was mined. Then on FIJI and she was torpedoed on the day after I joined her. My seasickness was cured on the old four-funnelled Yank BEVERLEY, then I went into submarines on April Fool's Day 1941 to get away from all that unpleasantness upstairs. I left the Andrew in 1953 having risen from Signal Boy to Signalman in 16 years!!! Then, 12 years as a jolly old Butlin's redcoat, followed by 10 years as a swimming instructor at Ecole Therese D'Avilla, Lisle, a girl's convent school, now researcher at the Submarine Museum".

Gus hasn't mentioned that he did 17 wartime patrols in the Arctic and Med. He has started on his weight loss, and has to get rid of 2 stones of ballast to bring him within the permitted weight limits. The jump will be made at Headcorn Airfield in Kent, and the date (weather permitting) will be announced in the next edition of Northern Light. We will try to arrange that a good representation of club members are there to witness the jump and to push the boat out afterwards. Perhaps our South-east members could arrange a social reunion afterwards! All sponsors will eventually receive a signed photo-postcard of Gus in full flight!

DIARY OF PROPOSED EVENTS 1994

Addresses and Tel. Nos of Organisers or Contacts listed on Page 2.

**9 MARCH: THANET AREA:** Members meeting at Margate RBL/RNA. Thence on 2nd Thursday of alternate months. Contact E. Sharpe.

**12 MARCH: HMS BELLONA REUNION:** At Victory Services Club, Marble Arch, London 1830 to 2300. "Chummy Ships invited". Buffet Supper. Contact Arthur J Willis.

**16 MARCH: SOUTH WEST MEMBERS (10th Anniversary) DINNER:** At Keyford Elmes Hotel & Restaurant, Frome, Somerset, 1930 for 2000. Overnight accommodation available at venue and locally. Contact 'Curly' Morris.

**23 MARCH: PRESIDENT'S REUNION LUNCH:** At Victory Services Club, Marble Arch, London. 1100 to 1600. Members only. Contact President Chris. B. Tye.

**26 MARCH: NORTH WESTERN REUNION BANQUET DINNER DANCE:** At the Stretton Hotel, North Promenade Blackpool. Booking forms for Dinner and also accommodation from Les Jones. Note: The Grand Spring Draw will be made during the evening.

**8 to 11 APRIL: HMS CUMBERLAND REUNION:** At Great Yarmouth. Non-members of Cumberland Assoc. welcome. Contact Tom Ponder on 0223 840188.

**24 APRIL: ACMT "FONT" DEDICATION:** At St Nicholas Church, Devonport. See ACMT notification on pages 36 to 39 for details. Overnight accommodation can be reserved at the China Fleet Country Club by phone: 0752 848668.

25/26 APRIL The proposed Mid-week Break at the China Fleet Country Club Saltash, has been CANCELLED. Due to lack of support - only four responses:

**30 APRIL: ACMT/NRC "MAST" MEMORIAL DEDICATION:** At Liverpool Parish Church, The Old Churchyard, Pier Head, Liverpool. SEE STOP PRESS ON PAGE 48 for details.

**4/5 MAY: D DAY CELEBRATIONS:** at Llandudno, Clwyd. Beach Memorial Service, Military Display, etc., organised by Wrexham British Legion. Contact Kevin Blanchard on 0978 312823.

**21 MAY: ANNUAL SOUTHERN BUFFET SOCIAL EVENING:** At the Victory Club, HMS Nelson, Queens Street, Portsmouth. 1800 to 0100. Contact Mervyn Williams or John Rousell.

**1 to 10 JUNE: ROYAL CANADIAN NAVY ASSOC. (40th Annual) REUNION:** At Niagara Falls, Ontario. NRC Members Welcome. Itinerary includes: Return Flights (London or Manchester); 9 nights at The Inn at the Falls; Visits to local Naval Associations; Ball; Welcome Dinner; Sightseeing; Excursion to U.S.A. etc., etc. Contact Jo Anne Caxton, c/o Shirespeed Travel, 1 York Terrace, York Street, Chester CH1 3LR. or Ben Harris, Tel: 0200 25332.

**3 to 6 JUNE: "V" & "W" DESTROYER ASSOC. PRE-D DAY 1ST ANNUAL CONVENTION:** At Liverpool 4\* Moat House Hotel. Itinerary includes Convention; Buffet Dinner aboard HMS Plymouth/Spam Supper at H.Q. of Western Approaches; Gala Dinner; Maritime Museum; Mersey Ferry Cruise; etc. Contact John Lawton (Page 2) or Shirespeed (above)

**4 & 5 JUNE: 26TH DESTROYER FLOTILLA REUNION:** Saturday 4th June. Reunion Buffet at the Victory Club, HMS Nelson, Queen Street, Portsmouth. Sunday 5th June. Drumhead Service at RN War Memorial, Southsea Common. Contact Jack Greenwood.

**23/24 JULY: "LONDON WEEK END".** Saturday Supper Dance in the Gascoigne Room, Union Jack Club, Waterloo. 1800 to 2400. Dancing to our regular entertainers "The Minchellas". Booking Forms from Chris Tye. Sunday Wreath Laving Ceremony & Service at the Russian Memorial, Brookwood Military Cemetery, followed by Buffet Lunch in the Sergeant's Mess, Brigade of Guards Depot, Pirbright. Book with Peter Skinner.

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**REMINDER: THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING THIS YEAR, IS NOT (REPEAT NOT) BEING HELD AS PART OF THE "LONDON WEEK-END" AND THAT WE HAVE NOT MADE A BLOCK BOOKING AT THE ROYAL TOURNAMENT FOR FRIDAY NIGHT.**  
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**21 to 23 OCTOBER: TRAFALGAR NIGHT, ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND ANNUAL DINNER DANCE:** At the Swallow Hotel, Eagle Drive, Northampton. Full details in the next edition of Northern Light. Booking Forms will be available from Les Jones.

**23 NOV: TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF CLUB'S FORMATION:** Reunion Luncheon at Victory Services Club, Marble Arch, London. 1100 to 1700 Members Only. Contact Chris Tye.

**7 DEC: SOUTH WEST (OGGIE LAND) CHRISTMAS LUNCH:** Similar arrangements to 1993, bookings to Peter Skinner.

IF YOU HAVE PROBLEMS ATTENDING EVENTS, WHY NOT CONTACT THE ORGANISER - WE CAN OFTEN ARRANGE "SHARED TRANSPORT", ETC.

1995  
 1995---50TH ANNIVERSARY OF VICTORY YEAR---1995  
 1995

During this very special year there will be numerous celebrations, gatherings reunions and acts of thanksgiving, remembrance and reconciliation, both in Britain and overseas. The club has set up a small steering committee to draw up the early plans. We will have definite information for you in the next edition of Northern Light. We have received invites to visit Jersey for Liberation Day, to Murmansk and Polyarnoe for Victory Day, to Germany, and Canada. There are several members who suggest a 'Round Britain' reunion. So there is obviously a lot to plan. If you would like something in your area, you should inform Peter Skinner at once, so that the Steering Committee can discuss the suggestion.

Three events which we can give you advance notice of are:-  
 CANADA:- The Bi-Annual HMCS NENE Reunion in Peterborough near Toronto, during the week end of 1 July, "Canada Day. Alan Turner the Reunion Organiser (he is a NRC member!) has extended a cordial invitation to you all. To ease his work load in U.K. he has asked our President to act as Liaison Representative here.  
 RUSSIA:- The mayors of Murmansk, Polyarnoe, and Vaenga (now named Severomorsk), as well as the Northern Fleet invite us there for Victory Day celebrations. We are asked to arrange the Jersey trip to coincide with the island's "Liberation Day" celebration in May. One of the big events in U.K. will be in Portsmouth:- Several organisations are planning reunions to coincide with a Drumhead Service on Southsea Common at the Naval War Memorial on the Sunday nearest to VJ Day.

YOUR RESPONSE AND SUPPORT OF THE "GRAND SPRING DRAW" HAS BEEN QUITE WONDERFUL, AND THE FUNDS RAISED WILL HELP US IMMENSELY WITH OUR AIMS AS SET OUT IN THE LAST EDITION. A SPECIAL 'THANK YOU' TO THOSE WHO ADDED 'A LITTLE EXTRA' TOWARDS COSTS, ETC. AN EQUALLY BIG 'THANK YOU' TO OUR LESS FORTUNATE MEMBERS, WHO WERE NOT ABLE TO SELL THEIR TICKETS, BUT RETURNED THEM PROMPTLY, SO THAT WE COULD RE-ISSUE THEM. THE DRAW WILL TAKE PLACE AT THE NORTHERN REUNION AT BLACKPOOL ON SATURDAY 26TH MARCH. IF YOU HAVE NOT YET RETURNED YOUR COUNTERFOILS, THIS NORTHERN LIGHT SHOULD REACH YOU IN TIME TO REMIND YOU THAT THE CLOSING DATE IS 19TH MARCH - OR, PERHAPS YOU HAVE TIME TO DISPOSE OF A FEW MORE BOOKS JUST PHONE 051 487 9567 IF YOU WANT SOME.

THANKS FOR YOUR SUPPORT & GOOD LUCK ! !

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**MORE NEWS ON THE D DAY CELEBRATIONS**

Admissions to events marked \*\*\* are by ticket only - individual applications to: Royal Navy Association, 82 Chelsea Manor Street, London SW3 5QJ.

- SAT 4 JUNE AT 1500 \*\*\* Garden Party at Southwick House in Portsmouth.
- SAT 4 JUNE AT 1700 \*\*\* Musical Event at HMS Excellent, Whale Island, Portsmouth
- SAT 4 JUNE AT 2030 \*\*\* Dinner at Portsmouth Guildhall.
- SUN 5 JUNE AT 1100 Drumhead Service at Southsea Common.
- SUN 5 JUNE AT 1230 Review by Heads of State of Veterans embarked in ships anchored in the Eastern Solent.
- SUN 5 JUNE AT 1330 Fly Past by Air Forces of the Allied Nations.
- SUN 5 JUNE AT 1600 Parachute drop by 1,000 paratroopers at Pegasus Bridge.
- SUN 5 JUNE AT 1800 "Family" Services at Ranville and Hermanville for the 6th and 3rd Airborne Divisions.
- MON 6 JUNE AT 1130 \*\*\* Services of Commemoration at 5 cemeteries: Bayeux; Ryes; Hermanville; Douvres-La-Délivrande & Ranville.
- MON 6 JUNE AT 1420 \*\*\* International Ceremony at Omaha Beach.
- MON 6 JUNE AT 1700 March Past of Veterans on Arromanches Beach.

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**BROWNIE MAKES IT A DATE FOR NORMANDY**

Excerpts from "Brownie's Sights" the newsletter of SS John W Brown the Veteran's Liberty Ship:- (Quote): WE HAVE ONLY FOUR MONTHS LEFT TO ACCOMPLISH A MOUNTAIN OF WORK TO PREPARE THE SHIP AND ITS CREW FOR THE MOMENTOUS VOYAGE ACROSS THE ATLANTIC. OUR VOLUNTEER CREW IN BALTIMORE WILL BE WORKING LIKE BEAVERS TO GET EVERYTHING READY AND WE'RE CONFIDENT THAT WE CAN DO IT. OUR SCHEDULE NOW CALLS FOR THE 'BROWN' TO DEPART FROM BALTIMORE ON SATURDAY APRIL 30, 1994. WE WILL STEAM TO NEW YORK AND SPEND A WEEK RENDEZVOUSING WITH JEREMIAH O'BRIEN and LANE VICTORY for the beginning of our transatlantic "Normandy Convoy." While our itinerary is not yet firm, tentative plans call for visits to Southampton, Portsmouth, London, Plymouth, Liverpool and Glasgow, as well as to Cherbourg and Rouen in France, with a call at Boston on the way home. The ship would arrive in Baltimore on August 24. Quite a trip! It will cover almost ten thousand miles and take 116 days from the time we leave Baltimore until we return.

Captain Brian Hope (Chairman,)

.....

Murmansk and four days out of Scapa Flow, when the watch engineer switched to the starboard tank, unfortunately he opened the bottom suction valve. Within minutes the fuel oil strainers were clogged, the fires went out in both boilers, and 'CURRY' had given up her place in the middle of the convoy, and gradually moved to the rear. Steam pressure dropped from 235lbs to less than 100lbs. Minutes later all 12 of the 'black gang' were either cleaning strainers, or burners, shouting orders, or yelling profanities.

The unsympathetic deck department were ringing up 'Full Speed' on the engine room telegraph or screaming over the phone demanding to know what was going on, a touch of fear in their voices.

Once the shift back to the high suction was made and burners, strainers and fuel lines cleared of the muck, 'CURRY' was back at 11 knots returning to her proper position.

The engine department endured the taunts and barbs until the 12 to 4 oiler replied, "Just goes to show you deck apes, you're nothing without the 'Black Gang'."

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**WAR THROUGH THE EYES OF A U-BOAT COMMANDER**

(The following is an interview between Admiral Erich Topp and Calvin L. Christman, in Dallas, Texas, U.S.A. Erich Topp survived the war to become Germany's second-ranking submarine ace and is author of the book "The Odyssey of a U-boat Commander")

[Reprinted in Northern Light with permission]

With the World War II problems of American torpedoes in mind I asked Admiral Topp if German submarines had any of the same problems with torpedoes that the Americans had. He replied that the main problem they had was with the magnetic warheads that were designed to run slightly under the target ship and break its back with the explosion. These warheads did not work well (Prein used a magnetic warhead on his first attack on the ROYAL OAK. When it failed, he had to re-load with contact warhead torpedoes and fire a second time, which sank ROYAL OAK). The magnetic warheads had a particularly high failure rate during the Norwegian campaign of Spring 1940. The Germans did not have the American problem of torpedoes circling and returning to the firing point or the problem of torpedoes running consistently deeper than set to run. Germans had basically two torpedo types: one propelled by compressed air that left a wake of bubbles and the other propelled by an electric motor that left no wake.

I asked what Admiral Topp considered the main reasons for the defeat of the German submarine effort in the Atlantic. He saw the main factors as ULTRA (this was most important because German submarines depended on communication for their wolfpack tactics and ULTRA used the German communications against them), radar on escort ships, radar on patrol planes (since an aircraft at 1,000 feet greatly extended the range of radar as compared to the radar on the mast of an escort ship, huff-duff (high-frequency direction finders, which allowed escort ships quickly to track the distance and bearing of German submarine radio transmissions), and Leigh Light (Allied bombers that attacked submarines at night in the Bay of Biscay as German submarines left ports in France for Atlantic patrols.

In a general discussion on German submarines, Admiral Topp



said that the maximum operating depth of a Type VII submarine was 150 metres, but he personally took a Type VII down to 260 metres out of desperation. The Type VII, from the time the alarm sounded, could dive to a depth of 10 metres in 20 seconds.

Admiral Topp felt that the Walter Type XVII boats or the high speed Type XXI boats would **NOT** have turned the tide if they had been deployed earlier. The wolfpack tactics depended on communications; even better boats would not have solved the communication problems and the broken German codes. Submarines had to surface in order to communicate and thus became vulnerable to counter measures. The Type XXI boat did have a radio antenna in the periscope, so that it could communicate at periscope depth, but the range and effectiveness of the antenna were quite limited, so its development would not have allowed a renewal of wolfpack tactics. The Type XXI, thus, would not have been more effective as a weapon, though the Type XXI would have had a better chance to survive. Type XXI's had a depth diving test of 220 metres; in an emergency, that would be doubled. Type XXI's had a maximum submerged speed of 17.2 knots. They had a very quick ability to change depth. The Walter boats had a H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub> (hydrogen peroxide) propulsion system that produced high pressure steam through a turbine. H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub> was a dangerous combination; it had an inherent possibility of an explosion if not handled carefully. The high pressure steam had a temperature of 550° C. The Walter boat had a top speed of 25 knots and a one hour submerged capability of 16 knots.

Topp was the commander of U-552 which, early on the morning of 31 October 1941, sank the destroyer USS REUBEN JAMES. At the time, Topp said that he and the crew felt great elation at having sunk a destroyer, their greatest adversary. Then, when they later heard by Allied radio broadcasts that the American REUBEN JAMES had been sunk, they realised it must have been the ship they sank. At this point, Topp became very concerned what effect the sinking might have on U.S.- German relations, but the high command, though asking him to report to Berlin to describe the incident, never criticized him for the sinking. He spoke quite movingly of his reaction some years later when he read the book "Mr Roosevelt's Navy" and learned of the agony that the survivors of the RUEBEN JAMES went through (the ready-action depth charges exploded as the stern sank, killing many of the survivors who were struggling in the water). He also recounted an incident many years later in San Diego when he met a Navy captain. He wondered why the American captain, while proper in behaviour, seemed so cold. He found out that the captain had been a young officer on the USS NIBLACK, which was working with RUEBEN JAMES on that morning, and that the captain's closest friend in the navy had been among the bridge personnel on the RUEBEN JAMES that died that morning.

At the time of the RUEBEN JAMES, Hitler was still trying to prevent war with the United States, yet immediately after Pearl Harbour, Hitler turned around and declared war on the United States. I asked Topp if he had any possible insights into why. He replied that, of course, he had no personal knowledge, but that he felt that by December 1941 Hitler felt that war was inevitable anyway and that by declaring war he demonstrated his resolve and loyalty to Japan.

I asked Admiral Topp how the officers and submarine service maintained morale, especially as the tide turned and submarine losses increased. Topp gave much of the credit to Doenitz, stressing that he was magnetic and charismatic, and that he played a vital role in maintaining morale at a high level. In addition, there was a closeness within the service, the feeling that they

were a band of brothers and that they could not give up the ship. There was a great loyalty to the service and to Doenitz. Also, the navy still felt the strain of the mutiny in the autumn of 1918; it could not allow any hesitancy or doubt in this war; it couldn't allow even a hint that might recall the actions of 1918.

Admiral Topp indicated that he felt the tide had shifted against the submarines by late 1942. battles of April-May 1943 only confirmed what had already occurred. Topp's last regular war patrol in a Type VII was late in 1942. After that, he was involved in training new crews in the Baltic. Then he received command of a new Type XXI boat very late in the war and out on his last patrol in late April 1945 about two weeks before the surrender. Despite his position, Topp had no idea of the staggering submarine losses during the war. He said that one knew of the losses among your own squadron, but one had no idea of the total losses. He mentioned that Germany lost over 100 submarines during January-May 1945.

Topp fully supported Doenitz during the war. Only after the war, when Topp had chance to read the documents and talk to other officers, did he begin to realise that Doenitz's actions were not always correct. He gave the example of Doenitz's aide who, during the war, came across a document that mentioned the Nazi action against the Jews and other groups. The aide pressed Doenitz for his opinion. Doenitz replied that he would not think to tell Goering how to run the Luftwaffe, and thus he would not think to tell the party leaders how to deal with politics. In Topp's opinion that is an example where Doenitz had been wrong. Also, Topp pointed out, Doenitz had a hard time bringing the needs and concerns of the submarine force to Hitler's attention. As Topp said, Doenitz "was wax in the hands of Hitler". Doenitz himself said that he felt like a "little sausage" when he was before Hitler. Doenitz also felt the shame of the 1918 mutiny and, thus, was unlikely to stand up to Hitler.

In a discussion of ULTRA and Bletchley Park, Topp stressed that Germany never systematically organised scientific research to help solve operational problems. Germans lacked operational research; they separated scientific thinking and operational thinking. The Allies combined this thinking, with Bletchley Park being an excellent example of where scientific thinking and operational intelligence needs meshed.

Topp indicated that in the 1930's Germany received early help in rebuilding and designing her submarine force from the Dutch, the Turks and the Finns.

Topp made his last patrol in a Type VII boat in October 1942. When asked if there were one particular time when he came closest to being sunk, he said no --- that he and his ship were always on the near edge of being sunk. He did, however, mention two episodes that were very close. One was a surface engagement in the fog with a Canadian escort ship when Topp's ship took a five-inch hit from the Canadian's deck gun, which affected the trim of his submarine and made the emergency dive difficult. Seeing the submarine hit and then go down, the Canadian ship reported that the German submarine with the red devil painted on the conning tower had been sunk. Earlier in the war, Topp recalled a cruise with one of the smaller 250 ton submarines in the Irish Sea when he and his crew were nearly sunk and had to sit on the bottom for a day and a half before they could escape.

Concerning ULTRA, he indicated that he and other captains suspected that the codes may have been broken or compromised, but the high command insisted that the code combinations produced by the ENIGMA machine made that an impossibility. He mentioned how the

British capture of the code-books and an ENIGMA machine from the U110 in May 1941 by HMS BULLDOG had been a great help to the British in turning the German submarine communications against them.

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#### A SORT OF "FAREWELL TO ARMS"

By Maurice Cross (Nº492)

After VE Day, if you remember, hundreds of ships paid off and shore establishments severely reduced. Thousands of redundant matelots poured into barracks and once again, I found myself in Jago's Mansions in Guzz. As weeks crawled by, 'Jack' was getting more and more niggly. As far as he was concerned, the 'job' had been done, so why was he sculling about being nagged at by barrack stanchions?

Obviously we all wanted to go home, but of course things were not that simple. First in, first out, plus the usual bureaucratic frigging about, was the order of the day. Tempers flared, voices were raised and the crunch came when some boozed-up matelots dragged furniture from their messes and set fire to it on the parade ground. The boozy ones were soon joined by a few hundred more and soon quite a sizeable mob was milling about.

Telephone wires hummed between the C-in-C, the Commodore and the Admiralty, resulting in half the barracks being sent on indefinite leave and a large contingent getting draft chits. I got one for Ceylon. We sailed on VJ Day aboard a Trooper, so it was peacetime routine with all lights on and everybody enjoying the trip.

It was ruddy marvellous in Ceylon. I had spent most of the war in the perishing cold and rain and here I was, under the swaying palms, swimming in the Indian Ocean and loafing about in H.M.'s Mayina Camp in Colombo. I remember one comic incident (to a spectator!). Fanatical Japs were still holding out in Sumatra, so a Naval Party was required to liaise with ships and pongoes. This party of unfortunate matelots had quadruple injections, including the dreaded Yellow Fever jab, where the SBA grabs a handful of gut and rams the needle in - oh painful! Afterwards they were all flaked out in their palm thatched huts, moaning and cursing and clutching their arms and stomachs, when came the pipe, "Party Sumatra is cancelled - the Japanese forces have surrendered". The roars of rage, pain and anguish could be heard in India!

I then had a pleasant four months in Trincomalee Signal Station - an ex-Dutch fort perched on a headland, surrounded by forest and overlooking Trinco Bay. An ancient, bomb-happy, Chief Yeoman of Signals was in charge. His first words to me were, "Welcome my son, to these palm-fringed frigging shores - now, every day, you will notice that I bugger off to that island over there", he indicated a tennis court sized island off shore, "I row myself across, with a supply of pusser's rum, my beer ration and perhaps yours, some sandwiches, an Aldis Lamp and a book - I return round about the dog watches. I'm expecting my U.K. sailing orders any day now, so dont let's have any aggravation - any panic. Just flash me up, O.K. my son!" I ended up i/c office administration plus the Station's domestic arrangements, plus helping out with V/S watches.

We had been warned by the Lieutenant down at the Naval Base, that things were hotting up in India and Ceylon, with the natives getting aggressive trying to give the British Raj the old heave-ho. "So, for heaven's sake dont get stroppy with your Ceylonese

houseboys and cooks - let sweetness and light prevail, O.K." Everything was fine until one hot afternoon when I was dozing in a cane arm chair on the veranda. The Ceylonese head-houseman, knowing of my aversion to all the exotic insect life that teemed around the Station, thought it a laugh to dangle a large dead scorpion in front of my eyes and then to give me a shake. I came to, staring at this hideous insect an inch from my nose. Triggered by revulsion and fear, I gave the Ceylonese a great thump, which knocked him over the veranda rail to land with a crash in the compound. He staggered to his feet, shot me a venomous look and limped away down to the Base. "Well, that's me right in it!" I thought, as I flashed the Chief on his island. Came the inevitable phone call from the lieutenant, "Report to me forthwith". "Bloody Hell" quoth the Chief after he landed and heard my story. "You trying to start a riot or something - if this frigs up my U.K. sailing, I shall hate you, really hate you!" We drove in silence to the Base.

"For God's sake, Cross, what are you trying to do to me - you know the score", raged the Lieutenant, "If this gets out to the town's fanatics, we shall be deep in the fertilizer - you'll have to go to the Ceylon NVR Officer and apologise profusely to him and your houseman and make good - I want a real grovel job - because if you fail, I'll have your guts dangling from the nearest palm tree and your Demob will be somewhere in the 21st century - so shove off and get cracking!"

So I grovelled and grovelled to the Ceylonese, pleading acute arachnophobia and eventually succeeding in calming things down thereby averting another Empire crisis with the Viceroy coming down from Calcutta to sort me out. To the Chief's great fury, I got my chitty about two months afterwards. "Return to Colombo for passage to U.K."

To be honest, being an unattached young chap, I was in no great rush to get back to austerity Britain in the winter. I was greatly enjoying a free tropical holiday - sailing a Station outrigger canoe under azure skies, surf-riding, sun-bathing, exploring Buddhist shrines in the forest and generally bouncing about Trinco in the Station jeep. After Scapa and Polyarnoe it was sheer paradise.

But if you gotta go, you've gotta go... So I packed my kitbag once again. I did think about kicking the head houseman's backside, just before leaving for the railway station - but reason prevailed. It would have dropped the Lieutenant right in it from a great height and he no doubt would have been on the blower to Mayina to have me swinging from the yardarm on my arrival. I took passage home in HMS LONDON.

We carved our way to the Med. at umpteen knots, stopping only at Aden. What a God-forsaken hole - nothing but bad-tempered camels, flies and wily oriental gentlemen trying to flog you dodgy goods. The Med. was miserably cold and choppy, but we were alongside at Gib. for three days and thoroughly enjoyed the night-life and walking to the top of the Rock. On the last night ashore, I bought a large bag of fruit and nuts for my parents. Unfortunately, I got a trifle Brahms and Liszt at a night club enroute to the docks, and afterwards dropped my bag on the quayside and then trod on more fruit than I managed to pick up, groping about in the dark. I caused a slight chaos when other returning merry matelots trod on my split walnuts and went down like ninepins, with much shouting - causing a naval patrol to rush up, thinking that general mayhem was taking place - so I crept quietly away and left them to it. (My mother eventually got three rotten oranges and two nuts)!

We collected some Marines at Gib, who joined us in the

transit mess. The Bay of Biscay turned them slightly green, so we helped them out by drinking their tots - spending the rest of the voyage in a delightful haze. Once again I took up residence in Jago's Mansions. I was intrigued to learn that my old Signal School IMPREGNABLE at St. Budeaux, had been enlarged and was now the Guzz Demob Centre.

At the appointed day we were busied over to IMPREGNABLE. As I passed the well remembered gates where once I had accidentally called my C.O. a 'silly old sod', I thought I saw the old Jaunty who had weighed me off all those years ago - at least it seemed all those years ago. I could hardly believe my eyes when they put us in 'Fisher' hut - as a starry-eyed eighteen year old, that's where I started off in 1941. I managed to get my old bed, third from the end, bottom bunk. The next morning, I rested on my bed staring up at the bed springs above. Five years had passed and here I was, back where I started - older, perhaps a little wiser and full of mixed emotions. I had made it through the war - thousands had not. How many of my old signal class had survived, I wondered. I knew of one who did not - he was on the PRINCE OF WALES.

When you come to think of it, the staff in barracks drafting offices, held the power of life and death over all of us. A casual flick of the fingers through index files to marry up men with ships and shore establishments, decided whether we lived or died. I wonder if they realised their awesome responsibility - I doubt it.

A loud voice came from the doorway to break into my reverie "Come along then gents! let's get started - the sooner you're through the system, the sooner you'll be civvies again!" We shuffled out of the door.

Well, I suppose that's it! - five years in the Andrew and nothing to show for it but a green pork-pie hat and a chalk striped suit! A sort of 'Farewell to Arms'? Not quite per Ernest Hemingway, I thought as I made my way, for the last time to North Road railway station and then home.

.....

OBITUARY

ANTHONY MARTUCCI

Seaman Anthony Martucci was a comparatively recent member of our club, (Member No 1725). He was one of the few recipients of a Soviet Gallantry award at the tender age of 18!

Documents and press cuttings recently received by the club tell the story of a unassuming young merchant seaman, these include a 1942 press cutting from a Whitby newspaper and letters from Anthony Eden's Foreign Office and EMPIRE BAFFIN's owners. The press cutting states "Anthony Martucci of York Terrace, Whitby, has been awarded the Order of the Patriotic War, Second Degree, of the Soviet Republics, for his gallant conduct while serving in a ship in a convoy to Murmansk. The convoy was heavily attacked by Germans, and when a gunner on his ship was wounded he took his place and carried on alone. Anthony has been at sea for four years at sea, joining the Merchant Navy by overstating his age, on leaving St Hilda's School, Whitby....."

The Foreign Office letter reads, "Sir, I am directed by Mr Secretary Eden to inform you that The King has been graciously pleased to grant you unrestricted permission to wear the Order of the Patriotic War, Second Class, which has been conferred upon you by the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the Union of Socialist Republics, in recognition of your gallantry in the conveying of ships to northern ports of the Soviet Union.....A notification to this effect appeared in the "London Gazette" on 17th November last. I am, Sir, Your obedient Servant, R.Dunbar (30 Nov. 1942)

"CROSSED THE BAR"

We regret to announce that the following members have passed on to a Higher Service:

- A.MARTUCCI in Australia EMPIRE BAFFIN
- F.WALKER of New South Wales VALIANT
- W.GOSS of Nuneaton MUSKETEER
- H.A.MILLWARD of Northumberland TAKU
- F.GLADWIN of Neath NAIRANA
- G.CROSS of Banstead MYNGS
- C.SHEPHERD of Liverpool DENBIGH CASTLE
- H.W.BARROW of Thetford, Nflk EDINBURGH
- D.HANCOCK of Bickley, Kent MILNE
- W.GRIFFETHS of New Malden DENBIGH CASTLE
- E.SKELTON of Dover. NAVAL PARTY 100
- E.H.NEVE of Aylesford, Kent BALDUR III
- C.YOUNG of Dumfermline MILNE
- G.N.WILSON of Blackwood,Gwent CUMBERLAND
- A.SEAGROATT of Colchester. ANSON

Letters of sympathy and comfort have been sent to our late shipmates' families, and wherever possible the North Russia Club has been represented at funerals.

Ensign coffin drapes have been supplied when requested.

REST IN PEACE



OBITUARY

SHIPMATE ERNIE SKELTON.

Ernie Skelton enriched my life, as I know he did everyone who knew him, with his great sense of fairness and duty, tempered by his incredibly infectious sense of humour. He will be sorely missed not only by his many friends here, but by a friend he made over 50 years ago in war torn Russia, whilst serving with Naval Party 100. His reunion with him in 1991 was profoundly moving. Friendship with Ernie spanned decades - miles - cultures and languages.

He was one of the earliest members of the North Russia Club (No 14) and served the club well, resulting in his appointment as Vice Chairman a position he was justifiably proud of. I am glad I was one of Ernie's friends, my life will be the poorer for his passing.

Norman Batchelor

LETTERS FROM MEMBERS

First, excerpts from three letters, to put the record straight regarding the article in the last edition "Exploits of a Fleet Air Arm Officer" by Dennis Grace:

From Bob Fairley N°1601 (ex-Scouser now of Nova Scotia). Dennis says he was sent to Monkton, Nova Scotia. I have never heard of that location, but surmise that he means Moncton, New Brunswick. Also, he says that while in New York he saw the French liner La France, lying on her side after capsizing due to fire. Surely, he is referring to the Ille de France. I am sure you will receive a few more letters on this subject. (We did, plus a couple of phone calls. None were critical, but all wished to clear up errors!!)

From George Burton N°1128. .....The writer makes reference to the August convoy to Russia, and I have no wish to sound critical in any way, but we can all be forgiven a certain lapse of memory now we are knocking on a bit.

The writer served in VINDEX on that convoy, I was in an escorting sloop. He refers to the loss of LAPWING a frigate. LAPWING was a sloop of the Modified BLACK SWAN Class and was not lost until 20 March 1945. The ship lost on the August 1944 convoy was a sloop of the same class KITE (U87).

From George MacDonald N°1551. ..... a very interesting article. Particularly interesting to me was the final paragraph concerning the sinking of LAPWING, Pennant N° U62, in the Kola Inlet.

At that time I was serving in ALLINGTON CASTLE and I clearly remember the incident. LAPWING was our Group S.O. on that convoy, JW65. She was torpedoed by a U-boat (U968) just after "Up Spirits" on 20 March 1945. The explosion in the midship area broke her back and the hull immediately twisted in two directions and in a relatively short period of time, sank.

Although we were in a very dangerous situation, ALLINGTON CASTLE did proceed to the rescue of LAPWING's crew and picked up some 57 men. Regrettably several of the survivors died before we reached Vaenga. The dead were prepared for burial at sea by ALLINGTON CASTLE's crew.

I also recall that the destroyer SAVAGE picked up a further six survivors some two hours after the sinking. They must have suffered badly at that time of the year.

While picking up survivors ALLINGTON CASTLE evaded two torpedo attacks through the expert ship handling of our Skipper Lt.Cdr. P.A.Read RNR. I would also mention that Shipmate Dennis Grace could have been serving in CAMPANIA at that time. CAMPANIA and TRUMPETER were the escort carriers on that particular convoy, JW65.

Sadly, some 150 men went down with LAPWING.

(Editor's note: I and the contributors try to get all of our facts right at the first attempt, occasionally errors do creep in, due to fading memories, old age, etc. etc. The carriers PREMIER and VINDEX escorted the following convoy JW66, which arrived in the Kola Inlet on 25 April, 1945)

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From Ken Ingall N°718. ..... Just received the Christmas issue of Northern Light and my routine today has come adrift because I could not put it down until I had read it from cover to cover.

I well recall my ship VIGILANT (26th D.F.) spent Christmas at anchor in Scapa having just returned from Kola. After an enjoyable Christmas Day (my birthday), I was duty Telegraphist in the W/T Office on Boxing Day and spent a large part of the afternoon and evening receiving and picking up messages about the North Cape battle.

continued/

The Wardroom had a party going on and my messages helped to inject a lot of interest and when I sent up the final message from DUKE OF YORK "SCHARNHORST IS SUNK" the cheer from the Wardroom could be heard over most of the ship, our sister ship VIRAGO was involved and SAUMAREZ was to become our Flotilla Leader late in 1944 when the 26th D.F. moved out to the Far East.

-----

From Jim Howard N°1959. I certainly have no intention of disputing, I wish only to relate a personal memory which will live with me for ever. I served on HUSSAR as a Signalmen, along with other ships we served as 'local escort' to and from Kola and Bear Island.

I recall PQ11 mostly because it was from this convoy we received mail. From which I received a letter from my mother in which she told me that my brother Bill was in a ship named either MARYANN or MARYLYNN she was not sure which. However, I managed to have a sneak-look down the convoy list, and there to my surprise was a MARYLYN.

Some little time later I had a run ashore into Murmansk in an endeavour possibly that I might make contact with my brother, whom I had not seen for something like three years.

If my memory serves me right I found my way to the Arctica Hotel (No, there certainly was no refreshment of any kind!) where I got into conversation with a couple of merchant seamen. I enquired what ship they were off - Yes! the MARYLYNN! I asked if there was a steward by the name of Bill Howard, they replied that there were two Howards onboard. So, I asked would they, on return to the ship ask if one was Bill Howard from Liverpool, with a brother Jim in the Andrew. Should this be so, would he go on to the bridge of his ship the next morning at 0900, when I would get the glasses on him and set the semaphore arms at the letter "J". This proved successful, from which we did meet again.

May I say how pleased I was to read that the other'Marylyn Howard' is one of our Youngest Members.

(Editor's note: We contacted the second Howard, also from Mersey-side, but Frank says; "I lived starboard side for'ard, and as a steward, the other Howard would have lived amidships. And in those weather conditions he'd never had gone on deck, except for boat drill. So other than a face, I needn't ever have known him.

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Excerpt from a letter received by Bill Ryan,

..... I am pleased to hear that you will be in Normandy for the 50th Anniversary Commemoration of D-Day.

The Regional Council of Normandy will be issuing a Commemorative Medal to veterans who visit the area. To obtain more information about this you may write to the following address:

ADBN 44  
Abbaye aux Dames  
Place Reine-Mathilde  
BP 311  
14015 Caen CEDEX FRANCE.

(We also suggest that you contact the French Embassy in London regarding access to official events, etc. Editor)

French Embassy  
58 Knightsbridge  
London, SW1X 7JT

### HMS BELFAST

rjf/jf/0107/2853

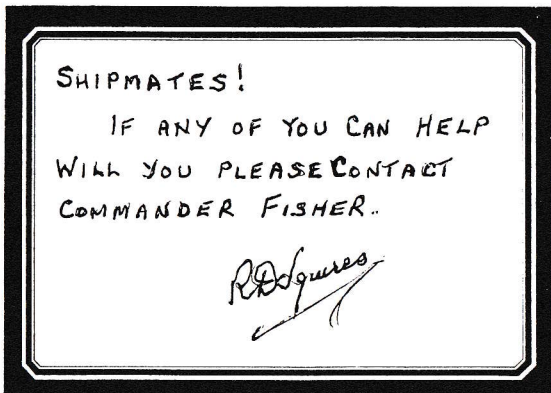
6 January 1994



HMS Belfast  
Morgans Lane  
Tooley Street  
London SE1 2JH

Telephone 071-407 6434  
Fax 071-403 0719

Mr. Dick Squires, MBE,  
Chairman,  
North Russia Club,  
28 Westbrook Road,  
Gateacre,  
LIVERPOOL,  
L25 2PX



I wish you and your members a happy and successful New Year.

I wonder if you could help us with a project on board? We are planning to reconstruct a sailors' messdeck as it would have been in 1943-43 and, to be successful, we need authentic articles of uniform, duffel coats, oilskins, writing materials, photographs, sailors' knives, ditty boxes, toilet gear - in fact, anything which sailors would have used at that time.

I would be grateful if you could circulate an appeal to your members to see if anyone is willing to donate the articles we need. Donors should contact me here - we can often arrange collection of larger articles.

I hope to see you when you next visit.

Yours sincerely,

Commander R. J. Fisher, MBE RN,  
Deputy Director.

### HMS BELFAST

rjf/jf/0095/2871

12 January 1994



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L25 2PX

James G. Ellard, Esq.,  
Chairman,  
Royal Marines Association,  
City of London Branch,  
20 Hawfield Bank,  
ORPINGTON, Kent, BR6 7TA

Dear Dick,

You will be aware that the Fiftieth Anniversary of D-Day is approaching. We in HMS BELFAST propose to offer guided tours of the ship, lasting about one hour, in particular the gun turrets, Director control tower, Wireless Office, shell room and magazines, T.S., machinery spaces and bridge. To add interest to the tours, we are looking for veterans who served in HMS BELFAST on D-Day, who live within easy travelling distance of London, and would be willing to talk to visitors about their experiences. Our initial plan is for these tours to take place 6-12 June (dates inclusive) between 1100 and 1600.

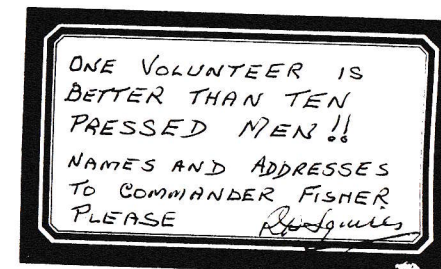
I regret we cannot offer to pay volunteers but we will reimburse travel costs and buy a lunch. Of course, veterans who can only come aboard for some of the dates will be very welcome also.

I would be grateful if you would advertise our proposals in the next issue of your magazine/newsletter and invite volunteers to contact me in writing at the above address.

Many thanks.

Yours sincerely,

Commander R. J. Fisher, MBE RN,  
Deputy Director.



**B O O K S**

THE ARCTIC CONVOYS 1941-1945. By Richard Woodman.  
With Foreword by Admiral of the Fleet Lord Lewin.  
To be published on 24 March 1994 by John Murray (Publishers) Ltd,  
50 Albermarle Street, London W1X 4BD.

The author, a professional seaman has carried out a major and comprehensive review of naval operations in the Arctic and covers all aspects and major operations. He is well known for his Nathaniel Drinkwater series and first became fascinated with the Arctic campaign when he sailed with survivors of PQ17. His subsequent obsession with naval history, and practical experience, both of command and operational planning, combine him to qualify as a splendid author of this major work.

Having spent several days browsing through some of the twenty-four chapters, some of which I had practical experience of, and others having written about in Northern Light, I now find it very hard indeed to find fault.....  
..... and I am most enthusiastic about this very valuable work, which I feel sure, will be recognised by many as an Arctic Campaign 'Bible'.

Enclosed with your Northern Light you will find an order form voucher. Please use this when ordering as North Russia Club will receive a very generous commission on all copies ordered in this way.

Perhaps you have saved your Christmas Book Tokens. The book has 528 pages (240mm x 159mm), with 16 pages of illustrations, 6 maps and 4 plans. Price £25.00 net.

.....

ORDINARY NAVAL AIRMAN by Jim Spencer, NRC Memb. N°720: This excellent book which was reviewed on Page 44, Northern Light N°30, is still available from the author at £12.50 net. (Book shop price £15.95).

Jim tells us that (quote) "The book is going very well, attracting favourable reviews, it has already been reprinted, so copies are still available from the author. Remember, if you quote your N.R.C. Membership number with your order the club's Welfare Fund will receive a £1.00 donation. It's a good, interesting read, whether you are RN, RM, MN, FAA, RAF or just a book worm. Author's address 1 Oaklands Close, Ascot, Berks SL5 7NG.

.....

DESTROYER & PRESERVER by Mike Alston. 244 pages, 19 illustrations. The story of H.M.S. Middleton and her ships company. Published by Maphigrada Publishing. Price £10.95.

This is an action packed report of a Hunt Class destroyer's service between 1941 and 1946. Several Russian Convoys are described through the eyes of a young seaman as well as a sojourn in the Med for Convoy 'Harpoon'. Well researched and backed up by some very humorous stories from his messmates.

.....

NORTH RUSSIA CLUB HAVE NO CONNECTION WITH ANY OF THE PUBLISHERS AND REVIEW THESE BOOKS SOLELY FOR YOUR INTEREST. AT THE SAME TIME WE ARE GRATEFUL TO PUBLISHERS WHO SUPPORT US WITH DONATIONS ETC.

**ACMT NEWS UPDATE, plus INVITATION to our...**

**...SPECIAL DEDICATION AND BLESSING OF THE NEW CHRISTENING FONT AND SILVER BOWL. HMS DRAKE PLYMOUTH, SUNDAY APRIL 25TH 1994, 1030 hrs in St. NICHOLAS CHURCH.**

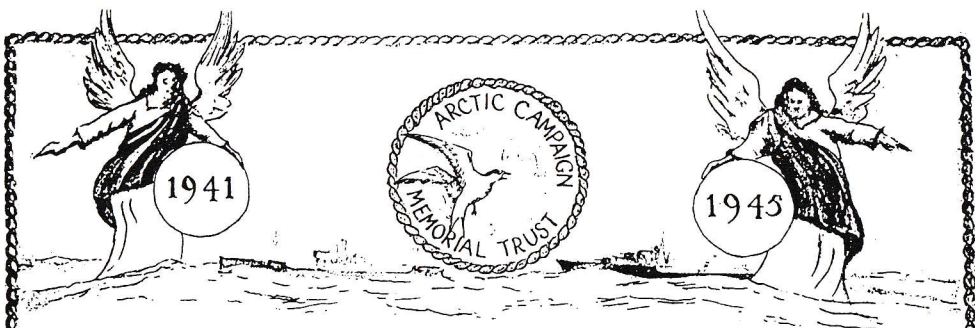
**SEA GOING SAILORS FROM HMS LONDON and OTHER SHIPS WILL BRING THEIR BABIES FOR A SPECIAL CHRISTENING SERVICE AT THE MEMORIAL FONT.**

**AFTERWARDS A FINGER BUFFET WILL BE LAID ON IN THE SENIOR RATES MESS, BY INVITATION ONLY.**

**WHY NOT SPEND A FEW DAYS AT THE NEW CHINA FLEET CLUB AND MAKE A SHORT HOLIDAY OF IT.**

**THIS IS ANOTHER HISTORIC OCCASION THAT ARCTIC VETERANS WITH THEIR SUPPORT OF THE A.C.M.T. HAS MADE POSSIBLE.**

**WE ARE HOPING THAT ALL VETERAN MEMBERS OF CLUBS AND ORGANIZATIONS WILL ASK THEIR OWN COMMITTEES TO CONSIDER MAKING A DONATION TO OUR VERY WORTHY CAUSE. WE HAVE DONATIONS RECEIVED FROM NAVAL CLUBS (ie R.N.As.) R.A.F. Ass's LOCAL COUNCILS, MASONS LODGES, PROBUS CLUBS, ROTARY, SOME FROM OVER SEAS.**



# THE ARCTIC CAMPAIGN



The christening font and silver bowl was made by the young students of Plymouth College of Art and Design and sponsored by the Arctic Campaign Memorial Trust who are dedicated to creating memorials to those who lost their lives in the Arctic Campaign 1941-45 during the Second World War.

Prime Minister Winston Spencer Churchill considered the convoys to Russia to be the worst journeys in the world. The route to the Northern Russian ports took the ships close to enemy occupied territory and were always liable to attack from the air, sea and under the sea. Add to this the appalling winter weather with ships icing up, huge seas and temperatures reaching forty below centigrade. This was a recipe for real hardship suffered by men from the Allied Services carrying & protecting these vital supplies these were to be used on the Eastern Russian front, where the enemy was attempting to close the Northern ports of Murmansk and Archangel.

One hundred and twenty four ships, many aircraft and large quantities of material were lost in the seventy two convoys to Russia.



This unique "Memorial font" is here to commemorate the three thousand men from the Allied Services who lost their lives in the frozen wastes of land and water in the cause of freedom.

*We Will Remember Them*

THE COPY OPPOSITE IS A FINE PIECE OF WORK PRODUCED BY SHIPMATE STAN ROGERS IS AN ILLUMINATED SCROLL 22½" x 13" FINISHED IN GOLD AND LOVELY COLOURS. IT IS TO BE INSTALLED IN ST NICHOLAS CHURCH, NAVAL BARRACKS, HMS DRAKE, DEVONPORT. SOME MINOR ALTERATION WILL BE MADE TO THE SCRIPT TO CORRECT SOME INACCURACIES.

\*\*\*\*\*

INVITATIONS TO THE CEREMONY TO DEDICATE AND BLESS THE FONT AND SILVER CHRISTENING BOWL MAY BE OBTAINED BY POSTAL APPLICATION (WITH S.A.E.) TO R.J.WREN, 13 SHERWOOD AVENUE, POTTERS BAR, HERTS EN6 2LD, ENGLAND. BY 14 APRIL 1994.

You MUST state:- NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS REQUIRED.  
 YOUR FULL NAME AND ADDRESS.  
 THE MAKE, COLOUR AND REGISTRATION NUMBER OF YOUR CAR.  
 NUMBER ATTENDING BUFFET @ £5.00 PER PERSON.  
CHEQUES MADE PAYABLE TO A.C.M.T.

\*\*\*\*\*

IS THE A.C.M.T. A ONE MAN BAND ? ? ?

A FAIR QUESTION AND HERE IS MY ANSWER .....

'THE A.C.M.T. BAND' IS A SPECIAL BAND OF PEOPLE WHO CREATE MEMORIALS TO THOSE FINE PEOPLE WHO LOST THEIR LIVES IN THE 'ARCTIC CAMPAIGN' GIVING US MANY, MANY YEARS OF PEACE.

"WE WILL ALWAYS REMEMBER THEM".

BECAUSE OF THE DIVERSE NATURE OF THE MEMORIALS AND DIFFERENT LOCATIONS IT IS NECESSARY TO DRAW ON THE SERVICES OF A VARIETY OF PEOPLE. HERE IS AN EXAMPLE: PROJECT No1, MURMANSK MEMORIAL. IN OUR BAND WAS DICK SQUIRES, MBE, NRC, AND S.J.DWIGHT ARCHITECT from U.K; ANATOLY BEZUGLOV, SVETLANA POLLUNINA, THE ETERNAL MEMORY TO SOLDIERS ORGANISATION, THE MAYOR AND MURMANSK CITY COUNCIL, RUSSIAN ARCTIC VETERANS all from Russia; THE BRITISH EMBASSY, MOSCOW, THE BRITISH NAVAL ATTACHE plus MANY WHO MADE DONATIONS AND RAISED FUNDS, TO CREATE IT ALL. "WHAT A GREAT BAND"!

ALL A.C.M.T. PROJECTS HAVE MIXTURES OF PEOPLE TO MAKE THEM EFFECTIVE. IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO OFFER YOUR SERVICES YOU WOULD BE VERY WELCOME.

WE NEED FUND RAISING ASSISTANCE IN LIVERPOOL, PLYMOUTH, CHATHAM (GILLINGHAM) AREAS, VERY BADLY, PLEASE HELP IF YOU CAN.

*Ron Wren*

CONTRIBUTORS TO THE A.C.M.T. SINCE N/LIGHT ISSUE No.32 JUNE 93

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WOOD J.	THOMPSON 'DUKE'.	RILEY J.	ANNIS D.	BEADOIN EMILE.N	
SEYMORE W. Dr	ANNIS D.	RILEY J.	THOMSON 'DUKE'.	UNDERWOOD J.	WARD D.
THOMPSON W.J.	WOOD J.	HURDWELL R.	SHARPE D.	GAME C.H.	HALL M.S.
DEARLOVE H.	COOK P.	CONLEY S.D.	MENGES C.	MADDERN J.	TAYLOR I.
HEAVEN S.C.	MENGES N.	MENGES J.	RYMANOWSKY Mrs.	IMPNEY M	McWHANNELL R.
WREN R.J.LIV'	WREN J.LIV'	WREN R.J.	LIV' WREN R.J.	LIV' BEVAN B.	COOK P.
VICKERS R.	CAULKIN C.	JARVIS T.	DUFFIN E.	POULSON R.	HARP Y.
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TIMMIS D.	BEAVINGTON K.	WILLIAMSON S.	BELL C.	ELLIOT B.	RILEY G.
BUXTON N.	BATE J.R.	KINDER A.	JONES O.	MENSTRIDGE E.	BOURNE G.
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LOUWERSE J.	HARPER J.	FINNEGAN F.	BRANCH C.	HYOLE W.	SLOAN D.
WARREN DAVID	BRETT J.	ABDEY S.A...	PLUS MANY CONTRIBUTIONS OF SERVICE, MATERIALS, SUPPORT, IDEAS AND ENCOURAGEMENT.		

NAMES ARE PRINTED EACH TIME A CONTRIBUTION IS RECEIVED AND THIS IS THE REASON FOR THE SAME NAME BEING REPEATED SEVERAL TIMES.

MANY DONATIONS ARE RECEIVED FROM 'NON' VETERANS AND PEOPLE IN NO WAY CONNECTED TO THE ARCTIC CAMPAIGN, WHO JUST WANT TO HELP.

*Thank you all very much for helping us in keeping your Charity Operating please keep it up there is still lots to do.*

*Ron*

SCHARNHORST REMEMBERED: Without doubt, the most significant gatherings since the last edition, have been the Meetings of Reconciliation, Thanksgiving and Remembrance for the Battle of North Cape and the sinking of 'SCHARNHORST. These commenced in Wilhelmshaven, continued onboard BELFAST in the Thames and ended at the Royal Navy Museum at Portsmouth. The following has been compiled from reports sent in by various members who were able to attend one or more of the events. "Bish" Wellman and Tom Bethell report from Wilhelmshaven and aboard BELFAST; and Dick Fulford with Sid Bateman at Portsmouth.

"World War Two was provoked by a German, one of the worst, perhaps the worst inhuman criminal the world has ever seen. I need not and will not mention his name since you all know him and since I do not want that the utmost sacrifice of brave seamen is dishonoured by the detestable, inhuman aims of their commander in chief." Strong stuff! Is this perhaps a British chaplain speaking? On the contrary, these are the words of Konteradmiral Jurgen Geier, the commander in chief at Wilhelmshaven. The occasion was the three-day event to commemorate the sinking of SCHARNHORST and was held in her home port.

Seventy representatives from the Royal Navy ships that were involved in the Battle of North Cape and their wives were present at the reception for over three hundred people. Some of the German persons present were next of kin of nearly two thousand officers and men who perished with the ship; others had served aboard the battlecruiser but had been posted before her final foray on Christmas Day 1943; and of the thirty-six survivors (of whom around a dozen are still alive) four were present for the ceremonies. By chance, "Bish" Wellman sat next to Willie G6dde, who was an acting CPO and the most senior of all the survivors. He was dragged out of the sea by his hair, by willing hands from the destroyer MATCHLESS and was, according to his testimony, 'a frozen slab'. The Medical Officer aboard saved his life by unorthodox treatment and after he had eventually left hospital, he became a POW in Birmingham until 1947. (Indeed, one could hear a trace, in his careful English, of a Brum accent). He has a great affection for that city because of the many kindnesses shown to him after the war.

Tom Bethell states that we have been invited to attend the 51st reunion in Andernach next May, but at this moment we have no further details. (Should any member be interested please let us know). Several of our members made arrangements to meet some of the survivors in London in November.

The ceremony aboard BELFAST on Remembrance Sunday was attended by more than three hundred and fifty persons and was superbly arranged by the Director and staff of the museum-ship. Amongst the congregation were sixty-nine North Russia Club members including our patron Admiral Richardson. (How did we manage that attendance from a ticket allocation of fifty?) The service was meant to synchronise with that at the Cenotaph only a few miles west of the ship. It was conducted by the Chaplain of the Fleet and the Pastor of the 'German Parish of South London' with a Royal Marine band and bugler in attendance. Lessons were read by a Merchant Navy veteran and a SCHARNHORST survivor. Our chairman performed the Act of Remembrance and gave the 'Ode to the Fallen', it was then repeated in German by Herr Kube of SCHARNHORST. John Beardmore (NRC) then gave the concluding address which you may have read as it was released for publication in the last edition of Northern Light. It had also been translated for the German visitors, Following the service an excellent buffet was provided in the Wardroom, where an excellent get-together of British, German and Norwegian (ex-STORD) veterans took place.



On December 1st, Dick Fulford and Sid Bateman were invited, with eighty other guests to Portsmouth Dockyard to view the new bust of Admiral Fraser and to see the new Arctic Campaign display in the museum. (Dick had been on the Admiral's staff during the battle and Sid, who is our "Jack Dusty" represented our chairman who was unable to attend at short notice). The following excerpts from their reports tell the true story ..... "I'm quite sure that the N.R.C. had never been heard of by 99% of those present! By being there we did some good, having plugged ourselves and the club. Maybe we overplayed our hands, but it was just too top heavy. We would guess that we were the only two lower deck types present - the others were mostly three-ringers and above, all 70+, many 90+!

However, we kept our end up and had a good buffet lunch. So, now N.R.C. is better known! We got at least one new member as well as selling a few books of Spring Draw tickets. The Arctic Section of the Museum was pathetic and hardly worth mentioning, but at least they had bothered to do something and assemble one case of exhibits. (Dick thinks that lack of money was the reason, whilst Sid was told that it was a combination of lack of space and a lack of exhibits.

To further our cause we have put the museum's curator on our mailing list for Northern Light - that makes eleven museums around the world who receive a copy!

A few days later the Portsmouth Evening News published a 150 word article of the event and a photograph showing Admiral of the Fleet Sir Henry Leach with Scharnhorst survivor Helmut Boekhoff, who now resides in Reading. Should other club members visit the museum, we would like their views, in case we can help with further improvements.

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WITH THE SEA CADETS: Friday 26 November was a chilly and foggy night on Merseyside but it did not stop nearly thirty of our members, and our President from attending the Sea Cadet Unit T.S. STARLING at Litherland. The evening had been arranged so that we could thank the officers and cadets for the help and hospitality they had extended to the crew of the Russian destroyer GREMYASCHI, during her visit for BA93 in May. The evening started with the cadets at Divisions, then followed visits to the various class rooms and instructional areas. After this there was Sunset and Colours. All performed in a true naval manner. Then to the Wardroom where a few presentations were made to add to their 'Arctic Corner', followed by a Scouse Buffet and sing song. As one Northwich veteran said "How good it is to see the real face of Merseyside. The cadets are a credit to their officers and instructors, to their Unit, to the Sea Cadet Corps, to Merseyside, and most important - to themselves!" All of us agreed.

NORTH WEST CHRISTMAS PARTY On Sunday 12 December a total of 72 members and guests attended a Christmas Lunch Time Buffet in the Senior Rates Mess at HMS Eaglet at Liverpool. This was the largest attendance since these quarterly gatherings commenced and attracted members from as far as West Midlands, Stafford, and Denbigh in North Wales. We will soon have to be looking for a larger venue! The event was 'festively jolly' and we found plenty of vocal talent amongst our members. Special thanks to George Ford for providing the entertainment on the keyboard and piano accordion.

SAVE YOURSELVES POSTAGE - RETURN YOUR DRAW COUNTERFOILS  
TOGETHER WITH YOUR SUBSCRIPTIONS!!!

WEST COUNTRY CHRISTMAS LUNCH: The morning of 8 December was wild and windy, with gale force winds reminiscent of the Arctic wastes, though perhaps not so icy, a party of 40 Veterans, their Ladies and Friends, gathered in the Fraser Bar of the Warrant Officers and Senior Rates Mess of HMS Drake, for what it is hoped, will be the first of a number of Christmas Lunches.

Precisely at 1200 Vice-Admiral Sir Roy Newman, KCB, Flag Officer Plymouth, and Lady Newman arrived to the accompaniment of much shouting of orders by the Base Commander, resplendent in Great-Coat and Sword. Ratings of all ranks did their best to stand to attention whilst their caps were being swept away by the mischievous wind. Awaiting their arrival in the calm of the foyer of the Mess was the Base Captain Simon Goodall who had arrived a little earlier, your President Chris Iye, and committee members Les Jones and Austin Byrne and their Ladies. Following formal introductions, this party made it's way to the Bar where Admiral Newman was introduced to the assembled party, and had a few words to say before mingling with us and sharing reminiscences, and the odd tot. Due to a prior engagement, Admiral Newman had to leave us at 1245. He wished us well and hoped that we would enjoy our lunch.

The Traditional Christmas Lunch was served and enjoyed in the Mess President's Committee Room, where we were surrounded by pictures of Admirals and ships of yesteryear. Our guest at lunch was Captain Simon Goodall, recently appointed Captain of Base Personnel. Unfortunately, he too had to leave early, but before doing so, had a few words to say to us.

At the end of a splendid meal, our Secretary was able introduce to the assembled shipmates, the CPO Cook responsible for the meal's preparation. He was none other than CPO(Ck) Speck, who was aboard HMS London for the Dervish '91 trip. During the course of the meal, a signal received from HMS London - "REGRET THAT WE FIND OURSELVES UNABLE TO JOIN YOU IN YOUR FESTIVE CELEBRATIONS, HOWEVER, OUR THOUGHTS ARE WITH YOU AND WE WISH YOU A VERY MERRY XMAS. BEST WISHES FOR 1994" was read to the assembled company. To which we replied "APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE ACCEPTED WITH REGRET. EXCELLENT LUNCH ENJOYED BY ALL, COURTESY CPO (Ck) SPECK, EX-LONDON, DERVISH '91. BEST WISHES TO ALL ON BOARD FROM PRESIDENT, CHAIRMAN, SECRETARY AND ALL MEMBERS OF NORTH RUSSIA CLUB. HAPPY CHRISTMAS AND SPEEDY RETURN".

We would like to take this opportunity to thank those members from outside the far south west, who travelled long distances to be with us. It was nice to see you down here in this remote part of the country, and we hope you enjoyed our South West hospitality.

Most of those travelling a distance had booked into the China Fleet Country Club for a couple of nights. During the evening following the lunch, seven of us gathered in Les Jones' apartment in order to help Austin Byrne consume some of his 'Christmas' brandy. Soon, the 'Lamp Swinging' got under way, during which we heard at first hand, a gripping account of the ordeal of the survivors of SS INDUNA. It is the sharing of experiences such as this, that makes the comradeship of the North Russia Club what it is. Let us make the most of it while we can, and urge all those who for one reason and another, have not been to a Reunion, to make the effort in 1994. Wives, friends and guests are welcome at most of them, and even, if as yet, you do not know another member, that situation will not remain for long, once you have broken the ice.

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A REMINDER FROM THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

Subscriptions remain at £7 per year and are due 1st March.  
Have you thought of Life Membership? £60 and you can forget all about future payments! Sixty-four members have already taken up the offer!!

TWELVE HOURS IN ARKENGELSK 23 AUGUST 1993  
By Bill Lowes N°1386 RAF 151 WING

MV RUSS was due to have us ashore by 0900, but due to the Russian immigration bureaucracy it was 0945 before we went down the gangway on a lovely sunny day. Even after 50 years and quite a few changes such as a bridge over the Dvina and some multi-story blocks, I was back on familiar ground. We walked along the Promenade down river past the theatre built on the site of the cathedral blown up by the reds, A friend researching the town's history tried hard to find a photograph of it in Russia but was unlucky. he eventually got one - from Britain. The next place of note was the oldest building in the city, originally the trading centre of 1584. These buildings which also housed a church are being restored as an Exhibition Centre, etc. A little further on is the memorial for the 1941-45 war, but I didn't see any recognition of what we did, this was only 100 yards from where the inter-service comms. unit lived from November 1941. (NP200, Army Base Unit and RAF 30 Military Mission). The house built in the 19th century was a fine example of a Russian building, we even had toilets, bathroom and central heating, in 1950 it was replaced by a block of flats, on the corner of Oolitzka Karla Marka (streets are feminised) and the Promenade. Behind and over the street from our Karl Marx Dom was a church used for many years as a soup kitchen, but has now been restored with the spire replaced, not quite as flamboyant as the original but looking very smart after years of neglect. Towering above and behind the church is the Archangel T.V. aerial. Our next stop was to be the Dobralubova Library on the corner of Loginova Street, to meet our English speaking contact Tanya Klushina, Head of the Foreign Books Department, who had just finished translating Eugenie Fraser's book, "The House on the Dvina", about living in Archangel before and during W.W.1. Opposite the library is the Yacht Club, a place much used by us in the summer when the thermometer used to go well up into the 80s and also useful to take photos of the river front out of sight of the NKVD. As we got to the library at 1030 and found it didn't open until 1100, we decided to look up the road and see what changes there had been, not many, the main road Pavolina Vinogradova had been widened, but there on the opposite corner was the Dinamo, best known in the summer as a sports stadium and during the other three seasons as our favourite dance hall. As you will see, it was the place we shift workers used to get our exercise so as to be fit to carry out our arduous watchkeeping duties!!! as well as entertaining visiting matelots. Back to the library at 1100 and taken to see Tanya who with typical Russian hospitality, immediately put on the samovar and made tea for us and then took out her meagre lunch to share with us, which we declined having had a good breakfast on board. We had a nice chat with her and told of my stay in 1941-43 and some of the changes I had noticed. Then I showed her some photos of the mission, several of whom are members of NRC. She asked if I would show them to a friend who was very interested in any pictures of old Archangel. Tanya phoned him and within 15 minutes he arrived complete with brief case (more on that later) and we were introduced to Yuri Barashkov, Professor of Architecture and ex-member of the Supreme Soviet for Archangel till Gorbachev got rid of it. This was the end of my good intentions, showing my wife some familiar places, going to the Civic Reception, etc. We were taken over by these Anglo-phones. Our new friends chatted for a while about my time there during the war, he had only been three years old then and was very interested in what we had done, the convoys and the aid we had given them. He then asked if I would mind talking to the T.V. people. As I had no objection he went away and arranged an interview for 1400. As the hour was getting towards lunch time on board it was necessary to start back, so Yuri decided we go by tram, we had no roubles, but that was nothing, that day we travelled on at least six trams, trolley-buses or buses and never paid once, he was so well known no one bothered him. The trams looked just as old and in need of repair as the ones used during the war, chaps who were at Solombula will remember them rattling down to the centre and always crowded. After lunch Yuri met us at the Voksal

(quayside) and took us to the TV HQ. The interviewer then took us out to the waterfront at the end of Karl Marx St. where there is a bronze statue of a sailor of the Northern Fleet and used this and the site of Karl Marx Dom as the background while we talked. Among the points I mentioned was that the following day was the 51st anniversary of the day the Germans had tried to burn Archangel down but didn't succeed although Norway House, our HQ got a little singed with an incendiary bomb. A stick of them landed there and one of them bounced up under the eaves. The interviewer spoke good English and spent his summer break visiting Stratford on Avon. There is a lot of affection for the U.K. over there, so maybe we left a few good impressions all those years ago.

Afterwards it was too late for us to go to the Civic Reception, so our new friend had the usual Russian suggestion - let's go and get drunk. We then went to his flat in the big apartment block in Lenin Square where we had our afternoon snack, smoked fish and bread washed down with cranberry liqueur. (from the aforementioned brief case), plus two bottles of champagne between four of us! After that, and we were still reasonably sober, our librarian friend had to leave us to lock up, and we three went shopping. I bought a Russian black fur hat for a fellow traveller, it cost £5 and it will have been put to good use this winter in Aberdeen. There were plenty of goods in the store but a lack of money. After seeing some of the wooden houses that had been reclaimed and rebuilt in Prospect Chumbarova-Luchinskovo we then went to another friend of Yuri, where we hoped to see the T.V. interview, but we were too late. But the family (he was a plain clothes policeman!) insisted on feeding us despite our protests that we would be well fed on the ship. As well as the food out came the vodka and another bottle of liquor as well as the usual lemonade to go with the vodka. As I had expressed a wish to see the only church that was open during the war and near the British War Cemetery they assured me that everything would be fine, they would see to it all. In view of the celebratory drinks I expressed my doubts, to which we were told they would arrange a car. This turned out to be a police car with driver. We were given presents of a beautifully carved bird, a 2lb jar of blackcurrant preserve (in liqueur -I think) and a cream cake. From Yuri we had his book "Nostalgia for a Wooden City" also a couple of children's story books reprinted last year from the originals published in 1899 and 1906. We then climbed into the police car, the five of us, my wife and I, the policeman and his wife and Yuri, all by now quite merry and were taken to the British cemetery, where I pointed out the tablet to Sgt Pearce V.C. and saw the open grave where the remains of the airmen recovered from the Kola Peninsula were to be buried. The next stop was the church where the Verger had been asked to open it for me to go in again after 50 years. It was well worth the visit especially when I pointed out that one of the icons was very similar to the one given to me as a present during the war. There are now three churches open in the city with others to be restored. As the time was getting on (it was 2145 by now) and we had to have our luggage packed by midnight and had to get up at 0400 to start the homeward journey by air, it was necessary to get back to the ship. So we were driven in style back to the quayside with our new Russian friends, singing Ceeny Platochik (Little Blue Handerkerchief) and Lubeemy Gorod (Beloved Town) those war time favourites to serenade us on our way.

Altogether a very hectic and hilarious twelve hours, our host for the day Yuri Brashkov, who has a great love for the wooden buildings of this city of his birth and is doing so much to restore them has not forgotten us, we had a Xmas and New Year card from them.

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DID THE LAMPS SWING ON THE BIG SHIPS? SEND YOUR YARNS TO THE EDITOR - NOW!

SLOPS

THE FOLLOWING ITEMS ARE AVAILABLE FROM OUR "JACK DUSTY" AT 70 NICKLEBY HOUSE, ALL SAINTS ROAD, PORTSMOUTH, HANTS PO1 4EL

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AN OLD BODY SHOULD BE REVERED

By Our American Poet

Just a line to say I'm living, that I'm not among the dead,
Though I'm getting more forgetful, and mixed up in my head.
I got used to my arthritis, to my dentures I'm resigned,
I can manage my bifocals, but my, I miss my mind!
For sometimes I can't remember, when I stand at the bottom stair,
Must I go up for something, or have I just come down from there?
And before the fridge so often, my mind is filled with doubt,
Have I just put food away, or have I come to take some out?
And there are times when it's dark, with my nightcap on my head,
I don't know if I'm retiring, or getting out of bed!
So, if it's my turn to write to you, there's no need for getting sore
I may think that I have written, and don't want to be a bore,
So remember that I love you and wish that you were near,
But now it's nearly mail time, so I must close now dear,
There I stand before the mail box, with a face so very red,
Instead of mailing you my letter, I just opened it instead!

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MEMBERSHIP LIST

Following the despatch of this edition, the editor and membership secretary will commence compiling a new, fully updated membership list - hopefully in time for mailing with the June Northern Light. If there are any errors in your existing entry which we have not been notified of, please contact Les Sullivan, at once.

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WELCOME ABOARD

New members enrolled since last edition.

- 1791 LOVERING Donald H. MV DOLABELLA/LONGWOOD
29 Burrows Road, Skewen, Neath. Glamorgan, SA10 6AE.
1792 COOPER G.A. MAGPIE
20 Fairfield Green, Four Marks, Alton, Hants GU34 5BP.
1793 SMITH Samuel C. NIGERIA
8 Christchurch Avenue, Rainham, Essex, RM13 8JB.
1794 ROUND Gordon W. INDEFATIGABLE
37 Ednam Road, Goldthorn Park, Wolverhampton, WV4 5BP.
1795 GOMERY G.A.E. MAGPIE
2 Yew View, Coleford, Gorstny Knoll, Glos. GL16 7LR.
1796 RICHARDS William F. BADSWORTH
Peniel, St Marys Road, Newquay, Cornwall TR7 1JU.
1797 SCARBOROUGH Roy TRUMPETER
27 Seaview Road, Brightlingsea, Essex CO7 0PD
1798 TYLER Joseph D. FORESIGHT
21 Flaxhill, Moreton. Wirral L46 7UH.
1799 CHAMBERS Stanley G. MARNE
8 Green Acres, Midsomer Norton, Bath BA3 2RW.
1800 GRAY Jeffrey R. DASHER
67 Addiscombe Road, Margate, Kent CT9 5SY.
1801 WILLIAMS Vivian V. VINDEX
58 Hollow Way, Cowley, Oxford OX4 2NH.
1802 SCOTT Harry V.P. INTREPID/SCYLLA/BLACK PRINCE
6 Gatward Close, Winchmore Hill, London N21 1AS.
1803 ARMSTRONG Stanley SUFFOLK/SHEFFIELD
11 Nettlehill Road, Ballymacash, Lisburn, Co.Antrim, N.I. BT28 3HA.
1804 WHITE Douglas B. MAGPIE
14 Shearstones, Yetminster, Sherborne, Dorset DT9 6NW.
1805 HOBBS Jack F. VINDEX/CAMPANIA/NAIRANA
97 Govanhill Street, Govanhill, Glasgow G42 7HJ.
1806 MASON Desmond C. SCOURGE
25 Oldbury Road, Worcester, WR2 6JT.
1807 MALONEY Denis T. ASHANTI
69 Grand Avenue, Lancing, West Sussex BN15 9QB.
1808 RAIKES Henry J. MERMAID
Bryher, Heol Eglwys, Penyfai, Bridgend, Mid. Glamorgan CF31 4LY.
1809 HALE William J. JAMAICA
The Hall, Partney Bridge, Spilsby, Lincs. PE23 4PE.
1810 COX Charles D. MAGPIE
32 Parr Court, Wimbourn Street, London N1 7JD.
1811 WHITE Jack R.S. NORFOLK
7 Richmondfield Drive, Barwick-in-Elmet, Leeds LS15 4ER.
1812 BEARD Kenneth R.F. LA MALOUINE
17 Perham Crescent, Ludgershall, Andover, Hants LS15 4ER.

CHANGES OF ADDRESS, ETC.

- Nº1604 PAGE Fred Change Post Code to M27 8JL.
Nº1053 SAYERS A.W. Change address to 1324 Overlook Drive,
Mount Dora, Florida 32757, U.S.A.
Nº 461 LOOKER R.W. Change address to 22 Lark Crescent, Hartford,
Huntingdon, Cambs PE18 7YN.
Nº1247 LINGUARD K.E. Change address to Hideaway, Coney Close,
East Wittering, W. Sussex PO20 8BX.
Nº1761 EADE Leonard Not BADE as printed N.Light, edition Nº34 page 33.
Nº1131 VIEWING G.J. Initials are not G.R. Town is West Ewell not Westewell.
Nº 306 HARMAN G. Change address to 6 Mellor Court, Deeburgh Road,
Merton, London SW19 1DX
Nº 272 BALAAM E Post Code is now CR7 6BU

**MOST CONVOYS**

Did you get it right? The corvette with the record of most convoys to or from Murmansk/Archangel was.....  
..."OXLIP"... with a total of EIGHTEEN. They were:-  
PQ 11; PQ14; JW51A; JW51B; JW56B; JW59; JW61; JW65;  
JW66: Eastbound, and  
QP8; QP11; RA52; RA55B; RA56; RA59; RA61; RA65 and  
RA66: Westbound.

Next were "HONEYSUCKLE" with SIXTEEN and "RHODODENDRON"  
with FIFTEEN.

.....

**S T O P P R E S S**

**WIDOWS OF DEPARTED SHIPMATES**

On the death of a member we always ask the widow or next of kin if they wish to maintain the link with the club. Those who do, receive Northern Light editions and are specially remembered at Christmas time. This year we were again able to send them a 'Boots' Gift Voucher with their Christmas card. Thank you girls for your lovely replies, there was no need for them as we are proud that you continue to be part of our unique club. God Bless You All.

.....

**SHIPMATES TO THE END**

Two MILNE shipmates, D.Hancock of Kent and C.Young of Dunfermline are listed in the latest "Crossed the Bar" list. We now hear that they had maintained contact with each other through the club, and that they and their wives had met again in London. They kept in touch by phone, the last time just before Christmas. Early in the New Year the two ladies spoke on the phone, only to find that both shipmates had Crossed the Bar on the same day!

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**NEW MEMBERS**

Have you joined our ships company recently? If your membership number is **1788 or higher**, you do not have to pay another subscription so soon - your subs will be due for renewal on 1 MARCH 1995.

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**LIVERPOOL "MAST" MEMORIAL:** At the time of going to print, the date for the ceremony is only provisional. Those members interested in attending should contact Ron Wren or Dick Squires nearer the date.

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