

25
9/91

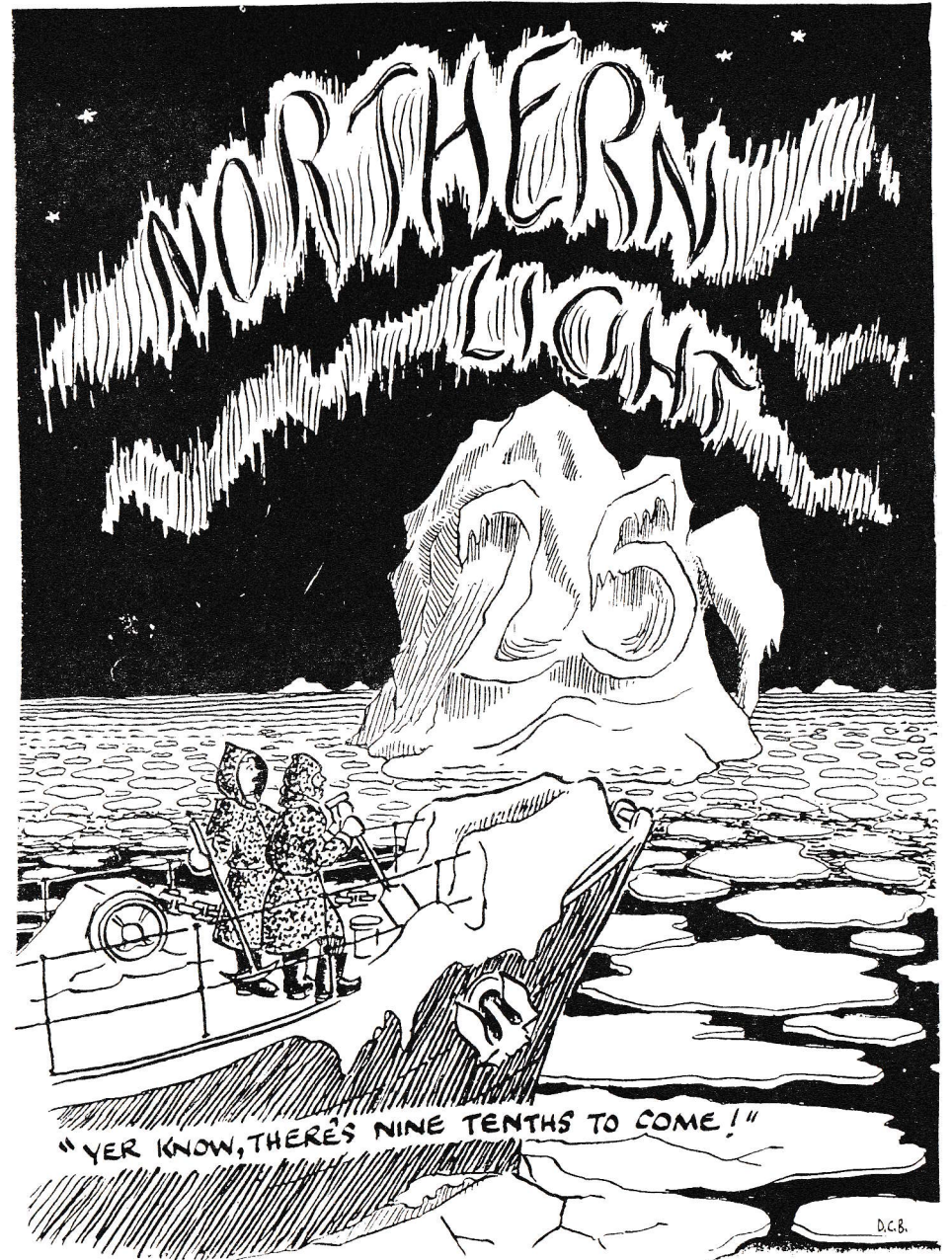


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OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE NORTH RUSSIA CLUB

9/91



Artwork by Denis Brooke

NOTICE

We wish to apologise for the late delivery of the last edition of Northern Light. This was caused by a dual catastrophe on the computer containing the address labels list, which finally entailed writing the labels by hand whilst the main problem was being resolved. The situation is back to normal now and we trust that you did not experience any undue delay. We also record a vote of thanks to our computer operator, who quite voluntarily got 'stuck in' and produced nearly 1,200 labels by the 'hand-draulic' method. Thanks Dave.

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THE TWENTY FIFTH EDITION

Little did we expect that when we produced the first edition of a photocopied Northern Light, that our growth in membership and sales would mean that our 25th would require a print run of 1,500 copies, or that the circulation would reach 14 different countries.

To celebrate "25" we have made a few changes in this edition - it is as much a pictorial as written edition. More important, it contains several items relating to the present day activities within our club. These include the May tour to Murmansk, the week in Jersey, the 9th Escort Group and Nene Reunions in Canada, as well as our official visit to Leningrad as guests of the city on the occasion of their Thanksgiving Celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Fascist invasion of the Soviet Union on 20/21/22 June. Also, a report on a visit to our club by two journalists from Archangel, who were gathering stories about the convoy years for the Severny Pravda and Pravda Komsomolets newspapers, as part of the 50th anniversary publicity. Also of course, is a report on the 'London Week-end' and the A.G.M.

What will the next 25 editions bring? A further increase in circulation? Or, something quite different - it's entirely up to you - you are the contributors!!

.....

OFFICERS & COMMITTEE FOR 1991-92.

- PRESIDENT: Chris. B. Tye.
- VICE PRESIDENTS: Captain F.A.Collins RN (Rtd)
Captain S.Farquharson-Roberts RN (Rtd)
- CHAIRMAN: Norman Batchelor.
- VICE CHAIRMAN: Ernie Skelton.
- HON. SECRETARY & EDITOR: Dick Squires.
- HON. TREASURER: Eric Rathbone.
- P.R.O.: Peter Skinner. (responsible for International Reunion 1992)
- COMMITTEE: Don Allen. (" " " " " " " ")
Les Sullivan. (Membership & Sales)
Ron Phelps (Welfare Officer)
Ron Wren (A.C.M.T. & A.Z.M.W.F.)
Les Jones. (Social events)
Merv. Williams. (" " " ")
Frank Green. (Raffles, etc.)
Austin Byrne. (Minutes Secretary)
Dennis Brooke. (Artwork)
Eddie Beard. (Ceremonial events.)

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NORTHERN LIGHT - THE 25TH EDITION - CONGRATULATIONS

From the President.

In 1943 at the Naval Base in Polyarnoe, with nothing to do while most of you were 'ploughing the oggin', there was produced, with great difficulty by the mucky blue-jelly, roller method, individual copies, and appropriately known as "Northern Light".

After 1984, I was often asked why we didn't have a magazine - a good idea but I was rather busy with the rocketing membership necessitating 5 hours work a day. Dick Squires offered to help and in view of continued requests, he started and became editor of a club magazine, with a few pages on a photocopier. He asked for title suggestions - it had to be resurrected from 1943, hence "Northern Light". As membership increased so did funds, the production of our magazine improved to its present excellent state, thanks to material provided by members and Dick's efficient compilation and hard work.

Because you are now reading the 25th edition of "Northern Light" I am sure you will join me with thanks and gratitude to the editor. The magazine gets better with every issue, for the pleasure given to us in its reading.

This fantastic and 25th edition also heralds the first nine months of an incredible year for our unique North Russia Club, in which has been established a first class, hard working committee. Since taking over as Hon. Secretary on my appointment as President and in particular since January 1991, Dick Squires has worked hard, endlessly, continuously day in and day out and often into the night.

As you read this Bumper 25th Edition of Northern Light, commend the hard work of the Officers and Committee of the North Russia Club who made it possible.

With honour, pride and pleasure.

PRESIDENT

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From the Chairman.

This our 25th edition of "Northern Light" has arrived, full of stories, poems, reminiscences and experiences, great reading. The memories, tears and smiles that they bring are all part of our history. Read once and thrown away NEVER these are no mere magazines more like diaries or encyclopedias, we read them, read them again, put them away and use them for references. Not just us, but our wives and families read them and we are proud to explain the naval slang and expound on the stories to our grandchildren. Northern Light is the hub of our club, a mouthpiece - A KEEP SAKE.

It KEEPS us in touch
It KEEPS us informed of stories and events
It KEEPS those of us unable to attend those events aware of what our Club is doing and where it is going.
Most important of all it is OUR magazine.

I would like to express my thanks to all our shipmates who have been prolific in their contributions to its reading, to Dick Squires our Editor for his hard work and efforts in ensuring that it meets the very high standard that he originally set, to Les Sullivan for ensuring that it is printed on time and finally to Ernie Skelton who with the help of his grand-daughters do the packing and postage to ensure that we all receive our copies of Northern Light.

I am sure that like me, you await with anticipation the next 25 editions of "Northern Light".

CHAIRMAN Norman Batchelor

THE 'MURMANSK' RUN

By several members of the Group

Annual visit to Murmansk 4th to 11th May '91

One of the group had collected the visas, air tickets and baggage labels the previous evening and arrived early at Heathrow's Terminal One on Saturday morning. The party was soon gathered in one place and the tickets distributed. Then our friend who had done the Friday night chore realised that he had left home without his passport. Panic reigned, as it was at first thought that he would miss the whole holiday. However, by turning on a massive display of matelot's charm and 'bull', the desk attendant was persuaded to 'transfer' his 'non-transferable' ticket to the following days flight. Off he went home, to collect the passport and off went the remaining 32 members on the first leg to the Soviet Union. The flight was excellent - a very good in-flight meal with gratis drinks and wine. It was not long before several of the party were making their way to the flight deck to be greeted by the Captain and crew. After satisfying themselves that all was in order and that the crew had control, they left the flight deck to allow them to make the touch down at Moscow's Shere-metyevo airport. Then followed the usual bottleneck and dis-organised chaos that always exists there. Eventually we were on our way to the Belgrade Hotel near the city centre. After settling in and a wash and brush up, it was time for many to sample their first taste of Soviet food. Everyone thought that the tour leader had gone crazy when he enquired "Who wants a bottle of beer?" 15 hands went up and 15 bottles were ordered. (Little did they realise that the lot only cost 17 roubles 15 kopecks - or 33p sterling!!!!) But Russian Peva Beer is not something you want more of! Soon, some were finding their way on to the dance floor, whilst others wandered off to the banks of the Moskva river, or the market area of Stary Arbat nearby. Later on, a few were invited to a private banqueting suite to join in a traditional birthday party. By the time they left (rumoured to be 3 a.m.) they were convinced that there was no shortage of food, drink, hospitality or friendship.

OUR TRIBUTE TO THE FALLEN



The Kola Inlet is calm and placid, our wreaths, one for GOODALL one for GOSSAMER float away.

After breakfast on Sunday the group left for a tour of the Kremlin grounds and Cathedral Square, leaving Bill Short and Dick Squires in the hotel foyer as they were due to meet 3 different television crews during the day. After an enjoyable 3 hour tour we returned for lunch to find our two T.V. stars in a rather glum mood. Their interviews had been timed at 2 hour intervals - 10 am., noon and 2 pm. All 3 crews arrived together - just as the restaurant doors were opening for lunch - we wonder why? After lunch the main party set off again, first to

Red Square and then an extended city tour. Little did they know that their guided tour of the famous square had been arranged so that a television team could follow their every footstep - excerpts from this were shown on both national and local television during the Victory Day programmes on the ensuing few days. Then it was on to Lenin's Mausoleum, G.U.M., St Basils Cathedral, Gorky Street, passing the Bolshoi Theatre on their way to Lenin Heights and the University. During the tour a stop was made to allow the group to ride a few stops on the Metro, Moscow's marble lined and sculptured underground railway. An evening meal was followed by an early night for most, in preparation for an early departure to Murmansk the following morning. The day was not over for everyone, Bill and Dick had dispensed with their interviewers by 5 p.m. and private transport had been despatched to the airport to collect our late arrival together with his passport. Allowing for delays they were due at the hotel by 5 p.m., 6 o'clock came, then 7, then by 8 o'clock panic was beginning to set in. Frantic phone calls were commenced to the airport and the airline office without much success, when suddenly they arrived. But where was the baggage? You've guessed it - still at Heathrow, together with a container full of other passenger's belongings. We began to wonder, had we got a Jonah in our midst?. Luckily, the final answer was 'No'.



"ALOYSHA" the huge (34 metres high) memorial to the Defenders of the Arctic Region.

we were ushered upstairs and into the lounge. There were more people, more flowers, more greetings and many introductions. Order was called for and a smart, slim and spritely veteran, who we eventually got to know as Vasily, chairman of the local veterans, gave a short speech of welcome and invited Dick to accept the 'Bread of Friendship and Welcome'. A young lady appeared, dressed in colourful local costume, bearing a loaf of bread. A piece was broken and Dick ate, we all followed suit. Yes, the forecast was right - I was feeling at home already. Soon, some members who were to live with families were deep in conversation with their hosts. I am amazed at the numbers of people who spoke

Monday morning came (and a member who was returning to Murmansk for the first time since the war continues the story) - We were on our way to the airport bright and early - breakfast had been arranged there. On the coach, Dick told us that the 'tourism' element of the week was over and that within a few hours we would all be at home. We wondered! What is in store for us now?. Nearing the end of the flight we all tried to look out at the scenery below to try to pick out the Kola Inlet and other focal points. My own lasting impression was of endless miles of snow covered tundra with a few clumps of trees and shrubs dotted around. We touched down and waited for other passengers to disembark. Then came our turn. Who are all these people coming across the tarmac? Surely not a welcoming party! But, how wrong can you be? Of course they were, we were given flowers and greeted most warmly and many walked arm in arm towards the Terminal building,

excellent English and feel somewhat ashamed that I cannot offer the shortest of replies in Russian. Eventually, our baggage was loaded on to a coach and we were invited to board. As we set off on our journey from the airport a young teenage girl sat next to me. "Hello" she said, "Welcome to my city, please be happy and healthy during your visit. We are very honoured that you have come. Oh, my name is Ludmilla, I am pleased to meet you". Soon we were in deeper conversation, frequently interrupted as my new friend pointed out local landmarks. She became apologetic because the city was 'not pretty, with green grass and flowers'. I recalled 1944, the last time I saw the ruins of Murmansk. By the time we reached the Arktika Hotel I knew I would enjoy this visit.

After lunch we were taken by coach to the Northern Navy House of Culture. This was the Museum and Concert Hall of the Soviet Northern Fleet. Our short tour of the museum was not long enough to form a real opinion, but it was certainly interesting! Then, in the concert hall we joined Soviet veterans, servicemen from Navy H.Q. and local students. The concert performed by navy ratings was quite professional, and turned out to be a real 'pipe opener' for events to come during the following few days. The afternoon ended with a few speeches, none were too long and they rounded off an interesting day. After dinner at the hotel we had a free evening - and we were in need of it.



School № 51 - The Brass Band - "When the Saints Come Marching In"

Whilst the tour leader took a small delegation off to meet the mayor, the rest of the group were conducted on a city tour which was very interesting and this was rounded off with a visit to the Local History and Culture Museum. We were all very impressed with this. Our afternoon visit was to School 51, a school which apparently has formed good links with our club. On arriving at the school we crossed the playground to be greeted by the school band and when the tune was "When the Saints Come Marching In" we all realised that this was specially for us. We were welcomed also by some of the teachers, we entered the doors and there were literally hundreds of kids, of all ages from six upwards, all saying hello in English and wanting to give us little gifts of badges and items that they had obviously made. Even the less sentimental of us felt humble but very happy. We soon ran out of the sweets and 'nutty' which we had brought for them. Eventually we were shown into a classroom where the tables had been laid for a Russian tea party. There were cream cakes and gateaux (what's the Russian word for them?) There was a samovar and colourful cups. Soon they were ready to start

their concert, specially rehearsed and produced just for 'their visiting convoy veterans'. It is difficult, no impossible, to describe the performances of some of those young children without conveying an impression of exaggeration to you all. They were simply fantastic, the singers, the dancers, the impressionists and the choir. But the highlight followed after the singing of Auld Lang Syne, which acted as a cover whilst a puppet theatre was being erected. The six and seven year olds who performed this act were perfect and their use of the English language was better than mine (and I've had 73 years practice!!) They had them all, Kermit the Frog (who appeared and said "Hullo Richard Squires" (everyone in Murmansk seemed to know Dick), there was the Bad Red Fox, Miss Piggy and the Little Piglets. There were a few eyes that were not dry when it came to saying goodbye to the children and their dedicated teachers. No matter what was to follow, it could not be better than this afternoon. So, Mister Editor, if you can, please let someone else continue the report on the visit.

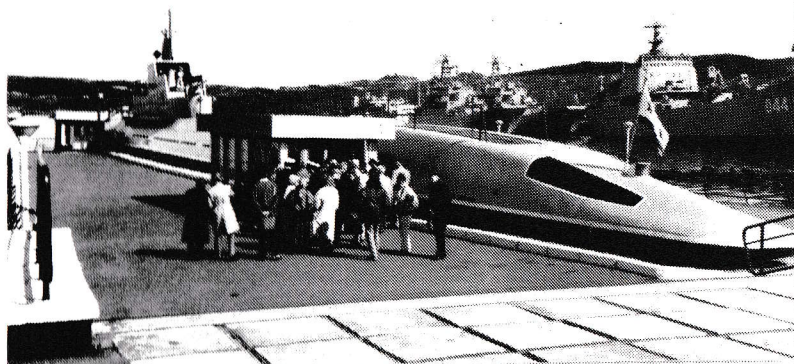


AT THE VETERANS DINNER PARTY

The editor does not wish to press someone else into the job, so he takes over himself. The group were only back at the hotel for enough time for a quick wash and brush up before the next event. In fact, those who were residing with citizens had no time to go home. Then it was a short walk from the hotel, across Lenin Prospect, through the park, to the Kirov Palace of Culture (to the locals the Dom Kultura). Here we joined the Soviet Veterans in a Dinner Party Concert. The entertainment commenced in a very solemn way, with a group of young dancers performing a salute to the fallen. This was followed by a Minutes Silence. We all agreed that this was the correct way to start an evening of this kind. Then the entertainment started - the dancers danced, the singers sang, the balalaikas played, the vodka flowed, and flowed, and flowed. Soon many veterans, both Soviet and British were doing their Fred Astaire impersonations, whilst more vodka flowed. A great night was had by all, even those who didn't know their way home and had forgotten the words of Show me the way to go Home. Everyone was advised to get a good nights sleep, as the party had only just begun.

Thursday morning commenced on a disappointing note when a few of our party missed the coach, through no fault of their own. We were on a strict time schedule, as we were to be escorted by a military police car complete with flashing lights, both amber and blue. We were on our way to Severomorsk and

Safanova. This is a controlled military zone and includes the Northern Fleet headquarters. During our war years the area was known as Vaenga. We were very fortunate to have been allowed to visit the area, as up to now visitors had not been allowed in the area. Our first stop was Safanova (named after a Soviet war hero). We were met by a familiar face - a naval interpreter who some had met on the previous year's visit and others had met on the destroyer 'Bezuprechnoi' during her visit to Portsmouth in 1990. We were taken first to the Navy Air Museum where we were met by Mrs S. Gromov, wife of the C.in C. Northern Fleet. This very knowledgeable lady was to take us on a tour of the museum. At regular intervals she made references to the involvement of the R.A.F. and F.A.A. with special mention of 151 Wing R.A.F. During the tour she stopped at a large, ornately carved wooden table and said "This is your Queen Mother's table". The heavy table, now glass topped, displayed a number of photographs of our air and ground crews during their days at Vaenga, (see picture on centre page). This to me, was one of the most interesting museum visits I have made during six tours. At the end of a memorable visit we were all asked to sign the visitors book and a quick flick through the hundreds of pages confirmed that we were the first visiting British group - the only other name we could find was that of the Chief of the Imperial General Staff. Next we were shown to a large hangar which was crammed with preserved aircraft. The highlight of course was a Hurricane and this plane became the back-cloth for many photographs. Back to the coach and we were soon on our way to Severomorsk, still escorted by the car with the flashing



Entering the "K21" Submarine Museum at Severomorsk

lights. On alighting at the quayside we were amazed at the number of naval ships in sight. It brought such remarks as "Aint seen as many ships since the Spithead Review in '36" and "Just like Guzz on a pre-war Navy Day". There was no restrictions on the use of cameras. We walked down the quayside to a submarine, the 'K21', which had been converted into a submariners museum. On going aboard we found that she had been completely gutted, with the exception of the forward torpedo compartment which remained in its original state. The ship sides and bulkheads were lined with photographs and artifacts. Even with no submariners in our group, we ran into overtime and were finally ushered back to the coach for the 30 kilometre journey to Murmansk to face the unfortunate members who had not been with us, and for a late lunch at 1530. The rest of the day was 'free time'. Some 'put their feet up', others went on their own sightseeing trips, but it was pleasing (but not surprising), to see how many had accepted invitations to go 'up-homers' for supper with their new found Soviet friends. Most, had an early night because of the warning - "Tomorrow is Victory Day and there are never enough hours in the day."

We were all ready at the coaches immediately after breakfast, we were joined by numerous teachers and students. They were intended to be our interpreters but at this stage we were all speaking English anyway. But they would be required later, when the various ceremonies commenced. First stop was Lenin Square, where we witnessed the city's mayor, dignitaries and civilians place their floral tributes at the memorial. This was accompanied by a military band, whilst in the street, various sections of the Victory Day March were proceeding to the starting point. Then, back to the coaches and off we went to the International Cemetery. Those in the group who had previously visited the graves were quietly surprised to see the improvements in the cemetery. The barren looking arctic grass has been replaced with paving flags and gravel, whilst each grave now has a surround of black marble. Subsequent enquiries suggest that this improvement has been supplied by a Soviet benefactor named Yuri Schecernin, but I cannot but wonder what the Commonwealth War Graves Commission's views will be. Our flowers were laid, our Silence observed, our prayers and Ode to the Fallen were said. Then, slowly we made our way back to the transport, for the upward journey to the highest point in the city at Aloysha. The surrounding area was quickly filling - hundreds of servicemen in a variety of uniforms, were being out numbered by civilians, both young and old. After the speeches and the Silence had been completed, the huge, Soviet style wreaths were laid, whilst hundreds of stems of tulips and carnations were placed on the plinth of the eternal flame.



At the International Cemetery - the Silence.

Then a hasty return to the transport and the dash down to the docks as we were running late. We were soon checked aboard the Maria Ermalova, a 200 berth passenger ship, which was to take us down the Kola Inlet. First, we found the cabins we had been allocated and disposed of our coats. Then, it was straight to the saloon for lunch. This was probably one of the nicest meals we had during our visit. No one hung around after the last course. All headed for the upper deck to take in the sights by this time we were passing Polyarnoe and heading for the open sea. At the appointed spot the engines stopped and Maria Ermalova came to a stop. A service was conducted by two priests of the Russian Orthodox Church. We were informed that this was the first time in 70 years that they had been able to conduct a service of this nature. We were impressed. Two wreaths were lowered on to the sea and many people also cast individual flowers on to the water. One of the wreaths had been supplied by one of our group and had been dedicated to the memory of H.M.S. Goodall, which had been sunk in the

vicinity. We then dispersed and went below decks for the various entertainments which were to take place. The bars were open, there were video films in the cinema and it soon became Standing Room only in the saloon, where a cabaret was taking place. The folk ensemble known as the "Nainas" kept the entertainment going almost up to the time to disembark. Their performance was very professional and were billed as students from the Higher Teachers Training College. Finally, it was "All-ashore", and just time for a group photograph on the jetty. Then back to the hotel and our private digs, to prepare for tomorrows departure to Leningrad.

There were dozens of people gathered in the hotel foyer to wish us farewell, and there were dozens more waiting outside at the coach. Many of them came with us to the airport, there was not an empty seat on the coach, others made their own way there, either by private car or taxi. At last we were on our way and all agreed that they would remember the few crowded days in Murmansk. It was a great pity that there was only a short stay in Leningrad, but we managed at least, to tour the city and see the main points of interest. The short tour was rounded off with a visit to Piskarovskoya Memorial Cemetery, where more than 700,000 victims of the seige are buried in mass graves. Then, back to the hotel, an evening meal, finish the packing and bed. Next morning 33 weary group members were on their way home. Thankfully, and despite the melee at Leningrad's half reconstructed airport terminal building, there were no casualties, no one left behind, and no lost baggage. Back to Blighty on time.



Some of the group at the 'Mother Russia' Memorial at Piskarovskoya.

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An Open Letter to Peggy Squires, Biddy Skelton and Edie Ford:

I would like to take this opportunity to "Thank you Ladies" for your generous help with the two Russian Journalists and Interpreter who came to England to obtain stories and pictures for publication in the Archangel press to coincide with "Dervish '91". Your kindness in accommodating them in your homes at very short notice, wining dining and taking them shopping and sight-seeing in Dover and Liverpool. Thank you once again and my sincere appreciation for all you have done.
Norman Batchelor

By Don Allen

Club Reunion in Jersey from 5th to 12th May 1991

A total of 74 members and ladies arrived on the island from parts of the mainland. All were met on arrival and transported by coach to the West Hill Hotel. After settling in, they all met in the Ballroom to be greeted by our genial host and organiser. Bob Smale's welcome included 'Drinkies' on the house. The week's programme was outlined and this proved to be most exciting to the enthusiastic participants. After an excellent dinner we were entertained with a first class cabaret followed by a more energetic disco.

Monday was a free day to allow all to explore St Helier and do their own thing, unfortunately the weather was very windy and rather cold, but no one complained.

After lunch on Tuesday a coach tour was arranged and we visited the underground hospital built by the Germans during the occupation, using a mixed labour force consisting of refugees and P.O.Ws from Spain and Russia among others. A vivid account of the Charblis disaster is depicted in graphic terms in one of the main corridors.

Back at the hotel a Vin D'Honneur was given by the States of Jersey Tourism Committee, presided by Edwin Gadel, Connectable of St Mary (Mayor), who addressed the members with a very warm welcome. He was presented with a club tie by Bob, on behalf of the members. After dinner a 'Party Night' in the hotel rounded off a wonderful day.

Wednesday 8th May was VE Day. Coaches left the hotel at 0930 for a Thanksgiving Service at St Helier Parish Church, conducted by the Very Reverend Basil O'Ferrall, Dean of Jersey and a former Chaplain of the Fleet. Our standard was proudly borne by Jim Mathewson with the Sea Cadets Standard in support. The sidesmen for the collection were Queenie Sullivan, Jack Roberts, Chic Worthington and Don Allen. The collection was dedicated to the Red Cross, (Photocopies of the Order of Service can be obtained from the Hon Sec)

A short walk through the church grounds led us to the State Chambers (Parliament) where Sir Peter Crill C.B.E., gave a talk on the history of the Constitution of the Islands. This was followed by a conducted tour of the State Rooms. On then to the Gorey Old Coach House by coach (compliments of Pioneer Coaches), for a Buffet Lunch (compliments of Bonnes Vacances), with wine served (compliments of Randalls Brewery) Another lovely day was rounded off after dinner with a sing song of 'Golden Oldies' with the able backing of the Norman Jones Dance Trio. In spite of the hectic day many were to be seen enjoying themselves on the dance floor.

Thursday 9th May is Liberation Day for the Islanders and is a public holiday. Ursula Farquharson Roberts, wife of our Vice President, planted an Ilea Oak tree in the



Mrs Ursula Farquharson-Roberts plants the oak tree. Thursday 9th May 1991.

entrance of the hotel grounds to commemorate the visit of the North Russia Club to the Island. This ceremony was concluded by many of the ladies lending a helping hand until the hole was filled. We then adjourned to the hotel grounds for a group photograph, which gave us the opportune moment to present Bob Smale with a gold plated cigarette lighter bearing the North Russia Club lapel badge

and a bottle of his favourite tippie. The presentation was made by Don Allen on behalf of the members with a grateful vote of thanks to Bob for all his hard work in organising such an excellent holiday. Queenie Sullivan then presented Daphne Smale with a basket of flowers as a further token of our appreciation. This was followed by a day long coach tour of the Island. After a stop for lunch we returned to St Helier where Captain Stuart Farquharson Roberts laid a wreath at the Cenotaph which was preceded by a short service of Remembrance by the Dean of Jersey.

Friday and Saturday were free days which enabled some to visit the other Islands and explore Jersey.

On Saturday night each lady was presented with a corsage of pink carnations by Brian Hitchcocks, who kindly donated this gallant gesture to our ladies and was received with the thanks of all present. The last night also provided the opportunity to hold the traditional raffle associated with North Russia



OUR WREATH AT THE CENOTAPH

Club reunions and with the kind assistance of other hotel guests a generous total was raised which was by popular consent has been donated to the club's Welfare Fund.

A GREAT TIME WAS HAD BY ALL AND MANY HAVE REQUESTED THAT THE VISIT BE REPEATED.

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THIS IS JUST ONE OF MANY LETTERS OF APPRECIATION

On behalf of my wife Joan and myself, I would like to place on record our high regard for the very successful reunion that took place in Jersey.

Our sincere thanks go to Bob Smale for the organisation that went into making our visit so worthwhile. He did a wonderful job and his efforts were praised by all members, their wives and guests. The staff at the hotel played their part in making our stay so welcome.

The planting of the Holm oak tree on the approach to the hotel, to commemorate the visit was a lovely touch and very much appreciated by the ladies who carried out the planting operation.

The visit to the State Chambers of Jersey with the talk on the history of the island by Sir Peter Grill, Bailiff of Jersey was most interesting and together with the visit to the adjoining Court House and laying of the wreath at the Cenotaph all contributed to make our visit one to remember. For me personally, the highlight was the service at Trinity Church in St Helier where I performed the honourable task of bearing the N.R.C. Standard during the ceremony. Some of our members thought I made a good job of it and enquired whether I had done it before. The simple answer was "No" - a bunting tosser got involved with other flags, but not the Standard.

continued

Jersey letter continued:

In closing I have one further person to thank. The Dean of Jersey i.e. the Very Reverend Canon Basil O'Ferrall as an ex-Naval padre appreciated our feelings. I found him a very charming man and he went out of his way to spend time with us, talking and praying with us and generally making our stay so welcome.

*All the best,
John Hutchinson*



THE "JERSEY" GIRLS



AND THEIR SHIPMATES - THE LADS

THE CANADIAN REUNIONS

Whilst the previous two reunions were taking place, seven 'Brits' had crossed the 'Herring Pond' to join several of our club's Canadian members at the reunions of the '9th Escort Group' and H.M.C.S.NENE.

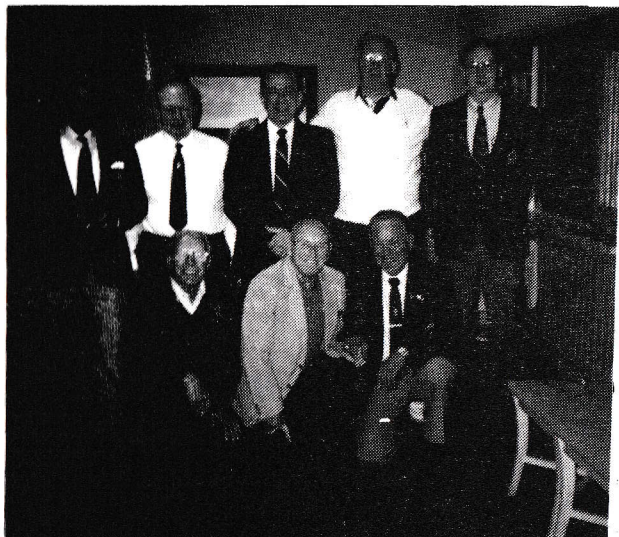
Our party consisted of President Chris Tye, George and Rose Nye, Ron and Cath Young, Hughie Noble and Tommy Adams. All state that they received a very warm welcome and had a most enjoyable time.

The reunions were held at Keluna and were on consecutive days. First it was the turn of the Escort Group and our party were able to acquaint themselves with many veterans who were interested in North Russia Club, and of course, there was plenty of encouragement from our group.

The following morning, a Sunday, saw the Veterans March from the Royal Canadian Legion Club, to the memorial at the waterfront. A full memorial Church Service took place and a wreath was laid on the sea. The march then returned to the club from where they had started. During the evening, the NENE Dinner took place and a special speech of welcome was addressed to our group. This was suitably replied to by our President and needless to say he did a bit of drum banging and flag waving for the North Russia Club. Already our membership Secretary is noticing a significant number of enrolments from Canada and U.S.A.

Following the reunions our group split up to go their own ways, most headed towards Vancouver, but not until they had made 'dates' with shipmates old and new, who intend coming to our International Reunion in 1992.

Finally, Chris wishes to thank Bill and Ruby Cameron and also Gordon Jamieson for their personal hospitality.



'All N.R.C. shipmates together' five Canadians and three Brits.

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RECEPTION AT THE SOVIET EMBASSY - 31 MAY 1991.

By Hon. Secretary

Just eight days before the event we were asked to invite 60 members of our club to attend a reception at the Soviet Embassy in London. The Ambassador had invited us so that he could say a personal thank you to Commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the commencement of the Northern Convoys. How do you divide 1,300 by 60 without disappointing many, many others - it's impossible!!

On the day, 60 lucky members, together with a similar number from the Russian Convoy Club assembled at the Embassy in Kensington Palace Gardens for a most enjoyable couple of hours. The highlight was the speech given by H.E. Leonid Zamyatin the Soviet Ambassador to Great Britain. (See photograph on page 23). The ambassador's words were:

"I am pleased to have this chance to pay my deepest respects to those who in times of imminent hardship helped my country to overpower the forces of Fascism. Ask anyone in the Soviet Union what was the most significant allied contribution to our war effort and you will hear two things - the opening of the Second Front in Europe and the Northern Convoys. (Hear, hear).

Important from the military point of view the D Day came three years into the war, but it was in the autumn of 1941 when the first ships with weapons, ammunition and food arrived in Murmansk. Then the soldier in the trench realised he was not alone in his fight. A source of tremendous emotional support. The Commonwealth played a significant part in sustaining our military capability at a time when most of our industry was either destroyed or relocated to unoccupied regions. In all more than 1400 ships took part and many were sunk taking away the lives of more than 3,000 seamen. I propose to stand in silence to commemorate their heroic deaths.....

.....Those brave men, who in the icy northern waters who did everything possible and impossible to help their fighting comrades. I would like to express the deep gratitude of the Soviet people for their heroic efforts. Having paid a great price for our victory we will never forget those who stood by us in the flames of the war. Who were the first to give us a helping hand, sometimes paying with their lives. Fighting the common enemy and having produced an unprecedented example of effective co-operation in the interests of democracy, peace and freedom for the people of the world. Successful against the little states the aggressor failed to reap the fruits of his barbaric acts.

Many of you I am sure often wonder, just as I do, whether we can achieve the same level of co-operation in peace as we did in combat. My answer to this should be a definite Yes.

Responsive speeches to the Ambassador were made by yours truly on behalf of North Russia Club and by E.R. (Bob) Allen on behalf of the Russian Convoy Club.

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SOVIET 40TH ANNIVERSARY COMMEMORATIVE MEDAL

The ambassador also announced that the presentation of the medal, per the list compiled by H.M.S. Centurion, will commence at the end of this month.

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FIVE CONVOY VETERANS IN LENINGRAD

By Bob Smale with contributions from all of them.

The request for a visit by 5 British veterans of the Arctic campaign was originated by Mr Vladimir Chernin, chief producer of the October Theatre in Leningrad, while he was putting together a spectacular stage show in memory of the 50th Anniversary of the German invasion of the Soviet Union, and the resulting 890 day siege of Leningrad.

The mayor of Leningrad Mr Anatoli Sobchak sent the invitations to the British Ambassador in Moscow, who passed the request to the Secretary of N.R.C. Dick Squires detailed off the volunteers!!!! Stuart Farquharson-Roberts, (Vice President); Les Sullivan (Membership Secretary); Bob Smale; Bob Badger-Smith and Tom Adams - and managed to obtain visas and other documents at very short notice. What efficiency!! We paid our own fares (Upgraded Club Class, courtesy of British Airways) but the city of Leningrad paid all the other expenses in a most generous and warm hearted way.

Wednesday 19th June:

We were met at Moscow by Wing Commander Nick Wiseman, Assistant Air Attache, who transported us, and our luggage, between Sheremetyevos 2 and 1 with smooth efficiency. A nine hour wait for the Aeroflot trip to Leningrad in sweltering heat was lightened for 3 of us who accepted the invitation of an engaging Russian space specialist to tour Moscow in his car, and on foot for 3 hours. It was amusing to hear that following the unlawful landing of a light German aircraft on the end of Moscow's hallowed Red Square many Muscovites have named the area Sheremetyevo 3.

At Leningrad we were met by a committee member of the Veterans Association, and taken to our hotel.

Thursday 20th June:

Our guide throughout was Victoria, a very attractive lady who spoke perfect English and really knew the city and its history. We spent the morning sight-seeing, including a visit to the cruiser AURORA, immortalised by firing the (blank) round which started the 1916 revolution (The perhaps better known battleship POTEMKIN in fact only started an abortive earlier revolution)

At 2p.m. we went to the October Concert Hall for the grand spectacular, an impressive mixture of wartime film, military singing and personal accounts attended by some 2000 audience. Halfway through the show some excellent footage of Arctic convoys was shown, mostly of British ships, and we were invited on to the vast stage to join five Russian Arctic Naval Veterans. We greeted each other with great warmth, it was a very emotional moment, and two of them, were in fact in tears.

Stuart Farquharson Roberts introduced each member of the team with a brief account of their role in the Arctic war. He went on to stress our mutual respect and friendship and our wish for ever closer international relations. Every sentence was applauded as it was translated.

Band-Captain Waterman R.M. then conducted a 100 man Russian Naval Academy band in an excellent rendering of "Hearts of Oak", and we left the stage to a standing ovation, followed by gifts of flowers, badges, and prolonged requests for autographs. The mayor was abroad but his Deputy, dressed in Admiral's uniform, warmly congratulated us. We did not know it but the whole show was being televised live throughout the republics.

Friday 21st June:

Taken to the Admiralty, where we were met by Admiral Selinavor, who gave us a personally conducted tour of the Admiralty. He said that apart from a recent visit by the First Sea Lord (Admiral Oswald) we were the first foreigners to visit the boardroom. We had coffee and received a painting of modern Soviet warships in heavy seas. His Chief of Staff then escorted us, via the high powered Admiral's barge to Kronstadt, where we were received by the Captain and

Officers of the training cruiser. Had a jolly good lunch onboard, followed by a tour of the ship. The navigational aids were impressive, particularly the satellite navigation systems and the Fax for charts.

On leaving the ship, we had an extended tour of the island, returning by launch.

We had been invited to an evening performance of the ballet "Gizelle" at the October Theatre. Before the commencement of Act 2, an announcement was made in Russian, followed by the blazing glare of spotlights, shining upon us. "You are being welcomed, as guests of honour, and naval war heroes" said Victoria. There was sustained applause. We all felt like superannuated Beatles!!!

Instead of taking cars (which had been made available) we decided to try the Metro, with its elegant marble stations...We found out that we were already well known, thanks to T.V. Members of the public in the streets, in the Metro, and on the train, came up, and shook our hands. What a kind and warm hearted lot they are.

Saturday 22nd June. 50th Anniversary Day. We went to the cemetery of the war dead at Piskavaskoye to lay a wreath of poppies. After meeting the V.I.Ps. and veterans we took part in a great procession (live on T.V.). We were again honoured in that we were given second place, after the Leningrad Veterans Association. Then after us the Admirals, Generals, the armed services, and the many other organisations. We passed the mass graves of the 700,000 who had given their lives during the Siege, and up to the mourning statue of Mother Russia. An unforgettable, moving and historic experience.

A fine evening tour ended our day.

Sunday 23rd June:

A morning tour to Pushkin, Katherine's Palace and gardens rounded off a most memorable visit.

Bob Swale.

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THE ANNUAL "LONDON WEEKEND"

The "London Weekend" commenced on Friday 12th July with our usual visit to the Royal Tournament at Earls Court. The block booking of 36 seats were soon sold out and we regret that efforts to increase the size of the 'block' were not possible, consequently the few late comers who applied for tickets were not able to join us. The Tournament this year, featured the Infantry and it was enjoyed by most of us. My only regret was that Pompey were beaten by Guzz in the Field Gun Competition. But I made up for it in their bar after the show.

The Annual General Meeting at the Victory Services Club on Saturday afternoon was well attended as well as being a lively meeting. We assure those who were in attendance that there will be a microphone on the top table in future. The names of your elected officers and committee are shown on Page 2 and we extend a special welcome to new committee members Denis Brooke and Eddie Beard. There were no changes to rules or constitution proposed this year and the committee's recommendation that subscriptions should remain at £6 per annum was accepted without dissent. The Hon. Treasurer in his report, stated that we had had a very successful year financially and invited questions from the floor. In response to these questions he clarified the profit figures for the Reunion at Blackpool.

The figures stated on page 26 of the Northern Light although accurate however they were misleading. The raffle proceeds that night were £105.30 and after deductions of £21.00 for prizes and £25.50 payable to the hotel the sum of £58.50 was sent to the Treasurer. Total profit on evening after payment of Hotel Invoice, Band, postage and refunds WAS £185.36. This was not put into Welfare Fund as stated in Northern Light but included into Club Funds. Also, it was agreed to add a footnote to the Balance Sheet regarding the allocation

of cash for the Tours to USSR. The Balance Sheet and Treasurer's Report were approved with acclaim. Detailed reports were also given by the Membership Secretary and the Secretary of A.C.M.T.

It was unanimously agreed that the 1992 A.G.M. will be held in conjunction with the International Reunion and will take place at Liverpool University on Wednesday 8th July 1992.

On Sunday we had a record turnout for the Wreath Laying Service at Brookwood Military Cemetery. Our Standard was paraded by Henry Baker and was supported by the Russian Convoy Club (London & Home Counties) Branch, Woking and Henshaw R.N.A.'s, the Association of WRNS, and three local R.B.L and other Standards. Wreaths were laid on behalf of North Russia Club, R.C.C (London & Home Counties) Branch, Commonwealth Russian Convoy Veterans and Citizens of Murmansk. Next followed a very convivial buffet lunch in the Sergeant's Mess at Pirbright Camp courtesy of the Brigade of Guards. We wish to remind the five gatecrashers that the excellent lunch and coach transport cost a mere £5 per head.

THE SAGA OF THE ARCHANGEL JOURNALISTS

By Dick Squires

Following a planning meeting of the Dervish Organising Committee in Archangel on 22nd March, the Deputy Mayor Marina Belogubova asked me "Would it be possible for two of our young journalists and an interpreter to come to Britain for one week to meet veterans?". She then added "I want them to publish convoy stories from the veterans themselves, not from our history books". On my return to U.K. things were soon organised regarding Entry Visas, accomodation etc., and venues for meetings. On their part they arranged that the Northern Shipping Company would sponsor their voyages. They would sail in and out on one of the regular timber boats. There is on average one per week.

Eventually, we received a telex on 12th June stating that "Mozgovoi, Slobudniak and interpreter Kovalchuk would arrive onboard ARSENI MOSKVIN at Boston Dock, Lincs. on Saturday 15th. Hurried arrangements were made with local members, and a venue was found by George Holmes, my old MATCHLESS shipmate of Boston RNA. An excellent turn out on Sunday (16th) found the journalists mingling with about 20 veterans and afterwards they expressed the view that already, their journey had been worthwhile. The following day they were moved on to Liverpool. A meeting was arranged for the following day at Liverpool RNA Club. Many club (and non-club veterans) turned out to show the young journalists the real meaning of "Swinging the lamp". Liverpool RNA joined in by providing a free, buffet lunch as well as "Splicing the Mainbrace" for all hands. The visit was certainly worthwhile!! Next, it was a move south to meet some of our members aboard BELFAST on the Thames. Again a very good gathering with more lamp-swinging, and a bonus of being invited aboard GLOUCESTER tied up alongside and just back from the Gulf. From London they moved south for a few days change of scenery. Soon after arrival a telex arrived telling them to board MEKANIK MAKARJIN at Port Creeksen. We all said "Where's that"? On finding out we were told that the ship would not be berthed there but on the other side of the Thames at Rochford. The another telex saying "Dont board her". Another few days wait and instructions were received to board KONSTANTIN SAVELJEV at Newport Gwent. 'Up bags and hammocks for the trek from Dover! More problems - the ship was due to call at Dunkirk and our friends had no visas to enter French waters. So, back again to Liverpool to await the next order. Several days elapsed the "Join ANDREI IVANOV at Goole. Success at last - they sailed for home on July 4th - a visit of 7 days lasted for 19! The result - plenty of Lamp Swinging stories in the Archangel newspapers.

Alexander, Boris and Svetlana wish to say thank you all for your hospitality, kindness, friendship and above all, for your stories.

ONBOARD THE BATTLESHIPS "KING GEORGE V" AND "DUKE OF YORK"
1941 - 1944

By Tom Waiting, former Sgt. Royal Marines.

After passing for Corporal at the Royal Marines Military School, at Thurleston, Devon, in 1941, I was immediately drafted, complete with blistered feet, to KING GEORGE V at Scapa Flow, where I became a member of the C.in C's Home Fleet Printing Staff.

Over the next 3 years, due to the frequent change of Flagship by the C.in C., I served twice in KGV and twice in Duke of York. I also had a short spell ashore at Lyness Base, Orkney.

Highlights of my Northern service were first - the tragic ramming and sinking of the escort destroyer, PUNJABI, by KGV while on convoy escort to Russia. The accident happened on a calm May day when a sudden fog descended (which lasted only a few hours). PUNJABI was sliced in two with the sad loss of many lives. Onboard the battleship we all thought we'd ploughed into a minefield.

KGV only sustained a large gash in her bows. Inspection of the damage was carried out at Seidesfjord, Iceland, after which we returned to UK for repairs. The then C. in C. Admiral Tovey, transferred his flag to the DUKE OF YORK. Later he was succeeded by Admiral Bruce Fraser.

On Boxing Day, 1943, while on DUKE OF YORK, we met up with the German battle-cruiser, SCHARNHORST. My action station was in a 5.25 turret. After several hours of shelling I well recall the mighty cheer that went up when we were informed by the inter-com. that the German was on fire and sinking. DUKE OF YORK had only minor damage done to her superstructure.

After the battle we proceeded to Murmansk (Polyarnoe? Ed.) where we embarked 36 survivors picked up by destroyers from the SCHARNHORST. Among them was a Petty Officer who spoke fluent American. He'd been recalled from the States by Hitler on the outbreak of war.

Other highlights while based at Scapa were the visits by H.M. The King, the Archbishop of Canterbury (Dr. Temple), Winston Churchill and many well known entertainers, including Gracie Fields, George Formby and Vera Lynn.

Those brief runs-ashore to the Flotta Canteen were highlighted by the 6 p.m. banter between the numerous liberty-men while boarding the many drifters returning them to their ships. Typical comments were - "Get your keel off the tin cans"; "Leave the Orcadian sheep alone"; "You turn right for the North Sea"; "When are you going to say goodbye to your bouy-friend". All good tongue in cheek Navy banter.

There was an excellent library on Flotta with mint condition books. I wonder how many ended up in Davy Jones's Locker and not back on the library shelves.

I well recall a visit to Akureyri, a small town in North Iceland. All our crew were allowed to spend £10 each ashore - which they did mainly on cosmetics, nylon stockings and bolts of cloth. In all, some £20,000 went into the tills of the then lit-up little town.

What was frustrating was the order that there was to be no fraternising with the naturally pretty, local girls.

It still remains a fact that few people then, and even now in 1991, are aware that the Allies invaded and occupied neutral Iceland. No doubt Hitler would have swooped in there after over-running Norway - but we were there before him. No wonder the Icelanders later were elated on winning the 'Cod' War. It was sweet revenge.

My lasting impressions of service in Northern waters are not so much what happened to us on our 'cosy' battle-wagons, but the danger, discomfort and icy turbulent seas endured by officers and crews of all the smaller vessels engaged in the convoys to and from Russia. One wag summed it up when he remarked that his ship had spent three weeks on one wave.

continued.

I'm so glad that through the columns of Northern Light, even after 50 years, due praise continues to be accorded to the exploits of the men of all three services and Merchant Marine. Their fortitude is a testimony to the courage of our island race.

'Tis often glibly said that you've never been anywhere unless you've seen the Southern Cross and the Aurora Borealis. Many, sadly, never returned after seeing the latter - but to all who still survive, may I wish them continued good health.

.....

RUSSIA GIVES UP BRITISH BOMBER

A response from Jack Love (ex - INGLEFIELD)

Perhaps you will allow me, honest Jack, to give details of that operation in July/August 1941.

Still serving on the destroyer INGLEFIELD, (Captain D III), after two years, we were the destroyer screen for the aircraft carriers FURIOUS and VICTORIOUS, together with the covering force of the two County Class cruisers SUFFOLK and my old ship of 1938, (Boy Sig. 1st Class!), the mighty DEVONSHIRE!

The targets were the supply lines to North Norway, Kirkenes and Petsamo, also ships in the area. The Germans were building various military installations, which were to base the whole fleet in that area, subsequently proving vital to the arctic convoys, apart from the first, which we safely escorted to Murmansk (Archangel?? Ed.) in late August 1941.

It proved to be disastrous, due to the complete domination of the Luftwaffe over the Fleet Air Arm's Albatrosses and Fulmars, not to mention the Swordfish!

However, the task of the destroyers also involved saving the shot-down crews. INGLEFIELD rescued several and although we were operating well inside the Arctic Circle all survived. We refuelled from VICTORIOUS in Spitzbergen.

On return to Scapa, Gutter Sound, in August 1941, we once more travelled north, escorting the first convoy of materials to Murmansk (?). Nevertheless, these convoys became a regular trip, mixed with Atlantic and Malta convoys.

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TEMPUS FUGIT

H.M.S. WESTCOTT

By C.W. "Stormy" Fairweather.

The first week in December 1941 was "Warship Week", when towns were invited to adopt a warship. WESTCOTT was adopted by Morcambe and Heysham. There were two occasions when the crew were invited to attend a civic reception, each time she was called away to duty, so the civic reception never took place.

However, better late than never, fifty years on some of the surviving crew members are attending a reunion and civic reception at Morcambe on 27 October next. Hopefully this one will not be cancelled and, maybe we will meet up with some of the good folk who knitted us woolies and sent us other comforts which we so much appreciated in those days.

We have a photograph of a painting of WESTCOTT by the late Les Lawrence and we will be presenting a 30" x 20" copy to Morecambe as well as a copy of the original "Blue-nose Certificate" that Les produced in pen and ink whilst serving aboard WESTCOTT.

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The "Bread of Friendship and Welcome" (see page 5)



Priests of the Russian Orthodox Church conduct the service aboard the MARIA ERMALOVA

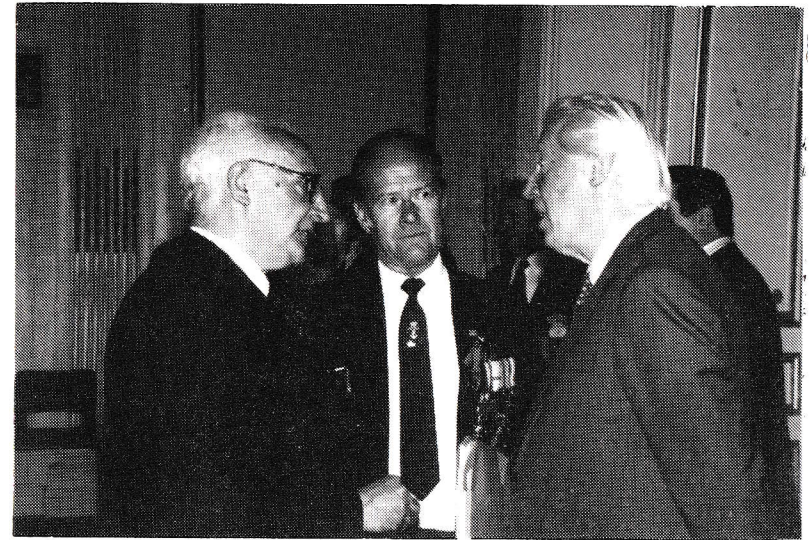
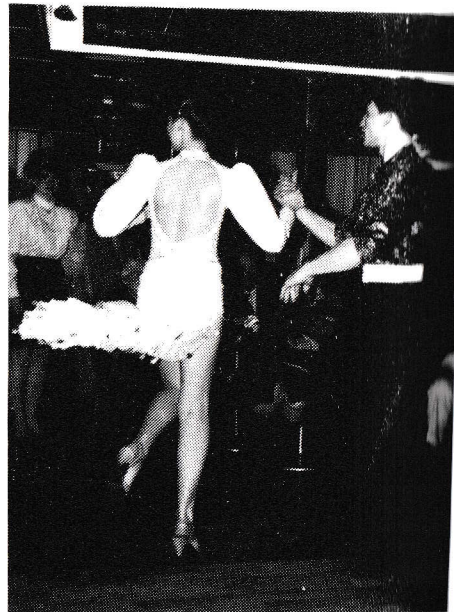
ABOARD
THE
MARIA ERMALOVA

(Scrabster Ferry was never like this)
(or the Hammersmith Palais)



Who was the lady who patted her
husband on the head and said
"Down Fido"?

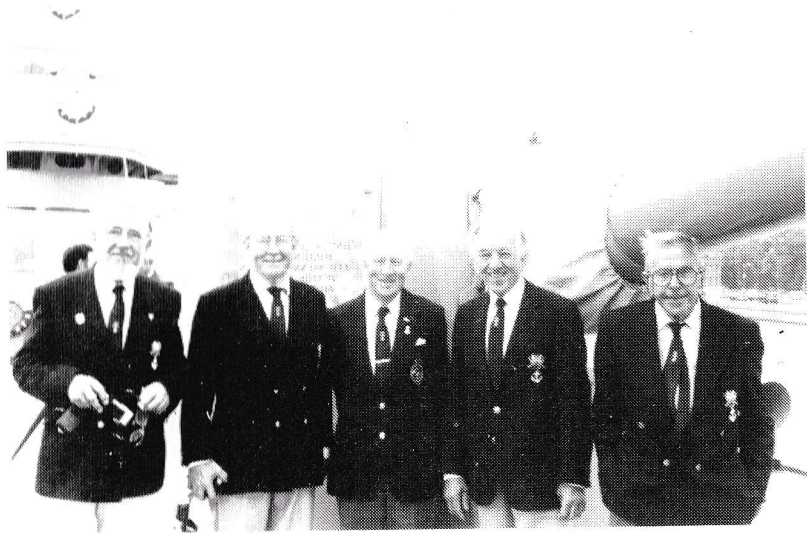
Shame on you madam, this is no place
for 'doggy talk'



Dick Squires (left) Norman Batchelor (centre) in deep
conversation with the Soviet Ambassador H.E. Leonid Zamyatin.



The committee interrupt their meeting aboard H.M.S. Belfast to pose
for a photograph with visitors from Murmansk.



NORTH RUSSIA CLUB 'AMBASSADORS' IN LENINGRAD.
 aboard the cruiser 'Aurora'. Story on page 16.

L to R. Bob Badger-Smith, Stuart Farquharson-Roberts, Tom Adams,
 Les Sullivan and Bob Swale.

.....



ARCHANGEL 'AMBASSADORS' IN BOSTON, LINGS.

Sam Crook shows off the trophy presented to the club.

L to R. Sveta the interpreter, Sam, Alexander and Igor who appears
 to be more interested in his new N.R.C. tie. Story on page 18.

A RAW DEAL FOR AMERICAN MERCHANT SEAMEN

In the last edition of Northern Light there appeared an article titled A Raw Deal for American Merchant Seamen", written by Virgil Sharp of Oregon, U.S.A. Please allow me to take issue with many of the statements and contents made by Mr. Sharp. His vitriolic, and mostly mistaken, comments are personally offensive to me as a retired member of the U.S. Navy and a three-year veteran of the U.S. Naval Armed Guard (1942 to 1944).

Before launching into a rebuttal of Mr. Sharp's letters, I note that he fails to establish any basis for his "expertise". Who is Mr. Sharp? What experience does he have? When did he serve, and on what ships and in what capacity? Certainly, your readers deserve to know something about the author of this highly critical and inflammatory letter.

Firstly, Mr. Sharp states that gun crews were placed on American merchant ships to protect "... us from German or Jap (sic) submarines". A review of the existing literature reveals that Armed Guard crews were assigned to defend the ships and cargoes from enemy forces and certainly not to protect merchant seamen or to take offensive actions against enemy naval forces. Indeed, many merchant seamen volunteered to be members of the gun crews and thank God they did as the numbers of Armed Guard personnel aboard most ships were numerically inadequate to fully man the guns. Numerous authors attest to this and my own experience indicates likewise.

Secondly, Mr. Sharp writes that "We all know that enemy submarines do not come to the surface to go one-on-one with an armed merchantman". Of course they didn't as gun battles on the surface would be suicidal for the submarine, especially during daylight hours. However, there are numerous examples of German submarines surfacing, especially at night, to fire torpedoes. Indeed, several books and articles written and published by German submarine Captains and officers reveal that they much preferred surface shots whenever the opportunity arose as far greater accuracy could be achieved. We of the Armed Guard were well aware that our guns could do nothing against a submerged submarine but we (and the merchant sailors) nevertheless stood long, arduous lookout watches in the hope of catching a submarine wholly or partially surfaced. Why else would there be some five to eight lookout watches around the clock on most Liberty ships. Certainly not for the purposes of navigation!

Thirdly, Mr. Sharp states that naval armed guard crews were "completely useless against enemy aircraft" and that "...a determined enemy will fly through any amount of flak to hit a target". These two statements are blatantly false as any anti-aircraft gunner knows. A heavy cover of flak and anti-aircraft fire is a highly effective deterrent against high level, low level and/or torpedo bombers as evidenced in numerous battles at sea in and around Europe and, indeed, the Battle of Britain. To follow Mr. Sharp's logic, you Brits surely wasted a lot of ammo defending London and other cities.

Mr. Sharp reveals his lack of knowledge regarding anti-aircraft ammunition and the methods of laying down anti-aircraft fire from three inch and five inch guns. He writes that the AA shells burst ahead or behind the enemy plane but almost never right on it. Mr. Sharp is quite correct. However, had he any knowledge whatsoever he would know that we gunners, except in the case of machine gun fire, never expected the shells to actually hit the aircraft. That is why we used timed fuzes or proximity fuzes in the three and five inch guns. Before making broad and incorrect statements aimed at knowledgeable readers, perhaps Mr. Sharp should acquire at least a modicum of knowledge about his topic.

Mr. Sharp claims he made a number of voyages along the east coast of the U.S. during the years of 1941 to 1944 and never saw "... a navy plane or surface ship, barrage balloon, blimp or any thing resembling our navy at any time on our east coast." I, of course cannot dispute Mr. Sharp's alleged experiences as I was not with him. However, I do suggest that he must have spent almost all of

his time elsewhere than on deck! Admittedly, the U.S. coast was ill-prepared in latter 1941 and 1942 and some coastal convoys and sole sailings were not adequately protected. But to suggest that there were no U.S. naval forces operating in U.S. coastal waters is sheer nonsense. My experience in the U.S. Naval Armed Guard indicates otherwise. And for the reader's information, my father (Perry C. Joyce, CSM, USN) was aboard the USS Greer (DD-145) and along with two destroyer squadrons that operated out of Iceland and Bermuda, patrolled the east coast from 1940 to 1943. And lastly, the RN and RCN had a number of smaller ships that, thankfully, augmented U.S. naval forces on our east coast in 1941-1942. And the above is to say nothing of the aircraft that flew many patrols out of Lakehurst, N.J. and elsewhere.

I choose to at least partially ignore Mr. Sharp's comments regarding the number of destroyers operating under the command of the U.S. Eastern Sea Frontier. Mr. Sharp should also be corrected in his belief that Admiral E. J. King had operational and direct control over the U.S. forces on the U.S. east coast. Admiral King was Chief of Naval Operations during World War II and had far more to concern him than one theatre of operations. Mr. Sharp's apparent belief that Admiral King once said, "F--- the Merchant Marine" is nothing more than spreading unsubstantiated rumour and, as such is resented by me and, I suspect, many of your other readers. Please ask Mr. Sharp to be more circumspect in the future!

Another example of the destructive criticism evidenced by Mr. Sharp's letter can be found when he reiterates those nasty comments about U.S. naval personnel making disparaging comments about the pay earned by merchant sailors during WWII and further alleged remarks that U.S. naval personnel accused merchant sailors of avoiding trips to combat areas. I have no doubt that these comments were made as I heard them on very rare occasions. But, for the most part, we in the U.S. Naval Armed Guard had a great amount of respect for our merchantmen/shipmates as evidenced by my experience on four merchant ships. And for the information of your American readers, numerous members of the USN Armed Guard WWII Veteran's organisation did our best to assist U.S. merchant seamen to acquire veteran status in the U.S. Since we are all veterans of WWII, it behoves us to cooperate, interact for our collective good and not dredge up past, and rare, unpleasanties.

Mr. Sharp apparently feels that the U.S. Navy spent untold millions of dollars and a tremendous amount of time and effort to recruit, train and organise the U.S. Naval Armed Guard solely for the purposes of publicity. Pardon me but this is utter nonsense and really humourous when one thinks about it. The U.S. Navy Armed Guard was a relatively small organisation and virtually unknown throughout WWII. Therefore, I ask Mr. Sharp where the publicity value was. Also, the entire armed forces of the U.S. got tremendous publicity during WWII and were supported by 100% of the U.S. population so why bother to engender "publicity" by establishing the U.S. Naval Armed Guard? Please Mr. Sharp, your logic escapes me.

In reading Mr. Sharp's letter (for the umpteenth time), it is readily apparent that he is quite bitter and wholly antagonistic towards the U.S. Navy for some reason known only to him. I regret this and will be the first to admit that too many errors were made by many military commands by all of the allies. However, to attribute non-existent errors and faux faux where none exists serves no useful purpose - especially in the manner employed by Mr. Sharp.

I realize, that this is a long letter and I could go on to further refute other statements. However, most readers will easily see that Mr. Sharp has written from a negative frame of reference and I am sorry if he has given you Brits the wrong impression. We, collectively, do not need that.

I SINCERELY HOPE AND URGE THAT YOU PUBLISH THIS LETTER IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF "NORTHERN LIGHT" PLEASE!

Vernon H. Joyce.
(N°. 1263)

"A RAW DEAL FOR AMERICAN MERCHANT SEAMEN - a reply"

In Northern Light N° 24 on page 11, Virgil Sharp has much to say about the U.S. Navy. Readers might be interested in the following:

I served in the corvette HMS LARKSPUR from building until she paid off in December 1941. Being interested in her eventual fate I have done some research and found that she was transferred to the U.S. Navy for 3 years. The 'Dictionary of American Fighting Ships', Vol.II, 1963, published by the Navy Dept. states the following - and I quote:

"FURY was built in 1941 by Fleming & Ferguson, Paisley, Scotland as HMS LARKSPUR; transferred to the United States 17 March 1942.....to Brooklyn N.Y. where she escorted convoys on the route between Key West Fla. and Norfolk Island Va., then was based at Tomkinsville, Staten Island, N.Y. for service escorting convoys between New York, Key West and Guantanamo, Cuba.

As Snorkel-equipped German Submarines made their last forays of the War into the Western Atlantic, FURY interrupted convoy escort duty to make antisubmarine patrols in the approaches to New York Harbour in February and again in April 1945.on 1 August, FURY sailed for Harwich, England, where she decommissioned 22 August 1945 and returned to the British the same day".

So you will see there was at least one Escort on the U.S. East Coast!

As a matter of interest, having "rejoined the Fleet" she was eventually sold to a private company in Hong Kong, renamed LARKLOCK and was finally broken up in Hong Kong in 1953.

Cyril Elles N° 125.

.....
MORE RESPONSE TO VIRGIL SHARP'S "RAW DEAL" LETTER.

An excerpt from a letter from Ian A Millar of Kernersville U.S.A.:

.....Although I have known Virgil Sharp for a number of years now and we are good friends I cannot say that I think his letter contributes to the over-all goodwill that most of us are seeking. We all know that there were problems during the war and that our Navy did not do well by our merchant seamen, nor those of other countries that had the misfortune to sail off our East Coast, but nothing can be gained by this name calling now. Such should state that the harangue should be addressed to the Navy Brass not the rank and file. I know from my years in this effort to bring recognition to everyone that every US type that reads that letter will take offense to it out of Espirit de Corps as it were, in fact most do not have the knowledge to know about the short comings of the U.S. Navy during the war in regards to merchant seamen. I hope that no one takes the letter too seriously, I am sure we can find those with an axe to grind in every service.

The topic is now closed - Editor.

.....
THE COMMODORE'S SIGNAL STAFF

From Ken Davey (N° 855): ".....to date I have seen no reference to "Commodore's signal staff" in Northern Light. We were present on every convoy so I put pen to paper and a dotting granddaughter typed up the following" -

For every convoy that sailed during the war, whether in the English Channel, East coast or North-about from Forth to Clyde, Oban (or reverse) or deep-sea - Atlantic, Arctic, Mediterranean, etc. there would be a Commodore and every Commodore would have his signal staff.

For ocean going convoys the staff usually consisted of a Yeoman, Killick, three signalmen and a P.O. or Leading Telegraphist and in addition one or two signalmen might be deployed individually, in other ships of the convoy to ensure that the Commodore's commands were carried out correctly and expeditiously.

Apart from a brief spell in a naval examination vessel out of Liverpool in 1940 and some four or five months in the DEVOAN, a B6 escort group frigate, my six years of war were spent almost exclusively in convoy signal staff duties.

That I survived despite three torpedoings, two trips to Archangel and one to

Murmansk and being involved in the Normandy landings, I put down to good fortune or a providence that looks after inebriates and children.

Living conditions varied immensely for convoy signal staff from trip to trip, from the luxury of a cabin in such ships as the HILARY or MONARCH OF BURMUDA or to slinging one's hammock in the chain locker or cargo space of some grotty coal-burning tramp steamer. The reception of the ships company also varied from whole hearted welcome to resentment by some merchant seamen that they were obliged to give hospitality to members of the rival service.

Generally however the latter were only a small minority and I enjoyed the time spent in such ships as U.S.Armed Guard CARTAGO, the AFGANISTAN manned by an all Asian crew in which I spent twenty one days and lived almost exclusively on curry dishes, and a Swedish ship whose officers were so impressed with my ability to decipher flag signals and read lamps that they begged me to desert from the Navy and stay aboard as they were onward bound for South America and Australia.

On my visit to Murmansk I remember little except that we suffered air attacks almost continuously throughout Christmas Day and eventually sat down to a so-called Christmas dinner on Boxing Day evening. During the attacks a Russian plane was shot down and our Bofors gun crew were blamed. Russian officials came on board and orders were given that we were not to fire again whilst in port.

Archangel was different. There I made many friends including Tanya, who unfortunately fell foul of the authorities and disappeared, Sophia who tried to teach me Russian and dancing at the International club, and the family who ran the ferry which plied between Archangel, Solumbala and Harbaka. I loved the evening trips when they had time to sing Russian ballads to the accompaniment of their balalaikas. I also liked the meals at the Intourist Hotel, the football at the stadium where I played for a 'Navy' team against Archangel Dynamos.

There are so many memories one could write a book not only of Russia but of Gibraltar, Alexandria, St Johns, Freetown, etc and of course the hardships at sea but that would be "swinging the lamp".

Ken Davey.

.....
A ROUND TRIP IN "INGLEFIELD"

An extract from a book which I have attempted to write for publication.
J. W. JOHNSON - Barrow in Furness.

I had joined the destroyer INGLEFIELD at Hull on 3rd November 1942, we proceeded to Iceland to join a convoy bound for Russia. INGLEFIELD commanded by Commander West was the senior ship of the escort, four further destroyers completed the escort of forty merchant ships. Unknown to us however at this time was the fact that we of our convoy was in fact a decoy force, paving the way for a vastly greater number of ships, making up a convoy which was to follow a few days behind.

This was the convoy in which the ACHATES was lost, and ONSLOW created history, added to which the convoy scattered. Returning to the theme of my story, including INGLEFIELD our convoy and escorts had an uneventful trip, that is until we arrived outside Polyarnoe Bay, our ultimate destination in the early evening, only to be informed that we could not enter harbour precincts until the following day. Thus, there were forty-five ships steaming up and down all night. I have to mention the fact that it was Xmas Eve 1942. As we were of course at Action Stations, the time was spent singing carols in order to entertain ourselves, this I believe helped to alleviate the sense of fear that was always in evidence. We entered the bay next day and INGLEFIELD tied up at the wooden jetty.. This resulted in leave being granted to half of the crew. As one taking part in this leave, I must record that it was the most bizarre run ashore in my considerable experience. Lining up ashore we were marched under armed guard to the "Red Fleet Club". We were shown a film, I understood it was one of the

very early editions of the industry, it was titled "Alexander the Great", we pieced the story together in spite of the numerous breakdowns. At the conclusion of the film we were marched back to the ship.

Next day we went alongside the oiler, manned of course by females, fraternising was out of the question, even if desirable. I come now to the main reason for writing this item. On completion of refuelling, we cast off. Catastrophe! We have wire wrapped around our screw, this is going to present a huge problem, destroyers do not carry divers, there are no big ships in port, therefore we must rely on the Russians to assist, this they did. The local Russian Navy authorities sent for two divers, I believe to Moscow, within twenty-four hours two arrived. I must remind readers that it was late December therefore bitterly cold. To our astonishment, the two divers came aboard, stripped naked, dived over the side, swam around the ship, came inboard, donned their suits, went over, and after what seemed to we watchers a lifetime, freed the screw. When they climbed inboard they were blue, it took quite a deal of "Pussers" to change their colouring. That was one of the most astonishing but courageous acts I saw all through the war.

While this was going on, our ships in ballast and the rest of the escorts have left and are heading for Iceland. INGLEFIELD put on speed in order to resume her position with them. Of course we were still closed up at Action Stations. At around 2300hrs we are addressed by our Captain over the tannoy, he informed us of the action being taken by the escorts of the large convoy I have referred to, which was following on behind as (this incidentally being the first intimation of its existence to us). He tells us that he knows of the action, then informs us that the scene of the battle is moving towards us at thirty knots and that we are moving towards it at the same speed. Don anti-flash gear on all guns, I am Captain of the 4" loaded with star shell. The time 0200, the crew waiting, then on goes the searchlight, bated breath, caught in the beam is a merchant ship, then another. It is not with a little relief that we realise that we have caught up with our own charges. We reach the area of North Cape, silent routine is ordered on all ships. On reaching Iceland we learn that our own ships have come through two sets of U-boats lying in wait.

.....
CONVOY EXPERIENCE WANTED!!!

Morgiana P. Halley, a Ph.D. candidate in English Cultural Tradition at the University of Sheffield, is writing a thesis about the Merchant Navy and its military escorts in Convoys during World War II.

She is interested in conducting interviews with seafarers and ex-seafarers who have convoy experiences they would be willing to share with her. If you would consent to an interview, please drop a line to:

Morgiana P Halley, c/o CECTAL, University of Sheffield S10 2TN
.....

ANNUAL DINNER DANCE AT HARROGATE 26 OCTOBER 1991

Members are reminded that all room reservations at the Granby Hotel must be made on the booking form supplied by Les Jones - not by phone or letter. If you require a new form please ring Les on 0257 791632

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THE "FORGOTTEN" CONVOY

I have been re-reading with interest the American report on "The Forgotten Convoy" in the March issue of Northern Light N°.23. Unfortunately the writer omitted to mention that "The Forgotten Convoy" (JW53) which spent 1943 in North Russia was not only made up of seven American ships and two Panamanian ships quoted but also included ten British ships: OCEAN FREEDOM, EMPIRE KINSMAN, DOVER HILL, BRITISH GOVERNOR, LLANDAFF, EMPIRE FORTUNE, ATLANTIC, EMPIRE SCOTT, EMPIRE GALLIARD, EMPIRE PORTIA; one Norwegian ship, MARATHON and one Dutch ship PIETER DE HOOGE.

I am surprised that the writer has forgotten this as when we were in Russia we all got on well with each other in the International Clubs and visited each other's ships and helped each other when required.

We received from the American stores, one packet of Lucky Strike cigarettes per man each week and this kept us in roubles for the time we were there. On the other hand when food got very scarce, as it did in the White Sea area, we had stocks of lime juice which was issued daily to keep scurvy at bay (Echoes of Nelson's time). The Americans did not carry lime juice and when their food went below a certain level we were able to give them supplies to keep them going. Even though they called us Limeys they were glad to get it.

Food was very scarce and after we had eaten all our Hard Tack (salt meat) we lived on Spam for a long time. Breakfast was fried Spam and black bread, lunch was diced Spam heated with rice as we had no vegetables, tea was a slice of Spam and a slice of bread and supper was a cup of cocoa out of which we first had to fish the cockroaches. Sometimes we obtained a cabbage in the villages and made cabbage soup which tasted terrible but we ate it to supply some of the vitamins we were lacking.

When I arrived home in mid-December and was given my leave plus survivor's leave, my mother trying to fatten up her very skinny son, told me that as a treat she had obtained, no doubt at great bother to herself, a tin of very scarce American tinned meat. When it arrived on the table, you have no doubt guessed, it was a large slice of Spam, but being me I ate it, told Mother I had enjoyed it and thanked her for saving some of her rations!

David B. Craig.
S.S. DOVER HILL.

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TAXI TO H.M.S. "BELFAST"

Norman Batchelor and I arrived at Waterloo Station where we met Frank Green en-route to BELFAST on June 20th - having a bit of time to spare our thoughts turned to refreshment - this we carried out - two pints and a wedge.

Next operation - hail a taxi - in we get - off we go.

"Wot are those badges on yer jackets about?" said the young Cockney taxi driver - aged about 28 - he was referring to the N.R.C. Blazer Badges - so we told him a bit about it.

The British Government never did recognise you fellers, did they" he said. "My ole man is a Burma Star man yer know"? By this time we arrive at the BELFAST - out we get to pay the fare - the driver wouldn't hear of it - "No" he said "you have this one on me - have a good day and enjoy yerselves".

What a nice gesture from a London taxi driver - thought it was worth a mention - he didn't even accept a tip!

Eddie Beard.

.....

H.M.S. SCYLLA - PQ 18.
.....

Photocopies of signals displayed on the Canteen Flat Notice Board after PQ 18. Some light-fingered matelot 'lifted' them to show to his grand-children one day.

TO REAR ADMIRAL (D) (who was using SCYLLA as his flag ship) FROM
COMMODORE OF CONVOY:

BEFORE YOU LEAVE US, I WISH TO THANK YOU AND ALL YOUR FORCE VERY MUCH INDEED FOR THE GREAT EFFORT YOU HAVE MADE FOR OUR PROTECTION. DO NOT LET ANYONE OF THE SCREEN BLAME HIMSELF BECAUSE A COUPLE OF PLANES AND A COUPLE OF SUBMARINES GOT THROUGH. THE SCALE OF THESE ATTACKS MUST HAVE BEEN IMMENSE, AND THOSE FROM THE AIR HAD TO BE SEEN TO BE BELIEVED. YOU HAD SOME NARROW SHAVES AND I HOPE YOU WILL GET HOME SAFELY AND REAP THE REWARDS YOU SO RICHLY DESERVE. IT IS GOOD FOR A "HAS BEEN" TO SEE THE DESTROYER SERVICE GOES ON AS IT ALWAYS HAS DONE, AND IS SO ABLY LED AND COMMANDED BY YOURSELF. ONCE MORE, MY OWN AND PQ 18'S THANKS TO YOU ALL.

TO COMMODORE FROM R.A.(D).

WE ALL THANK YOU FOR YOUR MOST APPRECIATIVE SIGNAL. IT IS FINE TO HAVE SAILED WITH YOUR GALLANT CONVOY. PLEASE CONVEY TO THEM IN DUE COURSE, MY AND OUR ADMIRATION FOR THEM. THE HOME FLEET DESTROYERS AND MYSELF WOULD HAVE YOU FEEL, IT IS THE LIKES OF YOU THAT TAUGHT THE LIKES OF US, AND IF WE MEET WITH YOUR APPROBATION WE ARE PROUD. MAY YOU FINISH THE COURSE SUCCESSFULLY IS OUR WISH TO YOU.

Submitted by John Squires (N° 1136)

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The following letter was received via our Naval Attache in Moscow. Perhaps a member (with Sea Cadet connections) might like to reply to it:



**ГОРЬКОВСКИЙ ГОРОДСКОЙ
ДВОРЕЦ ПИОНЕРОВ И ШКОЛЬНИКОВ
ИМЕНИ В. П. ЧКАЛОВА**
(улица Пискунова, 39)

Dear Friends!

In August 1991 our country will celebrate the 50th anniversary since the time when the allied troops from Great Britain and U.S. started their mission of escorting transports in the years of World War II.

In those combat voyages our fellow townsmen - teenagers - took part. They were ship's boys who volunteered into the ranks of the Soviet Northern Fleet at the age of 15 - 16. To them our fight Glory Museum of the Navy Ship's Boys is devoted. It is situated at the Pioneer Palace in the city of Nizhny Novgorod.

Nizhny Novgorod is an ancient Russian city. It is very beautiful, standing at the site of confluence of the two great Russian rivers - the Volga and the Oka. It has a glorious history, this year it will celebrate its 770th anniversary. In

our city the world famous Nizhegorodskaya Yarmarka (Fair) is held annually

With the proposal of sincere friendship we would like to exchange search materials on combat voyages of friendship in the North in the years of the World War II. We ask you to be so kind as to search for and gather materials (photos and documents) on those people who took part in the North escorts. We'll be really happy to get some new materials for our museum.

We invite you to our city, to our Pioneer Palace, to the schools of our city.

Let the friendship of our grandfathers hardened in the united fights go on in our united peace-loving actions.

Long live their feat of arms memory!

The Director of the City Pioneer Palace:
The Chairman of the Regional (N.Novgorod)
Council of the Navy Ship's Boys Veterans:
Glory Museum of the Council of the Fight
Glory Museum of the Navy Ship's Boys:
The members of the searching groups:

J. Ben
J. Ben
J. Ben

Our address: 603005, Pioneer Palace, Piskunov Str. 39, Nizhny Novgorod, USSR/CCCP

MORE LETTERS

Dear Shipmate Dick,

The 23rd Destroyer Flotilla ("S Boats") - H.M.S. SAUMAREZ, SAVAGE, SCORPION, SERAPIS, STORD and SVENNER (both Norwegian crews) and SWIFT - had a lively reunion at H.M.S. NELSON, Portsmouth on 8 June 1991.

Around 100 crew members (many who had not met each other since 1945) attended with wives and friends, Former ships' captains Read-Admiral Balfour (Scourge), Captain Gower (Swift), and Lieut-Commander Walmsley (Saumarez) were there - and eight of the SCHARNHORST survivors (thirty five survived from a crew of around two thousand) came along as special guests. Four of the "S Boats" had been responsible for the final, decisive torpedo attacks on the German Battle-cruiser.

Towards the end of the evening the senior representative of the "Sharnhorst Association" read an address in German, a translation of which is attached herewith. The highlight of the evening was when the former destroyer crew members sang their version of the song "Lili Marlene" (SAVAGE, SCORPION and SCOURGE version).

The evening, unanimously agreed to have been a great success, was organised by Billy Swift (ex-SCOURGE).

Yours sincerely JAMES HINTON. (SCOURGE).

TRANSLATION OF SPEECH

Admiral Sir, Gentlemen Officers, Ladies and Gentlemen, Comrades.

In the name of the "Scharnhorst - Board - Comradeship" I would like to thank you for your invitation to the 3rd Reunion of the 23rd Destroyer Flotilla.

My special thanks go to Bill Swift. His efforts made the meeting between two former opponents possible. Thank you, Bill!

We followed your invitation with great pleasure and, some of you, and some of our survivors may have the opportunity to talk about the events December 26, 1943. With the "Scharnhorst" there lost 1932 Officers and crew their lives.

Your c in c of the Home Fleet, Admiral Frazer, testified: our sailors did their duty as soldiers are expected to do. We will never forget those who lost their lives at the Northern Cape.

But instead of looking backwards, I would prefer to look forward, forward into the future and there I am very hopeful. If former enemies can become friends it makes us all hopeful, or doesn't it? Sailors are specialists in knots and splices. Let us find the right knot, and the right splice for our friendship so that it never will break again. There are such a lot of problems all over the world and, I think not finally we are asked to stand together helping to find a

way to solve these problems. But the most important thing is, let us stand together to avoid a 3rd World War, let us fight for peace.

The "Scharnhorst Family" still exists with 350 family members. In their name and, in the name of our delegation present today - including our wives of course - I want to say thank you all for your hearty welcome, and your hospitality here in Portsmouth.

Convinced we have not met one another for the last time, I would say: "See you again in Germany".

Thank you !!!

Bordkameradschaft

"Scharnhorst"



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A LETTER OF SPECIAL INTEREST FOR ALL POMPEY RATINGS

Dear R.D.Squires,

I wonder if you could tell me what happened to H.M.S. HIGHLANDER? We went from Londonderry to St Johns, Newfoundland, this was our base for the Murmansk, Archangel convoy runs and I think it was the worst of the lot..... I live all by myself, I have no kin - just me in a two bedroom flat 9 stories up a 17 story block of flats. I hope you will publish my name, number and ship in the magazine (It is, on page 42, Memb N° 1259). I have written to one shipmate and I hope he drops me a line, I would like to meet old shipmates. See, I am all alone, I am 75 years old but I can sure get about. I dress well and like all sailors look smart and clean. So if you know of somebody who would like to write, I would appreciate it. So, till I hear from you or somebody, I am sir, old shipmate.

George Daniel P/KX 94770.

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THE FOUNDATION OF N.R.C. - WHEN DID IT ALL START?

Dear Dick,

I wonder how many of N.R.C. can remember the first reunion of Naval Parties 100 and 200? Way back in 1947 a reunion of men who were in the two naval parties met in a first class London hotel. It was attended by all ranks, during the meeting speeches were made and it was decided to make it an annual event. In 1948 we met again but the numbers were reduced. It was then decided that as most of us were making new careers and many of us new families, it was decided to put the thing on ice.

And so it was, then of course in 1984 Chris Tye advertised in Navy News, looking for his 'oppo'. The seed of N.R.C. in its present form was born. At the first meeting on H.M.S. Belfast it was decided to make Chris Tye the Secretary - for who better than a R.N. Writer? 'He was the only one with a pen'. I never think of a single Founder but a group of Founder members. The late Bill Loades (N° 4) being the keenest member.

But never mind who it was, the club in its present form is second to none. Friendships have been formed, we were not all shipmates as such but bound together by the unforgettable experience.

Long may it live.

Sincerely,

Ernie Skelton (N° 14) (Vice Chairman)

WHO KILLED NINA ?

By Tom Speirs (N°32)

Situated about 2 miles inland from Vaenga there were eight of us - a P.O. Tel., 6 Telegraphists and a Stoker who took care of the 'Donkey Engine' for emergency power. We were billeted in a hut built into the rising ground and in winter, (which never seemed to end) was completely covered in snow.

The events about which I feel bound to relate after a lapse of 47 years, are perhaps a confession to an unlawful killing. I did not commit the crime nor will I name the perpetrator of the act. Suffice to say that we were conspirators in the act which was mutually agreed.

Nina, a Russian female, joined us after an evening at the Red Army Club. She had no fixed abode and tagged along with us to the Meacon site, presumably for a meal. However, she remained with us for the few remaining months of our stay in the U.S.S.R.

Although she never wore make-up, she was a lovely lass and she soon found a way into all of our hearts. We gave her a bed of her own - no Hanky-Panky from any of us I can assure you! Indeed, I would venture to guess that she was innocent of any sexual actions.

She showed her affections to each of us in turn but, she had a preference for 'Stokes' who was the better cook and whose meals were more palatable than the indifferent meals served up by the Telegraphists (who have never been renowned for their culinary success!)

Sometimes she could be a right bitch, but on other occasions she would be as affectionate as any young girl in the U.K. Anyway I will not bore you with any further description of our feelings towards her, and will now get to the point of my story which ends in tragedy.

When we were informed that the Meacon Station (at which this all took place) was to be closed late in 1944 we made a decision which I regret even to this day. It was unanimously agreed that rather than return Nina to her Russian compatriots, who would no doubt punish her for defecting to the British, she would be better dead.

Consequently we put her to death, shot by a .303 bullet and we interred her in an unmarked grave in the wilds of Vaenga. You may wonder if her death remains on our consciences or if we will be answerable on the final day of judgement but -----

Eh? Oh sorry shipmates! ----- I forgot to mention that Nina was a small lady dog of mixed breed. Rather than set her loose on our departure, when she would possibly starve, her life would have been intolerable anyway because there were packs of dogs which roamed the district and 'gang bangs' were the norm. We could never subject her to that!

R. I. P. NINA !

SO WHAT THE HELL WAS THE MEACON STATION ?

Having read the above story and knowing that some of you will be saying Meacon Station? What's that? Well, here is a little more about life there and about our role.

Water was delivered in a large barrel on a horse drawn cart - in winter on a sled. When the barrel was delivered in winter we had to break the ice on the aperture on top and carry the water indoors by buckets. Our fuel consisted of wooden blocks which were also delivered by horse and cart. The Russian driver was always pleased when he visited us because he was always given a few packets of fags which were a welcome relief to us as we couldn't stand the stench of the Russian "Mahorka" which was smoked in rolled up newspaper!

MEACON ??? continued.

Tinned food can be extremely monotonous and in particular our Bete Noir was tinned potatoes - a sloppy mess which defied all attempts to be made palatable. In fact when we collected provisions from the store in Vaenga, we used to tip out the tins and substitute a wicker jar of rum at each end of the box! This exchange was much appreciated by all except Jack Dusty who had to balance his stocks and found that he was rum deficient and tinned potatoes surplus!

We all became adept at ski-ing, playing cards with stakes of cigarettes instead of money which was useless anyway! Eventually these cigarettes consisted of about 1/4 inch of tobacco in the middle of the paper. We also had a dartboard which was placed between large portraits of Churchill and Stalin. By a curious coincidence, the latter's photograph seemed to be the target of badly aimed darts.

This horrified some Red Army girls, who used to visit us mainly for a free meal, and when we missed the dartboard, we accidentally hit Stalin with a wayward dart. Incidentally, they went a bundle on tinned food which probably made up for the hard life which they had. They lacked all the necessities of hygiene and frequently asked us for the packing used to protect the larger radio valves, presumably for periodic use.

Whenever we encountered English speaking Russians, we were forever asked when the Second Front would take place - this during the time when our troops were forcing their way through Italy. It was at the Red Army Club that I first saw two Red Army officers dancing together to the strains of "By Mir Bis Du Chain". I wonder how many of us in Naval Party 100/200 can ever forget the perpetual sounds of "Seeneye Escromnee Platorchik" which regaled our ears at every turn!

To get back to Meaconing, I should explain that our aim was to confuse the enemy when spotting signals were made by radio of our convoys by aircraft and submarines. Our task was to tune in on these signals and simultaneously blast them out on our powerful transmitter, thus giving a totally different bearing. There is no way of saying how successful we were but from 1943 onwards, the attacks on Northern Convoys significantly decreased.

So, how did we cope with the stark living conditions? Well, it was with some difficulty because:

- (1). We were completely isolated for long periods from any other human contacts.
- (2). We had no recourse but to eat entirely out of tins. We did however scrounge fresh vegetables and meat from some of the convoy escorts.
- (3). It was bloody cold sometimes, especially when we were unable to get the fire going because of wooden block fuel being completely waterlogged.
- (4). After a spell at Murmansk W/T (WUK) I returned home on the carrier HMS NAIRANA but since then my wife and I have returned to visit Moscow and Leningrad. Quite different places as compared with the wilds of Vaenga.

Tom Speirs (N°32)

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THE EDITOR IS IN THE RATTLE!!!

On page 25 in the last edition I said that Eric Whyte was in the Fleet Canteen with a Wren. I should have said Fleet Cinema. And on page 32 I gave Ken Lingard's address as Broadside Avenue - it should be 9 Brookside Avenue, Wraysbury, Staines, Middlesex TW19 5HB.

Sorry Chief - I'll do Jankers but PLEASE dont stop my TOT. - PLEASE.

THE SHORE PATROL

We were wandering round Chatham
Like the way we used to do
Arguing what pub to choose
To have a pint or two.

It was raining cats and dogs that night
But we all said "What the Heck"
Our oilskins were quite watertight
And buttoned to the neck.

Now, buried in our pockets
Our hands were warm and dry
When without a word of warning
A patrol came passing by.

"Hands out of pockets you lot"
The snarling order came
And who dared, those among us
Not to acquiesce the same.

But when we turned the corner
The rain was now intense
We put our hands in pockets
It seemed like common sense.

It was but minutes later
The same patrol appeared
The P.O. thus confronted us
"Gimme Yer Names" he sneered.

So we ended up doing Jankers
Number Sevens as I recall
Our kits were laid out in splendour
In the First Dog Watch, and all!

Now the moral of my story
Although it seems so dense
Is to carry out an order
When you know it lacks good sense.

Tom Speirs.

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WHY "DOG WATCHES"?

During the very successful visit by N.R.C. members to Jersey our generous host Bob Smale asked me why Dog Watches were called. Bowled middle stump! I hadn't a clue, but have done some research on my return.

The Oxford Companion to Ships and the Sea says of dog watches:-

"How they came by this name is not known; they were certainly in use by the 17th century. One suggestion that they were called dog watches because they were curtailed, though ingenious, does not appear to have any foundation in fact".

The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology sounds more convincing to me. It says:-

"In dog-sleep, dog-watch, there is a reference to the light or fitful sleep of a dog".

I trust that "fitful sleep" referred to those off watch, otherwise we would have been in mortal danger from icebergs, let alone U-boats. But if so, it's a possible derivation.

Can anyone else be dogged enough to get his (or her) dog teeth into this canine conundrum?

Stuart Roberts V.Pres.

ARCTIC CAMPAIGN MEMORIAL TRUST - report.
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WORLD WAR TWO
ARCTIC CAMPAIGN
MEMORIAL TRUST

MURMANSK MEMORIAL: Many problems and difficulties have plagued this project, not least the distances involved. Our Naval Attache Captain Mike Caswell RN, has been most helpful and so has our own Dick Squires. It now looks as if all will be in place in time for the celebrations in late August 1991.

PORTSMOUTH CATHEDRAL WINDOWS: Two cheques have been sent to secure the installation of one of the windows. We are still seeking funding to secure the installation of the second window which 'gives thanks from all of us who returned'.

BOOK OF REMEMBRANCE: Plans are going well, our first will be sited in either St. Giles Church in London or in the Cadet Training Ship in Colchester. Many other locations will be considered and we would like to have suggestions for possible sites. Churches and Cathedrals will be the prime locations. Ships Associations should be approached and told of the plans for these books. When the plans are further advanced, the "TRUST" will ask the associations for their details for inclusion in the pages of what could be something very special to those following that a great contribution to freedom was made in the Arctic Campaign WW2.

EXCHANGE VISITS: The first token payment by "THE TRUST" to a young Russian from Murmansk visiting Britain and the West for the first time. Plans are now being made to exchange 10 pupils and teachers from Murmansk in 1992.

FINANCE: As ACMT has now been operating for two years, accounts have to be sent to the Charity Commission. We will be able to report that we have met all of our obligations and objectives. The contributions to "THE TRUST" have been most encouraging and indicate that continued support can be expected.

TRUSTEES & COMMITTEE: Although changes have been made, we are in a better position than ever. To replace our dear shipmate Les Lawrence, we have appointed his daughter Christine Hepworth. To replace Kenneth Clarke, who wished to resign to make way for a younger person - John Clarke (no relation) has been appointed. John's father served on convoys to Russia and was killed in action. Judy Freeman is a new addition to the board of trustees. Judy's late father was in Naval Party 100 and she is also Secretary to Captain F.A.Collins on BELFAST. Youth is of great importance if we are to continue the ACMT. These new Trustees are much younger than the original team. Our committee is an open one and people are invited to attend meetings if they have something they wish to contribute, this is proving to be most successful.

PATRONS: Once again HRH Prince Phillip Duke of Edinburgh has been approached.

SPONSORS: Several new companies have been approached and we hope for some new backing soon.

PUBLICITY: ITV's News at Ten recently, the South Coast Times, Potters Bar Times and soon a national Sunday Newspaper, may not be much yet, but even this small amount has produced extra donations and members for North Russia and Russian Convoy clubs. Anything that you can arrange with your local media is worthwhile.

YACHT CLUBS: We would like someone to take responsibility for this operation which could prove to be a very worthwhile one. Details from Ron Wren 070755846.

SLOPS: We are putting the original idea on hold for now, it is still something that we want to go ahead with but we have a new project that is thought to be more appealing, if it all works out well we will develop the range.

THE "ACMT" EXCLUSIVE SHIRT (see details): We need your maximum support on this project, a proportion goes to support THE TRUST as you make a contribution when buying a very nice shirt.

continued.

A.C.M.T.REPORT continued.

"JUST NUISANCE" (the dog) - ANNIVERSARY PUBLICATION: To celebrate the Golden anniversary of this canine Able Seaman who was based in Simonstown S.A. "THE TRUST" has produced the full story with photographs. This remarkable dog, friend to sailors in South Africa during WW2 is unique in the history of animals. Those of you who met him, will know he was a proper Navy Able Seaman with Pay Book, Hammock and Rations. You can read all about him in the book "Just Nuisance" post free at only £3.50. All proceeds go to ACMT. Printing, distribution and postage is to be paid by our Midlans sponsor DeVoyle Litho for the first 100 to NRC and RCC members.

SCHARNHORST ACTION PLOT: John Beardmore has kindly made his personal copy of this historic document available for professional copying, to be made available to our members, with part of the proceeds going to ACMT. As I understand it, a very good job is being done by the printers, the price has yet to be fixed but it will be very reasonable.

R.N.A's: When they are made aware of the needs of "THE TRUST", R.N.A's have been very generous to us. As the overall objective is to honour our shipmates lost in the Arctic, it is right and proper that Naval Clubs should be given the opportunity to help. Please tell your club about A.C.M.T.

FUND RAISING: The Trustees would like to thank everyone who has helped the TRUST by donating cash, time, services and materials, it is because of this help that we are meeting our objectives. THANK YOU ALL.

DONATIONS from Edition N°24 to 24th July 1991:

A stamped addressed envelope would be appreciated with postal donations if a receipt is required.

Which club? Sometimes the list seems to indicate that the donations come from only one club or association. Often the donor belongs to several clubs and listings do not show this unless they are specifically shown:

- J.OSBORNE RNA Sherborne Dorset.
- MRS J.M.CAUDREY. Member of public who read about the work of ACMT at Portsmouth Cathedral in South Coast News.
- D.C.BROOKE. NRC Hastings Group - another round of drinks at their meeting.
- J.R.B.HINTON. Ex SCOURGE - Beer Mug Sleeve collections in two local pubs the New Inn and White Hart - friends supervised collections, thanks.
- W.G.SHARPE. Ex Royal Marine DUKE OF YORK - read about ACMT in Potters Bar Times.
- ROSEMARY MCINTOSH. Read article in Portsmouth Evening News and sent cutting.
- JACK ROWE HMS MARNE & HMS HUTER - lost a Brother in action.
- J.ELDRED. CHARITIES AID - donation sent via Payroll Scheme.
- L & A PHILLIPS. NRC - Alma is still knitting dolls for our Charity.
- GORDON PETERS. NRC.
- STAN ROGERS. A friend - Calligraphy.
- ALEX CAIRNS. In lieu of coming to NRC Annual General Meeting - wife was ill.
- R.SKINNER. NRC - Talk to Ladies Club.
- J.D.POLLARD. RNA Watford and District.
- DEVOYLE LITHO. Assortment of services including printing.
- MRS RUTH BRYANT. Friend of Len & Alma Phillips.
- NORTH RUSSIA CLUB Beer Mug Sleeve collections Evening Social following A.G.M. at Victory Services Club by:- Sid Scott; Len Williamson; Mrs Audrey Batchelor; "Happy" Harry Ingle; P.Skinner; F.Pender and L.Jones.

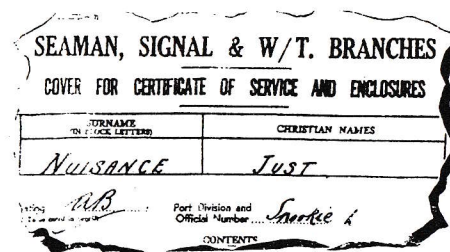
Mrs Rosemary McIntosh would welcome information about Stoker Evans - HMS MATABELE.

The list is rather shorter this issue but everything helps the Charity along and we extend our thanks to you all for your kindness. Perhaps now that we have some items that can be purchased we will be able to swell our funds a little more.

Thank you all very much, yours sincerely,

JUST NUISANCE

The story of an Able Seaman who leads a dogs life



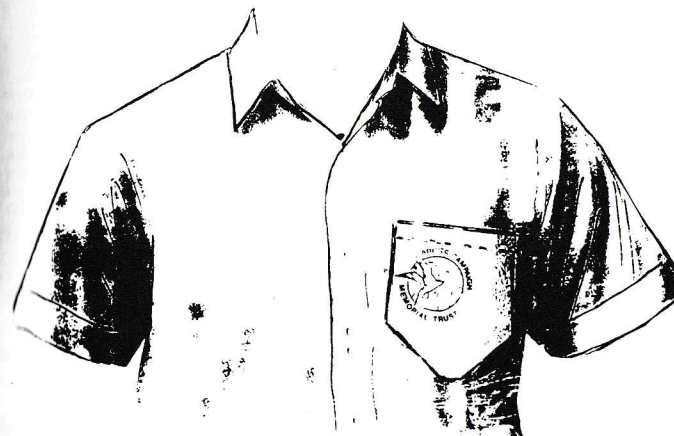
This is the true story of a real dog, I met for the first time as a young sailor during my first run ashore in Capetown during WW2. "KENYA" had spent the previous years on Russian and Malta Convoys and action with the Home Fleet on various activities. She was then sent via the Cape for further duties against the Japanese. On our way to our new base in Mombasa we had a run ashore in Simonstown, caught the train to Cape Town and took too much of the local brandy. It was "Just Nuisance" who got my shipmates and I back to the ship. God Bless Him

Order your copies from R.J.Wren, 13 Sherwood Avenue, Potters Bar, Herts EN6 2LD.

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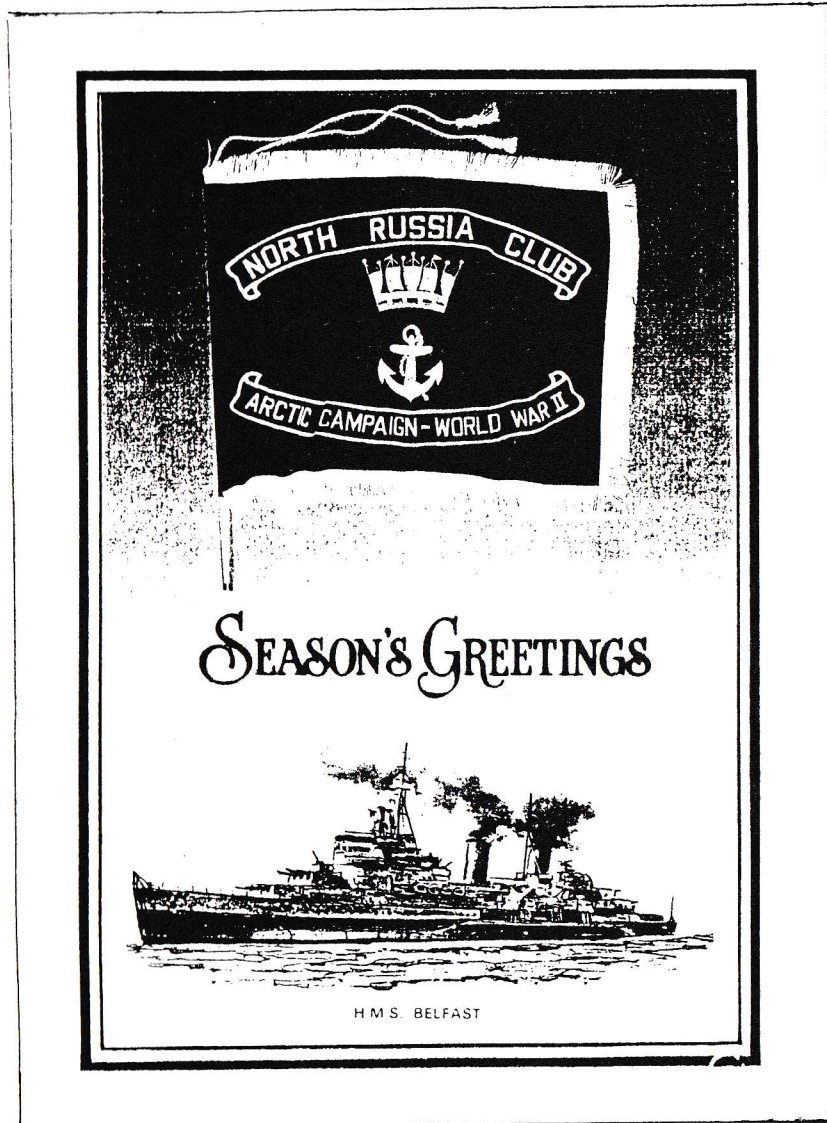
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" CROSSING THE BAR "

Sunset and evening star,
And one clear call for me!
And may there be no moaning of the bar,
When I put out to sea.

But such a tide as moving seems asleep,
Too full for sound and foam,
When that which drew from out the boundless deep
Turns again home

Twilight and evening bell,
And after that the dark!
And may there be no sadness of farewell,
When I embark.

For tho' from out our bourne of time and place
The flood may bear me far,
I hope to see my Pilot face to face
When I have crost the bar.

ALFRED LORD TENNYSON

.....

WE REGRET TO REPORT THAT THE FOLLOWING SHIPMATES
HAVE 'CROSSED THE BAR' SINCE THE LAST PUBLICATION.

E. MYNETT of Warley, West Midlands.	ex-HMS KEPPEL
J. EAMES of Sittingborne, Kent.	ex-NAVAL PARTY 100
K. ELLERBY of Grimsby	ex-SS EMPIRE METEOR
Cdr. J.MOWLAM of Alverstoke.	ex-C.O.HMS MATCHLESS
W. WHITE of Albrighton.	ex-HMS MERMAID

MEMBERSHIP

At 31st August 1991 the fully paid up membership of North Russia Club stands at 1,113. In the past year we have recruited 240plus new members. There are still a few outstanding renewals - if yours is one of them I shall be pleased to hear from you. Subscription remains at £6.00 - and, if you have difficulty with your remittance please let me know. In complete confidence, we can help. My address is 2 Broadlawn, Woolavington, Bridgwater, Somerset TA7 8EP.

Les Sullivan, Membership Secretary & "Jack Dusty"

.....

SLOPS

The following items are available from "Jack Dusty" at above address:

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When ordering or applying for Order Form please state your membership number.

.....

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1322. ROGERS Stanley F. SHEFFIELD
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29 Forest Hill, Aberdulais, Neath, West Glamorgan SA10 8HD.
1325. APPS Leonard S. BELLONA
Westwood, Collingwood Rise, Heathfield, East Sussex TN21 8DL

.....

LIST COMPLETE UP TO 31ST JULY 1991

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Outline details as in NORTHERN LIGHT No.24.

Please complete and return this questionnaire, enclosing an SAE, so that your requirements for, and participation in the above event may be planned, and the necessary arrangements made. If you are unsure about taking part please do complete this form as an indication of interest. Full programme details and booking forms will be sent when the planning is completed.

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN TAKING PART IN THIS REUNION (DEPENDANT ON FINAL COST) IN ANY OF THE FOLLOWING WAYS:

- A) FULL REUNION : 2ND to 12TH JULY, 1992..... (A)
- B) 2nd - 5th July, GLASGOW..... (B)
- C) 6th - 8th July, LIVERPOOL..... (C)
- D) 9th - 12th July, PORTSMOUTH..... (D)
- E) Lunctime only - 9th july WOODSTOCK / BLENHEIM PALACE /BLADON..... (E)
- F) Would you be interested in attending any of the above venues to take part on a "day trip " basis? If YES please tick....(F)
- G) BROOKWOOD, Surrey, Wreath laying at the Russian War Memorial..... (G)
- H) Will you require transport from BROOKWOOD on to LONDON (U.J.C.) after wreath layingYES/NO
- J) IF IT WERE POSSIBLE WOULD YOU BE MORE INTERESTED IN ATTENDING ONE OF THE FOLLOWING IF GROUP TRANSPORT FROM YOUR LOCALITY COULD BE ARRANGED?

Please circle as applicable : - A B C D E G

K) At which of the venues would you require accomodation? Please indicate by writing possible number requiring accomodation next to the venues listed below.

GLASGOW..... LIVERPOOL..... PORTSMOUTH.....

YOUR NAME MEM. NO.:

ADDRESS

TOWN:

COUNTY:

PLEASE SEND THIS COMPLETED FORM : MR. P.A. SKINNER
 TO THE ADDRESS OPPOSITE AS SOON : The Anchorage
 AS POSSIBLE TO ASSIST THE : BURSCOTT
 PLANNING COMMITTEE. : HIGH CLOVELLY
 : BIDEFORD.

PLEASE ENCLOSE AN SAE SO THAT : DEVON EX39 5RR
 YOU CAN BE SENT A REUNION BROCHURE :
 AND BOOKING FORM. :