



Welcome to the Christmas newsletter

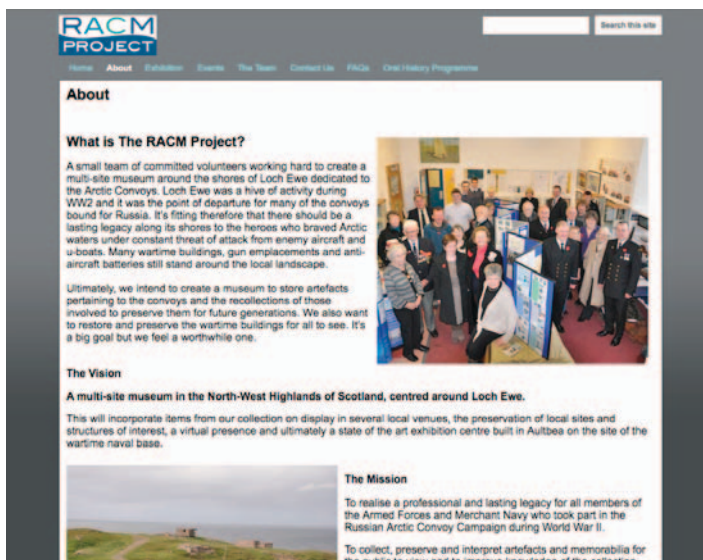
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News

Temporary Project Website

RACMP have an exciting new project website under development! This website will contain much more detailed information about our project, goals, fundraising events, news, and much more. In the meantime, a temporary project website has been set up to give visitors more information about what we are trying to achieve. This website can be found at www.theracmproject.org



Expedition Arctic Ocean Raptor

In other news, RACMP has joined forces with Arctic Ocean Raptor, an expedition that will be undertaken by the Global Offshore Sailing Team "to the most Northern, partially ice-free places of this planet" in remembrance of all the sailors who braved Arctic conditions in the name of research and in times of war. In the second week of the voyage, the Expedition Yacht will enter the operation area of the Arctic convoys and lay a wreath to commemorate the men and women on both sides who fought during the conflict. Visit www.arcticoceanraptor.com for more information.



The expedition team

The expedition team have sent us a Christmas message, which is at the end of our newsletter.

Inverasdale exhibition

Our Summer long exhibition in Inverasdale School closed at the end of October. As our regular followers will be aware it is open just 2 afternoons a week for 6 months and we are pleased to report that we had almost 2000 visitors this year. We would like to thank everyone who visited the exhibition and made this year a huge success. There were several donations

to our collection and even visits from veterans. More details later in the issue.

Project progress update.

Behind the scenes the whole team have been working very hard to move the project forward. A new project website is under development and a project Executive Summary is now available. We have also launched an Oral History Programme to grow an archive of first hand accounts from convoy veterans. It is our goal to make such recordings publicly accessible online.

RACMP has appointed a new Project Development Coordinator, Chris Conniff to produce a detailed action plan to help us progress the project. We are very happy to welcome her to the team.

Event roundup

Poolewe Duck Race – 22nd August

After a 10 year gap the Poolewe Duck Race returned! The tide was high and the weather was kind to organisers and spectators alike. Poolewe Bridge formed the finishing line and provided a good vantage



point for those watching the race. All potential escapee ducks were quickly captured and corralled by the Ewe Canoe “marshalls”.

Duck Race Results:

First across the line was duck No. 602 sponsored



Photographer: Emma Hewes

by Mr. J. Mackenzie of Canon Bridge who kindly offered the prize to the next winner over the line. The winner of the RACMP hamper was therefore Mrs Amy MacDonald with Duck No. 432. In 2nd place was Duck No 187

sponsored by Sanfur Linley-Lapage who won free entry for eight family members to Poolewe Swimming Pool. In 3rd place was Duck No 635 winning tea for two at Bridge Cottage Café for its sponsor Mary Rogers. The first prize in the raffle (a giant teddy bear) was won by ‘Bingo’ Jean Cameron.

Open Day at Pool House - 14th November

We would like to thank all those who attended our Open Day on the 14th November. Visitors came from as far as Reading and Stoke on Trent to support the Project, raising £487.00. There were guided tours with a talk on the history of the house, followed by the film of “Operation Pedestal” - the most heavily attacked and heavily defended convoy ever. The central theme for the day was HMS Ashanti and we were delighted that Craig Wylie, grandson of a crew member was able to attend.



Leading Stoker Wylie was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal for his bravery during the Arctic Convoys and was one of three men put into a small boat during storm conditions to try and help the stricken HMS Somali which sank on the 25th September

1942 with the loss of 67 lives. 35 were rescued. Craig donated a beautiful oil painting of his Grandfather in uniform, with Craig’s father as a baby in his arms, and with “Ashanti” clearly displayed on his hat band. Thanks also to those who purchased raffle tickets for the RACMP Christmas Hamper packed full of festive goodies.



Our Night to Remember - 7th December

RACMP Chairman, George Milne and Vice-Chairman, Bruce Hudson both gave illustrated talks about their recent travels in Europe. Bruce gave an enlightening description of the freezing conditions on board a ship off the coast of Norway (albeit from



Vice-chairman Bruce Hudson entertains us with tales from Norway

the comfort of the regular service ferry). Images of icy gangways and frost covered lifeboats gave a taste of the cold endured on convoy vessels, though of course there was no danger of torpedo attacks or aerial bombardment. George gave detailed presentations of each of the maritime museums he visited in Denmark and Germany, which have given us much to think about regarding how we might display our own collection items to the public. Many thanks to all who came to this event, and thanks also to the caterers and raffle prize donors. The stollen cake and glühwein proved very popular indeed.



Reports

Moscow Victory Day Commemoration

Three British veterans attended President Putin's Red Square Victory Day commemorations on the 9th May 2015 and were given pride of place. The event, which marked 70 years since the end of the war in Europe featured a spectacular parade of around 16000 soldiers, 200 armoured vehicles and 150 planes and helicopters, all accompanied by impeccably choreographed military bands.



The Russian government arranged the spectacular even as it is likely to be the last major anniversary of the conflict in which WWII veterans will take part. Ernie Kennedy, Geoff Shelton and David Craig were seated immediately behind the Russian president

Vladimir Putin and alongside the Chinese leader Xi Jinping. The seating arrangements ensured that a worldwide audience saw the three Britons wearing their medals and white berets. The veterans were honoured for their part in the Arctic Convoys in which they endured temperatures of minus 40°C and severe weather to deliver vital

supplies to Russia. Sir Winston Churchill's grandson, Sir Nicholas Soames was also present. Mr Shelton, 89, of Edinburgh said "President Putin gave us the best seats there". Mr Craig, 90 of Kilmarnock commented that "when I watched the display of military strength, I just thought of the millions of Russians who lost their lives helping us to win the war." Sir Nicholas paid tribute to the veterans saying "I was humbled beyond words to meet them. Churchill called their journey "the most dangerous voyage in the world". Putin also made a speech in which he said the veterans present were the "main heroes of the commemorations. Today your children or grandchildren are grateful to you for this victory".

U.S. Veteran Returns to Loch Ewe

In August 2015, RACMP was delighted to welcome U.S. veteran George Graydon who made the return voyage to Loch Ewe more than 70 years after he served on the Arctic Convoys.



George and his wife during their visit

George, who is 94 years old, flew to Glasgow from his home in Sarasota, Florida and then drove from Glasgow to Loch Ewe to visit the Exhibition accompanied by his partner, Louise Spellman. During the war, George served on the SS Harpalion and on the SS Zamalek, for which he

recently received his Ushakov medal.

On 13th April 1942 the Harpalion, a straggler in convoy QP-10 was bombed and heavily damaged by German JU88 aircraft. The vessel was abandoned by the crew and a reported scuttling attempt by the escort must have failed, because her abandoned wreck was



SS Harpalion

located by U-435 which fired a spread of three G7a torpedoes at 15:35 hours. The third torpedo struck aft and caused the vessel to sink slowly by the stern at 15.50 hours. U-435 was captained by U-boat ace Siegfried Strelow, one of the most experienced and successful commanders operating in Northern and Arctic waters. He and his entire crew would later lose their lives after being sunk by a British Wellington bomber off Portugal. All 70 of the Harpalion's crew were saved. George was picked up by HMS Fury and was then transferred to serve on further Arctic Convoys aboard the SS Zamalek.

Zamalek, like other rescue ships, had medical facilities on board, including an operating theatre and sick bay. Well-armed for her size, she did not have the status of a hospital ship and would have played an important role in the defence of convoys in addition to picking up survivors. Rescue ships ran very real risks. They were converted merchant ships of no great speed. When the rescue ship Zamalek stopped to pick up survivors of three torpedoed ships in March 1943, it took 24 hours for the Zamalek to re-join the convoy while it was under heavy attack. The presence of a rescue ship provided a big boost to morale in the convoy. It offered some measure of hope of rescue in the worst case. Standard convoy rules specified that the last ship in a column was to render assistance to a stricken ship. The other ships in the column were under strict orders to maintain their position. At night, when most U-boat attacks occurred and with zigzagging and no running lights lit, getting out of position greatly increased the risk of collision. In practice these orders were extremely unpopular with merchant captains and they often did not stop to pick up survivors. If a torpedoed ship was on fire, it meant being illuminated and a target for lurking submarines. The wolf pack tactics of U-boats

led to attacks on convoys with as many submarines as possible. Stopping to pick up survivors and falling behind the protection of the convoy meant the possibility of losing it entirely and having to sail independently. Escort commanders did have the discretion of detaching escorts to rescue survivors with the important caveat if he thought it justified to do so; the commander's primary responsibility was to protect the convoy. Escorts were often detailed to rescue survivors but it was a calculated risk as it meant one sector of the convoy might be undefended or less well covered. Most convoy escorts were not fleet destroyers but destroyer escorts, smaller and slower warships. The Flower class destroyer escorts that were ubiquitous had a top speed of only 16 knots compared to the 36 knots of a Tribal class fleet destroyer. Detaching a destroyer escort to render assistance meant it wasn't protecting the convoy for many hours. Zamalek rescued 665 sailors during her career as a rescue ship including 216 in the Battle of PQ.17. Zamalek survived the war and was sunk as a block ship in the Suez Canal in 1956.



Recent Visitors to the RACMP Exhibition

On the 12th August, RACMP was pleased to welcome Regina le Page (and family), whose husband Robert le Page was an observer on Swordfish aeroplanes with 816 Squadron of the Fleet Air Arm. He served aboard escort carriers HMS Dasher and HMS Chaser. Robert, who died in 2006, was author of book 'Luck of the Devil' which is available to buy at the Exhibition shop.



Three generations of the le Page family

89 year old veteran, Geoff Shelton visited Loch Ewe and the Exhibition on the 5th August. Geoff drove from his home in Glasgow to Loch Ewe. The following day, RACMP team members, Neil & Gill Cameron took

The last 10 Minutes of Billy McCree

One week out from Reykjavic on a trip across the sea,
Bound for Murmansk fully loaded was the plain old Lisa Marie.
She was old and slow and rusty, but chugged on quite serene,

Just one of over thirty ships of PQ17.

Billy was warm in his engine room,
The beat of the engines, her heart in the gloom.
The rear of the convoy was a dangerous place,
But the old tramp steamer just couldn't keep pace.

Prowling along off the port quarter,
A lone grey wolf stalked through the water.
The ship ploughed on under dank leaden sky,
Watched between troughs from an unblinking eye.

The dice had been thrown for the Lisa Marie
And her faithful attendant young Billy McCree.
Steamer and U Boat were locked in a dance,
For submarine captain it was his last chance.

As Billy the stoker sat having his brew,
Silver and white bubbles cut through the blue.
Torpedo and ship met in slow motion,
A drama played out on the cold Arctic Ocean.
The stokers were doomed they'd no time to scream,
The whole engine room was enveloped in steam.

All were killed save Billy McCree,
He'd have the last waltz with his Lisa Marie.
The Ocean poured in through a hole in her side,
For Billy McCree there was no place to hide.
The roaring of sea water filled his young ears,
The terror of drowning the sum of his fears.
Water was swirling around both his feet,
Ne'er again would he stroll down Sauchiehall Street.

It wasn't the sea water caused him to shout,
But the power had failed and the lights had gone out.
The water rose quickly and gripped like a vice,
It pressed all around him, a blanket of ice.
His world was now water, and darkness and cold,
A genuine nightmare would never be told.

The engine room flooded there wasn't much space,
Just room for his hands, his head and his face.
His ship now dying, slipped under the waves,
Consigning the crew to their watery graves.

Billy had chance for one long last breath,
Before he went under and waited for death.

He heard the screams of poor Lisa Marie,
The pounding of blood and the roar of the sea.
He ripped out his nails as he clawed at a ladder,
Then cried as he lost control of his bladder.

He drowned quite alone, sad and bereft,
The slow dance of death, all that was left.

If ever you venture out on the tide,
Take time to look out over the side.

Be quiet and still, look into the waves,
Those sparkling waters hide so many graves.

You may see the shadow of U225
As she creeps along quietly, no need to crash dive.
Or the ghost of a stoker named Billy McCree
Waltz the slow dance of death with sweet Lisa Marie.

Contributed by Steven Speakman - August 2015

him on the grand tour around the Loch. During WWII, Geoff served as a Gunner Radar Specialist aboard escort carrier HMS Vindex.



Veterans Geoff Shelton and Ron Cunningham

We were delighted to welcome a second veteran on the same day. Ron Cunningham served on HMS Cygnet as an Able Seaman gunner on Convoys JW56A in which 3 merchant ships were sunk by U-boats and RA56 which returned to Loch Ewe safely with all 37 convoy ships.

Remembrance Services

On November the 7th RACMP attended the local remembrance services in Poolewe and at the Convoy memorial stone in Cove.



RACMP Chairman, George Milne, lays wreath at Cove

We were heartened to see David Craig, a veteran of SS Dover Hill, at the service honouring the memory of his comrades.



H.M Coastguard representative Colin Pickering, local Air Cadets, Lord Lieutenant for Ross Shire Janet Bowen, David Craig and local piper Liam Forbes

Collection update

RACMP receives special honours from the Edinburgh Russian consulate



On a visit to our Inverasdale exhibition on 7th May 2015, Consul General Andrey Pritsepov presented two items normally reserved for surviving Arctic



Convoy veterans. He had ordered a special presentation to our project of Russia's 70th Anniversary of the Allied Victory in Europe medal and a limited edition wristwatch especially manufactured in Moscow to honour the Scottish veterans.

above-left: Limited edition wristwatch from the Russian Military Historical Society

above: 70th anniversary allied victory medal



Ensign donated to collection

RACMP was delighted to receive the donation of a "Red Ensign" from Liberty Ship expert, David Aris. The following explanation accompanied the gift.

"In the maritime world it is customary courtesy for a foreign flag ship to fly the national flag of another nation when it is berthed in a foreign port. (In some cases this is a legal requirement and a fine is imposed if the rule is not observed, but not in the UK.) The flag of the ships nationality would be flown at the stern and the host country flag on a signal halliard above the bridge. In the UK it is the customary to use the Red Ensign rather than the Union Jack.

There are only two Liberty ships still in existence, apart from a few hulks, and both are in first class condition with the US Coast Guard and with the survey society. Both are in the USA. The SS John W Brown is based in Baltimore and the SS Jeremiah O'Brien in San Francisco.

The Jeremiah O'Brien did eleven short voyages across the Channel with military supplies from D Day plus four in 1944 but was laid up in the Sacramento River for many years after the end of the war. She was later taken out of mothballs by a volunteer group and

returned to full working condition.

In 1994 she steamed across the Atlantic to take part on the 50th anniversary of Day, 1944, the only ship to return fifty years later.



Jeremiah O' Brien alongside HMS Belfast in 1994

US law, the Congress Act called the "Jones Act", dictates that a US flag ship leaving a US port must have a crew who are totally US citizens! However, this rule does not apply when such a ship is in a foreign port, and so, due to a vacancy which turned up I was invited to join the crew, as an engine room rating, for the return voyage to the US.

The US crew numbered fifty-two. After arrival in San Francisco, as a "Brit", they gave me this flag which the ship had used when berthed at Portsmouth, Southampton, Medway and in the Pool of London.

I joined the ship in Le Havre on 17th July 1994 and we arrived San Francisco on 23rd September having called at Portland, Maine (where the ship was built in 1943), New York, Baltimore, Jacksonville, The Panama Canal, San Diego and San Pedro."

David Aris



Robert Bailey pencil drawing

In early summer this year, the Exhibition was visited by Liz Richardson who spotted a picture on display which she recognized as being the work of her brother, world renowned artist, Robert Bailey. The picture, entitled "Arctic Encounter" shows a Convoy that was attacked by the Luftwaffe on July 5th 1942, leading to the loss of five ships. The picture is signed by some of those whose ships took part in the battle and also by the German pilot whose JU-88 led the attack.



"Arctic Encounter" by Robert Bailey.

Mrs Richardson explained that her brother now lives in Canada and works as an artist for the Walt Disney Company. She was delighted to see her brother's work on display and said that she would contact him to ask for a special commission for RACMP.

We were delighted to welcome Liz and her husband Rob again on Wednesday 9th September and thrilled to receive a wonderful gift from her brother, Robert.



Liz presents the drawing to Stuart and Peter

This superb portrait of Winston Churchill and Arctic Convoy in the background was drawn in graphite and has photographic quality.

Robert Bailey trained at Longton College of Art in England during the 60's. He entered the field of aviation art, and became known worldwide in the genre for creating oil paintings of military action and having the veterans sign lithographs made from them. Movie producer George Lucas came across Robert's aviation art website and asked him to work on the Star Wars films. After meeting with George, Robert's career took on a new twist...Star Wars and other movies. Lucas was sufficiently impressed by Robert's work to purchase originals for his private collection. Robert has gone on to create similar work for sale at comic conventions.



Robert at work

Pencil is now Robert's preferred medium as it is more fluid than paint and scenes can be created far faster this way. Besides being a licensed Star Wars and Disney artist, Robert is now also licensed to draw Marvel characters such as the Avengers and Spider

Man. Celebrities who have collected Robert's work include George Lucas, Linda Hamilton, Carrie Fisher, Sigourney Weaver, David Prowse and Ian McDiarmid.

Donation of an Oil Painting

RACMP has received the first of three oil paintings depicting HMS Honeysuckle on Arctic Convoy duty. The painting shows the corvette in heavy seas with other convoy ships in the background and was presented by Gordon and Denise Robinson on 1st July at Inverasdale School.



Gordon presenting the painting to Stuart

Their father, convoy veteran Eric "Robbie" Robinson, was given the picture by his best friend and renown naval artist, Leonard "Lennie" Mobbs who served alongside him on HMS Honeysuckle. Robbie died in 2006 and Lennie "crossed the bar" last year. Lennie's son, Kim will bring the remaining two pictures next month. These depict HMS Honeysuckle under heavy air attack and also at the sinking of HMS Goodall.

Lennie wrote in detail about his Arctic Convoy experiences and vividly recalled the sinking of HMS Goodall at which he was instrumental in the rescue attempt, being one of the Honeysuckle crew in lifeboats along with his friend Ronnie.

Despite a number of manoeuvres designed to confuse the submerged threat, the Goodall was hit by two Gnat torpedoes from the submarine U968. The torpedoes hit her forward magazine which ripped open and folded back the foredeck, its innards belching smoke and flames. The sides of Goodall were glowing red from the inferno raging inside. Honeysuckle was well placed to offer assistance but could not go alongside due to the tremendous heat. Honeysuckle's Captain decided to ram his ship's bows into Goodall's stern to allow a rescue attempt.

Lennie wrote "when the Goodall was torpedoed, she went up like a torch, most of her bridge was destroyed and the top half folded over forwards over the foredeck from the funnel. The latter had been flattened and she was losing fuel oil which set the sea on fire around her. Honeysuckle lowered the

starboard sea boat with Robbie Robinson, myself, Strickland and a couple more. While we were being lowered to the sea we saw a crew member of Goodall jump off from what was left of the burning bridge. He was on fire. As we pulled away from Honeysuckle the skipper took her in closer to the Goodall to get the men gathered at the stern of their stricken frigate. Robbie remarked that "the temperature of the sea was low enough to totally incapacitate the proverbial metallic primate"

We picked up four of the Goodall's crew out of the water. I believe we had others hanging onto the gunwales trying to get aboard and in their efforts they overturned us, or rather we just sank. I noticed Robbie on the stern with just his head and shoulders above the water, he was still holding onto the tiller. Now we were all swimming as the sea boat disappeared beneath us and it was every man for himself. The water was so cold even though we were clothed (clothing makes a difference for a while but not for long). The Farnham Castle was close to us, picking up survivors and we made for her, hopefully to be rescued ourselves. We were hauled on board and then I noticed two men on a Carley Float floating towards the burning oil making no attempt to save themselves, probably in shock but also out of the reach of any rescue attempt. What a way to go, I had to turn away. After some time aboard Farnham Castle and after a welcome mug of rum, a Russian launch came alongside and took the five of us back to Honeysuckle".

Donation of replica HMS Cygnet plaque

During his visit in August Ron Cunningham presented RACMP with a replica plaque of his ship's crest, which he made himself.



Stuart presented with HMS Cygnet Plaque

Donation of a photo of HMS Devonshire

Arctic Convoy veteran Arthur Waddington lives in Bradford and served on HMS Devonshire. He recalls coming ashore when his ship visited Loch Ewe in

1944. He walked several miles around the loch with his shipmates but was not permitted to enter Aultbea Hotel for a drink - it was for officers only! He also recalled when his ship was part of the escort for RMS Queen Mary taking Winston Churchill to meet President Roosevelt. He visited the exhibition on the 1st July 2015 and gave us a photo of HMS Devonshire for our collection.



Get Involved

Oral Histories Programme

We are looking for first-hand accounts of the Arctic convoy operations.

RACMP has created an Oral History Programme to collect and store the first-hand accounts, stories and experiences of those involved in the Arctic convoys to Russia (1941-45) so that they may be preserved for future generations.

The poster features two vintage microphones on the left. In the top right corner is the 'RUSSIAN ARCTIC CONVOY MUSEUM PROJECT' logo with the tagline 'LET'S BUILD IT TOGETHER' and 'SCOTTISH ARMY RESERVE CHIEF'S SOCIETY'. A speech bubble in the center contains the text: "Share your story with us". Below this, the text reads: "ORAL HISTORIES PROGRAMME", "The Russian Arctic Convoy Museum Project is creating an archive of personal accounts, told by those involved in the convoys, whether they served on a ship, flew aircraft or worked at the docks moving the supplies.", "WE ARE LOOKING FOR VETERANS OF THE ARCTIC CONVOYS WHO HAVE A STORY TO TELL.", "Help us preserve these memories for future generations. Contact marketing@theracmproject.org for more details.", and the website www.theracmproject.org/ohp at the bottom.

We are trying to create a lasting legacy for all members of the Armed Forces and Merchant Navy who took part in the Russian Convoys. We are developing a diverse collection of artefacts, the bulk of which includes documents, clothing, artwork, photographs, models, and some retrieved wreckage. Most precious of all, however, are the stories and recollections that make these items resonate with their viewers by giving them context and added significance. First-hand accounts of the convoys paint the most vivid

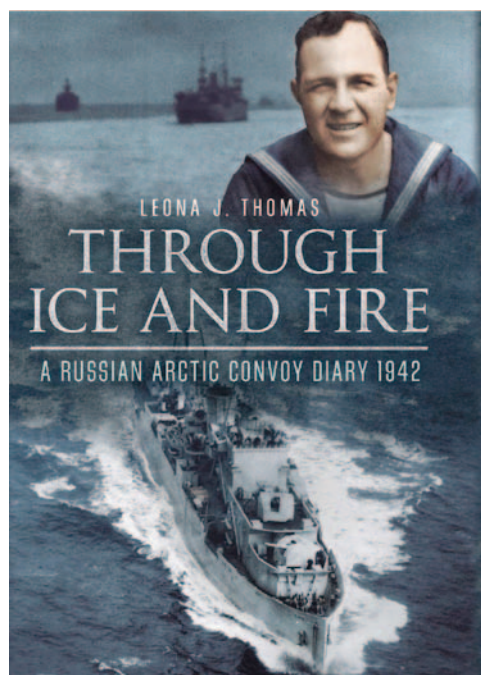


pictures of the conditions endured and will facilitate learning and understanding of precisely what took place both at sea and in port. Any recollections, no matter how insignificant they may seem to you, can help us to paint a vivid picture of the Russian convoys for future generations.

We would love to hear from any veterans who would be willing to be interviewed and have their stories included in our archives for public access. If you are interested in participating please contact us marketing@theracmproject.org. For a more detailed overview of the project, please visit www.theracmproject.org/ohp

HMS Ulster Queen

Many readers will be familiar with a recent book on the convoys, "Through Ice and Fire" by Leona Thomas. Leona, whose father Leonard H. Thomas served on the auxiliary anti-aircraft ship HMS Ulster Queen on four convoys to and from Russia, based her book on her father's war diaries, which contained detailed accounts of his experiences in the Arctic.



Now, Leona is appealing for any relatives of crewmen who served aboard the Ulster Queen to get in touch with her to help make a documentary about the ship. She has this message: "As well as trying to raise awareness about the

Russian Arctic Convoy veterans, I am also trying to locate as many as possible of the families whose fathers, brothers, etc served on the Ulster Queen. We have been in talks with a film producer in Belfast who is interested in making a film or docu-drama about the book and in particular the Ulster Queen and I had an article in the Belfast Newsletter a few weeks ago asking for family members to get in touch.

Any information about family members who served on the Ulster Queen, or further information about her would be gratefully received!"

If anyone has any information they would like to share with Leona, please contact marketing@theracmproject.org



HMS Ulster Queen

How else can I help?

Spread the word. Tell people about our project and help us find more people with stories to share. We are always looking for new stories, accounts and anecdotes to put on the “True Lives” page of our website, which you can see here: <http://www.russianarcticconvoymuseum.co.uk/wp/themenoftheconvoys/>

Volunteer

We welcome any offers of help, particularly from those able to offer the odd afternoon in the summer to meet and greet at our Exhibition in Inverasdale. If you would like to be involved in our project in any way, no matter how small, please contact Elizabeth Miles at info@theracmproject.org

Donate/loan an item to the collection

Many fascinating items in our collection have been donated by veterans or their relatives. If you have an item relating to the convoys that you think may be of interest to us, then please contact Bruce Hudson at vicechair@theracmproject.org

Make a donation

Help us make the project a reality. You can find our Just Giving page here: <https://www.justgiving.com/russianarcticconvoymuseum/Donate/> or, if you prefer to donate by cheque, please make it out to: “Russian Arctic Convoy Museum Project”

Address:
RACMP
C/O Pool House
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Don't forget you can gift aid it too.

Follow us online

RACMP often post updates, news stories and event details on social networks. If you want to keep up to date with our progress then you can follow us on the following sites:



[Russian Arctic Convoy Museum](#)



[Arctic Convoy Museum @InfoRACM](#)



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If you would like to contribute to future newsletters (or find any errors or omissions) please contact us at admin@theracmproject.org



EXPEDITION ARCTIC OCEAN RAPTOR

CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

for the honourable members and supporters of the
“RUSSIAN ARCTIC CONVOY MUSEUM PROJECT”

EXPEDITION TO THE EDGE OF THE WORLD IN JULY 2016

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

In just a couple of days it's Christmas. Another peaceful Christmas on our beautiful European home soil, and we are grateful for this, knowing perfectly that times were different.

On Christmas 1942, John Nicolson - serving on HMS 'Obdurate' - wrote the following personal note:

“As the clouds rolled over the mountains and darkness set in, we heard the familiar voice on the loud speaker – ‘Captain speaking’. Everyone held his breath, as we knew when the ‘Old Man’ spoke he had something important to communicate. This is what he said: ‘We have the honour once again of being entrusted to escort a convoy to North Russia, and we shall proceed at midnight’. An atmosphere of gloom settled on the ship. We had heard such speeches on the many previous trips that we had made to Russia, but the fact that it was Christmas Eve and we had everything arranged to the smallest detail for spending Christmas in harbour, left us disappointed. However, we had to cast disappointment aside and face the situation with a smile, so we decided to celebrate Christmas when we arrived at Murmansk, which was to be our destination.”

Having read the first time about the RUSSIAN ARCTIC CONVOY MUSEUM PROJECT and having seen the enormous work you do in preserving history and creating awareness about the Arctic Convoys, it remembered us at the words of a dear friend called Peter Nixon, Chairman of the Channel Dash Association, who said:

“... working so hard to bring history back to everyone's attention and recognizing the many great acts of courage performed on our behalf by men and women of all sides during a period of conflict. ... It is not about Winner's or Loser's. ... Europe is a wonderful place to live because it is made up of many different, but beautiful countries... We should be proud of this fact. Equally, we should not be ashamed of our past, nor should we glorify it, for it was our past which created what we are today.”

Bearing that in mind and having had the chance to get personally in contact with members of the RUSSIAN ARCTIC CONVOY MUSEUM PROJECT inspired us to join forces in 2016 with a Historic Research Offshore Sailing Expedition to the operation area of the Arctic Convoys.

Maybe it is one of the first times where such an initiative surpasses any national thinking. It starts at the heart what all these women and men we remember have been – Sailors.

The international team of Expedition ARCTIC OCEAN RAPTOR composed by British, German, Italian, Slovenian, Spanish and US sailors will navigate in a 47ft sailing yacht to the operation area of the Arctic Convoys with the goal to create globally contacts between countries, associations, scientists, sailors & arctic enthusiasts and remembering the men and women of both sides engaged in the “WWII ARCTIC OCEAN BATTLE” during the ARCTIC CONVOY operations.



The Expedition under the patronship of Admiral of the Fleet Lord MICHAEL CECIL BOYCE, Baron Boyce, KG, GCB, OBE, DL will be realized with the help of many famous research partners, organizations and corporations such as The INTERNATIONAL MARITIME MUSEUM HAMBURG, The GERMAN SOCIETY for MARITIME and NAVAL HISTORY, The MÜNZ Corporation & BOREAL YACHTING.

And we are proud being able to say today, that also the RUSSIAN ARCTIC CONVOY MUSEUM PROJECT will be one of the important partners we have on board on our way to the Arctic Ocean.

The Arctic Ocean is not only one of the most spectacular natural habitats on this planet, but also one of the most challenging seas to sail on. Over centuries brave women and men of all different nations crossed this ocean: explorers, fishermen, researchers, Navy and Merchant mariners and sailors. And maybe all their voyages had a different objective, but they always had one particularity in common - it was a voyage to the extreme: freezing cold temperatures combined with high storm probability, strong frequency of fog and the permanent danger.



The Expedition schedule foresees that the expedition yacht “Arctic Light” will be provisioned on the 24th of July 2016 in Longyearbyen/ Svalbard. The Team will then be heading north to reach 81 degrees. On its way back – approaching Svalbard coastlines from the north – the Team will explore the places where 2nd World War Weather Teams had their stations. After one week the boat will return to its expedition base in Longyearbyen. In the second week the Expedition will head south to the operation area of the 2nd World War ARCTIC CONVOYS.

There we want to commemorate and honour all those brave souls who paid the ultimate sacrifice during that time of conflict. We will do this by laying a wreath on sea, exactly in the area where history happened – together and in joined forces with the RUSSIAN ARCTIC CONVOY MUSEUM PROJECT. “Mission completed”, the Expedition will return to Longyearbyen on 6 August 2016.

Everyone is invited to become personally part of the Expedition either by writing to the team, posting on the website or by connecting to the partners and associations, which are part of this unique venture.

We wish you all a peaceful Christmas time and we are looking forward to an exciting project 2016 together.

Jochen Werne

Bernard Sealy

Bernd Lehmann

Skipper & Expedition Leader

Expedition Liaison Officer

Chief Historian

Interesting Links to the topic

Expedition Arctic Ocean Raptor

Global Offshore Sailing Team

Royal Cinque Ports Yacht Club

Russian Arctic Convoy Museum Project

International Maritime Museum Hamburg

Deutsche Gesellschaft für Schifffahrts- und Marinegeschichte

Münz Teamfashion

www.arcticoceanraptor.com

www.gost.org

www.rcpyc.org.uk

www.theracmproject.org

www.immhh.de

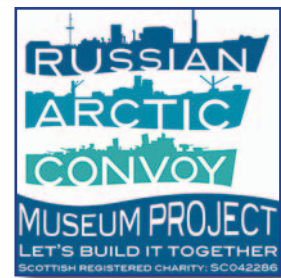
www.marinegeschichte.de

www.muenz.de



FRANK MASON R.I.

THE CONVOY ASSEMBLES



WWW.THERACMPROJECT.ORG

*Remembrance
and all good wishes
for Christmas
and the New Year*

*From all at the
Russian Arctic Convoy Museum Project*