

In this issue:

- 1 News
- 1 Reports
- 5 Feature item: The Fairey Swordfish
- 7 Convoys Remembered Update
- 8 Upcoming events
- 8 Get Involved

News

AGM

The AGM took place on 11th April 2016 and was well attended. Along with the usual updates and voting we also had a talk and refreshments to entertain members. More details in the reports section.

Exhibition



Our exhibition in Inverasdale School was opened on 4th May for it's third season. The Exhibition will run until October. If you would like to visit, the opening times are Wednesdays and Fridays 2-5pm. Visit our website for directions.

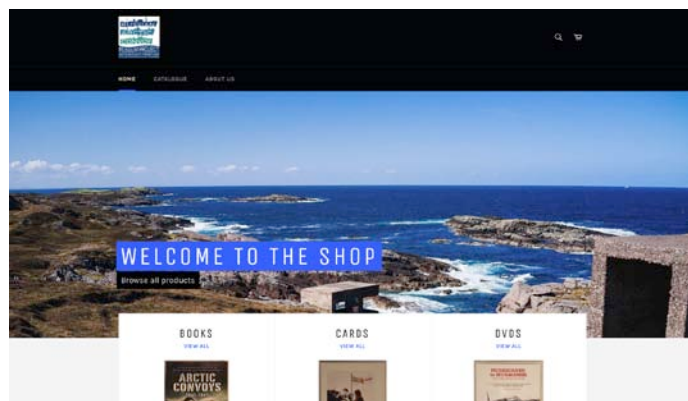
Memorial Service

The Russian Consul General, Andrey Pritsepov, visited Loch Ewe on the 12th of May to pay his respects and lay a wreath at the Russian Arctic Convoy memorial stone at Rubha Nan Sasan, Cove. He was overwhelmed by the local turnout and support.



Russian Consul General Andrey Pritsepov addresses the crowd.

Shop



RACMP has revamped and relaunched its online shop. The Russian Arctic Convoy Shop has books, toys, dvds and all manner of gifts. All items purchased help us keep our exhibition running and help us tell the story of the Arctic convoys and wartime Loch Ewe. Why not take a peek at shop.ractrust.org? We add new products from time to time so watch this space.

Reports

RACMP Vice-Chair visits Washington

RACMP Vice-Chairman, Bruce Hudson, visited Washington D.C. between the 30th March and 1st April this year to meet with senior personnel from the Navy History & Heritage Command. This included

the Managing Director of US Naval Museums, NHHC Chief of Staff, archaeologists, historians and curators.



RACMP Vice-Chair Bruce Hudson outside NHHC, Washington.

Bruce gave a presentation on the RACM Project to advise them of our location, background, current status, future prospects and information about our collection. This was followed by a question and answer session. In conclusion, the NHHC stated that there may be an opportunity through an internship programme for students from UK universities to visit the USA to carry out research projects that would be of value to both their and our respective Projects. They also indicated that in the light of what they now know about RACMP, our organisation could become the source of specialist knowledge on the Arctic Convoys to their potential benefit.

Bruce visited the US Navy Museum on site, escorted by Dr. Furgol. The Navy Yard is a functioning USN facility and therefore security is tight, which rather restricts public access to this particular museum. It is housed in the old gun manufacturing workshop, where calibres up to 16" were made. It contains a progressive sequence of displays from the beginnings of the USN up to more recent times. There is a small PQ17 display showing Douglas Fairbanks Jr., amongst other items.



Inside the Museum at NHHC, Washington

Bruce also visited the Underwater Archaeology

laboratory where Shanna Daniel showed a number of techniques used to restore and preserve artefacts, some of which taking years to complete.

On the last day in Washington, Bruce visited the Library of Congress and spoke to Megan Harris, Senior Reference Specialist. They are engaged in interviewing and recording individual veteran's recollections. They currently hold some 100,000, although potentially, millions could be possible. It may be viable in the future for RACMP to establish a group of US volunteers to act as researchers on behalf at this facility.

Museum Week



RACMP was delighted to participate in "Museum Week 2016". Advertised as the "First worldwide cultural event on Twitter", museums from 75 countries took part, generating 664,000 Tweets that were seen more than 294 million times. UNESCO supported the event which they said was "to celebrate the role of museums in the preservation and celebration of the common heritage of humanity". A "Museum Week Heatmap" shows how the initiative developed each day around the globe. Visit www.museumweek2016.org to view the map.

The theme for day 1 on the 28th March was well kept secrets or behind the scenes of your museum. The following day focused on the founders or key members of the museum team whilst Day 3 was concerned with museum buildings and architecture. Towards the end of the week, culture, heritage, innovative projects and, of course, museum collections were all subjects of interest to a massive worldwide audience.

If you would like to see RACMP's contribution throughout the programme, you do not need to be a Twitter user, simply visit <http://storify.com/RACMP/racmp-museum-week-2016>



Arctic Convoy Museum

@InfoRACM

Follow

We love that we can educate others about the Arctic Convoys in the very place the ships assembled, Loch Ewe #loveMW

11:43 AM - 3 Apr 2016

11 10

New Exhibits



Scott with the Swordfish.

RACMP wishes to thank Scott Garland from Poolewe for his very kind assistance in arranging the permanent loan of a model Swordfish aircraft and for collecting it, on our behalf, from Edinburgh. The model has now been delivered to Inverasdale School and can be seen at our Exhibition.



Honeysuckle at Goodall sinking.

RACMP has received two magnificent paintings by Convoy veteran Lennie Mobbs who served on HMS Honeysuckle.



Honeysuckle under attack.

These were presented by his son, Jim Mobbs in memory of his father. One painting shows the Honeysuckle under air attack, whilst the other shows her rushing to try to assist the ill-fated HMS Goodall (the last Royal Navy vessel to be sunk in the European theatre of war with great loss of life).

Jackie Stockwell from Sussex also made a presentation of her father's medals to the Project. John McNee, who was a shipwright, received not only the Arctic Star for service on the Convoys but also the Atlantic Star, Africa Star and good service medals.

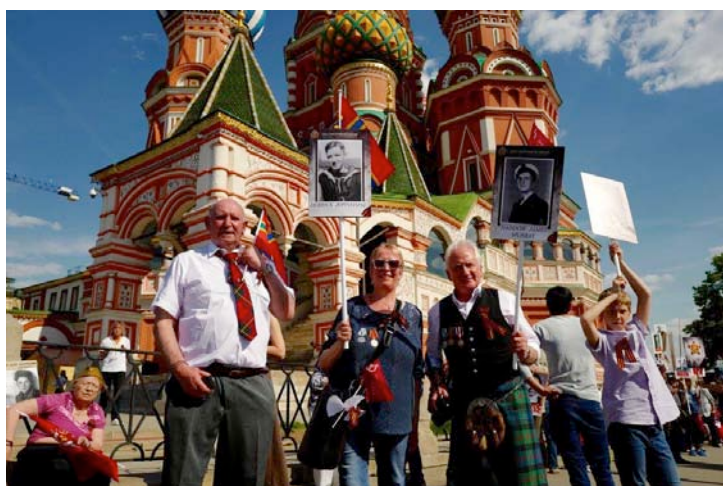


Peter Harrison receives John McNee's medals on behalf of RACMP. Finally, local resident, Danny Grant of Aultbea, presented to us a collection of medals that were awarded to his brother Donald. These also included the Arctic and Atlantic Star, plus the 1939-1945 War Medal. Donald served with the Merchant Navy aboard the rescue ship "Zamalek" which saw action in PQ-17.

AGM

The AGM took place on 11th April 2016 and was well attended. Members were given an update on the progress of the SCIO application, and three new staff were welcomed to the project team, these being Chris Conniff, Gail Waters and Maralene Hildrey. Chair, George Milne and Vice-Chair, Bruce Hudson expressed their intent to form an alliance with the Lend Lease Museum in Moscow. George was re-elected as Chair by unanimous vote, as was our Treasurer, Roger Kendall. Two resolutions were proposed and passed, one setting the subscription rate for members at £5 and the other was to reduce our committee size from 10 to 7. The formalities concluded with a call to action among our members and supporters. As our work load increases there is a growing need for volunteers to help us run the Inverasdale Exhibition and to assist in the organisation and running of events. If you would like to offer any time or assistance, please visit <http://www.theracmproject.org/get-involved> to find out how you can do so.

London and Moscow Victory Day Commemoration



March of The Immortal Regiment in Moscow.

On the 9th of May there is an annual parade of the Immortal Regiment in Red Square, Moscow. This year RACMP was delighted to receive an invitation from government officials in Moscow, via Robert (Bob) Miller from the Lyness Russian Arctic Convoy Memorial, to select the son or daughter of an Arctic Convoy veteran to take part. Various names were drawn at random and Graham Haddow, son of veteran Murray Haddow, was delighted to accept. Graham joined Sarah Taylor from Stromness, Orkney, and Bob, who made all the necessary arrangements, for the trip to Russia. Up to 100,000 people took part, many carrying photographs of their family members who served in the Great Patriotic War (WWII). Russian President, Vladimir Putin took part carrying a picture of his father. Sarah attended representing her father,

Convoy veteran, Dr Derrick Johnstone whilst Graham similarly carried a wartime photo of Murray.

Prior to the parade there was a display of military aircraft and the release of many white doves to signify peace. The group all said that it was a very emotional experience and very different to the remembrance events in the U.K. The atmosphere was very happy, as opposed to the more solemn events back home, but was incredibly moving nevertheless. Graham's kilt drew much admiration and many Russians asked Graham if they could be photographed alongside him. On his return, he told us that his wedding day and his children births, notwithstanding, this was the best and most memorable experience of his life.

RACMP Chair George Milne and Vice-Chair Bruce Hudson attended the annual Victory Day commemorations at the Soviet War Memorial in the park adjacent to the Imperial War Museum on the morning of 9th May, with veteran John Hirst from the West Riding Russian Convoy Club. The total turnout was in excess of 200, including 12 Arctic Convoy veterans, eight Russian naval and army veterans, ambassadors, veterans' associations and Russian organisations in Britain.



James Weeden (son of Lt. Cdr. John Weeden DSC, RNVR, an AC veteran), John Hirst (served on convoy PQ13), Geoff Lodge (ex RAF) at the Memorial.

Feature Item: FAIREY SWORDFISH

These unlikely little planes, affectionately known as 'Stringbags', hold a special place in our hearts here at RACMP. They were an old design in 1941 when they were pressed into Arctic service and flying them took extreme bravery, never mind landing on icy decks. We have managed to collect models, photos of their service and accounts of those who served with them.

Approaching obsolescence in 1939 the Swordfish was a Fairey private



Swordfish on the deck of HMS Wrestler

It carried a crew of three, pilot, navigator, radio operator/gunner. Principle offensive armament was an 18 inch torpedo weighting some 1600 lbs (750 kg). Alternative loads could be bombs, mines, depth charges and latterly



Bob Selley on HMS Nairana with the ship's cat.

rocket projectiles.

Swordfish Mk.1's began to join the Fleet Air Arm in July 1936, joining 825 Squadron. At the beginning of the WWII thirteen FAA squadrons were equipped with the Swordfish.

The Swordfish was credited with the first U-boat (U-64) sinking of the war on 13th April, 1940. The Swordfish was also involved in the famous attack on the Italian fleet moored in Taranto harbour. Twenty one aircraft attacked on the night of 11 November 1940. Seven ships were sunk or damaged for the loss of two Swordfish.

Subsequently the Swordfish was re-deployed in the anti-submarine role. In September 1944 Swordfish aboard escort aircraft carrier HMS Vindex, employed in escorting a Russian convoy (JW61) sank four U-boats. Overall they were credited with some 20 U-boats sinking's.

Production ended in 1944 for a grand total of 2,391 Swordfish aircraft. In May 1945 the last front line squadron was disbanded, but continued to serve in second line units for some years after that.

The Royal Navy/Fleet Air Arm Historical Flight still keep two examples of the Swordfish flying, which appear at air shows around the UK to this day.

The large scale model Swordfish hanging in the RACMP Exhibition Centre at Inverasdale was secured by Scott



Garland, a local resident, and depicts aircraft serial number L2781, construction number F-2723 coded 4F of the Fleet Air Arm.



Swordfish model made for RACMP by Jon Miles

This was powered by a 690hp Bristol Pegasus radial engine (subsequently upgraded to 750hp), driving a three bladed propeller. This achieved a maximum speed of 138 mph, cruise speed of 120 mph, service altitude of 10,700 feet and a range of some 1,000 miles.



Swordfish operating off HMS Vindex, photos from Kenneth Watson.



Large scale Swordfish, Thanks to Scott Garland

Twenty banners were paraded, most from British Legion branches. After speeches from the Russian Ambassador Alexander Yakovenko, Col. Steve Francis RM, UK Ministry of Defence, and the Mayor of Southwark, the wreath laying (around 100) took place. This included those laid by us, John Hirst, and Vic Bashford, one of the last surviving veterans of 'Operation Dervish' - the first Arctic Convoy in 1941. Gift boxes containing Russian tea, a glass drinking vessel, confectionery and photographs from the veterans' previous trip to St. Petersburg in 2014, were presented to all attending vets by the Russian Embassy. Light refreshments were then served in marquees in the warm sunshine.



The Soviet Memorial.

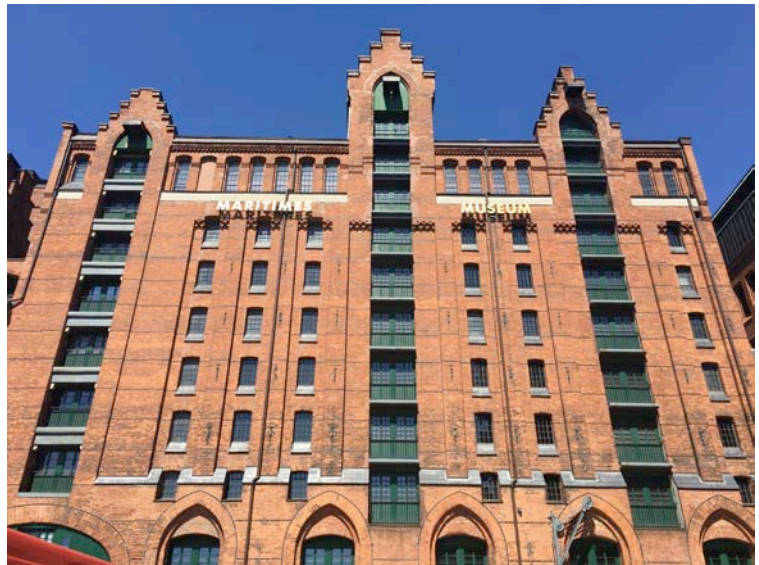
Following this the veterans and RACMP were invited to a reception aboard HMS Belfast. After the welcoming speeches and the firing of a six gun salute from the ships guns, a reception was held below decks where more speeches and presentations proceeded during lunch in the main mess. We made contact with colleagues from Moscow who wish to develop links between us and their Lend-Lease museum. A packed assembly received complimentary rum rations sponsored by the Jamaican High Commission.

Following the event, George accompanied veteran John Hirst and his companion back to Wakefield, then to Bradford where, on the following day, he and John met Arctic Convoy veterans Austin Byrne and Arthur Waddington - all in their mid-nineties. Their WWII exploits were recalled and noted, fuelled by the best Russian vodka.

Long may our living heroes prosper. They and we will always remember the millions who gave their lives for peace.

Message to The World

Representatives of RACMP visited Hamburg to attend the Mission4Peace "Message to the World" on the 8th May 2016. This event was organised by Jochen Werne of the Expedition Arctic Ocean Raptor and Eugene Kasevin of Victory Day London. Whilst there they also took in the sights and splendours of this vast port city.



The International Maritime Museum in Hamburg

The Mission4Peace event took place at the International Maritime Museum and was attended by dignitaries, Second World War veterans and representatives from several countries around the world. There was a keynote speech from the Ambassador of the Kingdom of Belgium in Germany, H. E. Ghislain D'Hoop. Following this the veterans were invited to express their own thoughts and feelings on the importance of peace and lessons learnt from their experience of war. We then heard from the dignitaries, and all the attendees were invited to sign the Declaration of Nations Reconciliation. During the signing the famous soprano, Friederike Krum gave a performance. The formalities closed with Ceremonial release of 2 doves in the name of peace. As it was also Mother's Day in Germany, Jochen's mother and the wife of British veteran Ernie Davies were chosen to release them.

The participating veterans were: Mr. Hans-Jürgen Steffen from Germany; Mr. Ernie Davies and Mr. Seymour Taylor from the United Kingdom; Mr. Yuri Alexandrov and Mr. Taras Goncharenko from the Russian Federation; Mr. Zdenko Duplančić from Serbia; Mr. Piet van der Burgh from the Netherlands; and Count Corrado Liberati from Italy.

The International Maritime Museum is vast and spread across 9 floors in a magnificent brick building in the heart of Hamburg. It has displays covering all aspects of maritime history from early ship building,



Keynote speech given by The Ambassador of The Kingdom of Belgium in Germany, H.E. Ghislain D'Hoop

through commercial shipping, life and war at sea. It boasts an impressive art and model collection and would require several days to see it all.

Throughout the weekend Hamburg was celebrating its Harbour Anniversary, held every year around the 7th of May to commemorate the formation of



Attendees signed the Declaration of Nations Reconciliation

Hamburg as a trading port in 1189. This is a huge event attracting millions of visitors and hundreds of visiting ships. Saturday's festivities closed with a fireworks display and the christening of the cruise ship Aida Prima, the largest ship in the Aida fleet.

You can find out more about the Mission4Peace at: <http://www.mission4peace.com/>

Book Signing

On Wednesday 29th June, RACMP was delighted to welcome Leona Thomas and Lynne Stopani to the Exhibition at Inverasdale School. Lynne and Leona are both the daughters of veterans who served together in the Engine Room of HMS Ulster Queen. Leona has edited and published her father's Russian Arctic Convoy

d i a r y which he recorded in secret throughout 1 9 4 2 . The book entitled "Through Ice and



Fire" is a gripping account of the hardship sailors endured on the journey. Leonard Thomas tells of appalling food shortages, intense cold and, for the early convoys, frosty relations with Russia.

That evening, Leona gave a well-attended presentation on her father's story at Pool House, whilst Lynne



displayed some wonderful artefacts brought back from Russia by her father, Thomas Stewart. Also on display was a heavy brass lamp from the "Ulster Queen" and wartime paintings. The presentation was followed by an informal question and answer session which gave both ladies the chance to mingle and chat with the attendees.

Convoys Remembered

New veteran stories added to our website

The following veterans have been added to our 'Convoys Remembered' archive:

Albert Edward Wait, Able Seaman on HMS Orwell; Leonard Morrison Mobbs, who served on board HMS Honeysuckle and who sailed on PQ16 and RA66; Bill Gordon, who served on HMS Scorpion and who was present at the sinking of



Leonard Mobbs



Albert Wait

the Scharnhorst; Wilfred Percy Rennardson, who was Acting Leading Telegraphist on HMS Edinburgh; and Goronwy Owen Jones, who served on HMS Anson.

You can read their stories on our Museum Website. If you would like to contribute a story to this site, please email Natasha at marketing@theracmproject.org



Bill Gordon



Wilfred Percy Rennardson



Goronwy Owen Jones

Upcoming Events

Expedition Arctic Ocean Raptor

Later this month The Global Offshore Sailing Team will sail up to one of the most Northern partially ice-free places of this planet remembering all sailors who bravely explored and fought in this fragile and dangerous environment.

With this Expedition the aim is to provide a platform of intercultural and interdisciplinary exchange for Arctic Enthusiasts such as Historians, Environmental Scientists, Sailors within Governments, NGO's, Navies, Associations or just out of personal interest.

The expedition runs 24 July – 7 August 2016 and will be laying a wreath for RACMP on the convoy route in memory of those who sailed there 75 years ago. For more information visit their site at <http://arcticoceanraptor.com>

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.

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

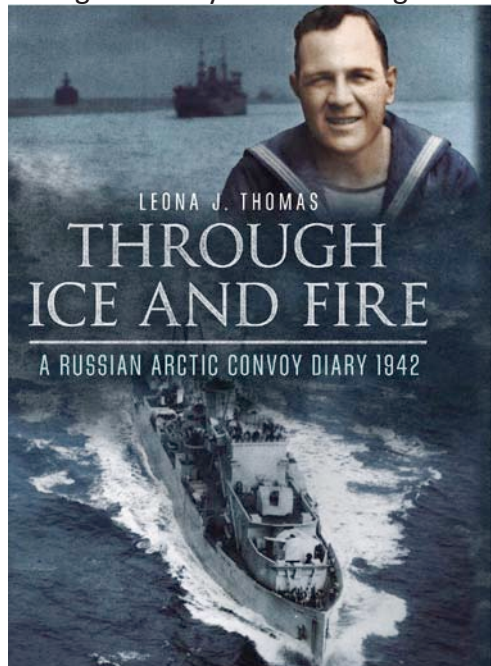
HMS Ulster Queen

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.



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

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 “Convoys Remembered” page of our website, which you can see here: <http://www.russianarcticconvoymuseum.org>

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

Poolewe

Wester Ross

IV22 2LD

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](#)



[RACMP +RacmpUkLochEwe](#)

Contact Us

By post:

RACMP

C/O Pool House

Poolewe

Wester Ross

IV22 2LD

By telephone:

01445 781272

By email:

info@theracmproject.org

Newsletter produced by Nicky Ellakirk (RACMP technical advisor) and Natasha Miles (RACMP social media marketer).

Photos and articles contributed by Elizabeth Miles, Nicky Ellakirk, Natasha Miles, Bruce Hudson, George Milne and Leona Thomas.

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