

FOOD ON THE ARCTIC CONVOYS

What did the sailors eat?

Life was tough on an Arctic Convoy. Food was one of the few things the sailors could look forward to amidst their normal duties, the constant threat of attack, and the perilous weather conditions. But what did they eat? Was it tasty? How difficult was eating in rough seas?

RICHARD NOSSITER



Describing the food in Murmansk

"We didn't run short of food as we got a barrel of salt pork which was terrible. I went round to one of the merchant ships and traded them some bottles of gin for some frozen chooks. We had one or two decent meals in the wardroom then."

GEORGE ROBINSON



Describing the food on HMS Halcyon

"We got our chef to make some bread for us and it was that heavy we called it ~depth charge sinkers". This was a weight attached to mines to stop them from moving around. We once went to the KG5 (King George Fifth) battleship and got some bread off them."

HERBERT ROBERTS



Describing the food on HMS Virago

"The tables, however, were anchored to the deck so couldn't move and also had ledges on the edges to stop the meals sliding completely off, so all we had to do normally was to hang on to the table with one hand whilst eating with the other. Unfortunately, the ledges on the table weren't big enough to counter the pitching and rolling of the ship at the speed we were travelling, when we were carrying out attacks on "Scharnhorst" and the food just bumped over the edge and toppled to join our poor sick signalman sliding up and down on the deck. If it hadn't have been so serious it would have been hilarious."

You can read the full stories on our website



ROY DYKES



Describing the food on HMS Honeysuckle

"Food was simply a piece of bread and corned beef because the ship's cook was given other roles on board and had no time to prepare proper food."

GEORGE DUNMORE



Describing the food on HMS Milne

"On our first Convoy we received a ration of Potatoes, they were frozen solid having been stored in the Veg locker on the upper deck. On thawing out they were just like sponges, we squeezed the water out and finished up with a handful of withered skins, not very edible. On future convoys we were issued with dehydrated vegetables, Potatoes, Carrots and Onions etc. I can't recall what we did with them as regards cooking but we didn't starve. (On a subsequent convoy the Veg locker was torn off the upper deck in a violent storm, along with the ship's whaler.) On the whole the food was good. We had plenty of meat. One of the highlights was the Pork Chops from America, they were huge. Fully an inch thick! at the other end of the scale was the Soya Sausages and Train Smash (Tinned tomatoes). If the weather was too bad we had to fall back on door step sandwiches of Spam or Bully beef or go without for a time."



DO YOU HAVE A STORY YOU'D LIKE TO SHARE WITH US?

Convoys Remembered is an online archive of stories from veterans or their relatives about the Arctic Convoys. They are all donated by members of the public. If you have a story to share, please contact us at veterans@theracmproject.org

Support Our Work

Donations towards our project help us to run our Exhibition Centre in Aultbea, to run public events, and to preserve the memories of the Arctic Convoy veterans. Donations can be made in person at our Exhibition Centre, online via our website, or by text. Simply text RACM11 £[amount] to 70070. JustTextGiving by Vodafone.

Thank you.