



# Russian Convoy Club of New Zealand

**Newsletter**  
April/May 2019

Dear shipmates, families and friends

## Wreath laid at Otaki



Veterans of the Arctic Convoys of World War Two gathered at Otaki College on Monday 11 March 2019 to take part in annual commemorations of the action in 1915 which resulted in the loss of SS Otaki. A memorial to the crew of SS Otaki stands in the grounds of Otaki College.

Each year students from Otaki College and Robert Gordon's College in Aberdeen, Scotland, the school attended by SS Otaki's captain Archibald Bisset Smith exchange places to experience each other's culture and education.

## Obituaries

We are sorry to advise the passing of one of our oldest members, Norm Batterham ex HMS Bluebell on 28 February 2019. Norm was #47 on the list of original members when the club was started by John Middleton. He is survived by his grandson, Mr D Batterham of Napier.

Also, we were saddened to learn of Alison Sexton's passing on 20 March 2019. Alison was a good friend of our club and was instrumental in the recovery of our mementoes when the Levin RSA closed and, as President of the Lower Hutt RSA, arranging for us the use of the Anzac Lounge for our meetings.

Our deepest condolences go to the families.

## Royal Marines perform at the Royal Albert Hall

Early in March 2019 the Massed Bands of the Royal Marines performed their annual Mountbatten Festival of Music at the Royal Albert Hall, witnessed by the Captain General of the Royal Marines, HRH The Duke of Sussex.

Raising money for the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity (RNRMC), over 200 musicians took to the iconic stage to perform two hours of incredible music, this year with a special focus on commemorating the 75th Anniversary of D-Day.

Lieutenant Colonel Jon Ridley is the Principal Director of Music and Head of the Royal Marines Band Service. He said: "The Mountbatten Festival of Music is a great show, with variety on the menu, as ever, including the world-famous Corps of Drums, film music, as well as classical features and traditional marches.

"The finale of the show is a commemoration to 75 years since D-Day, and this will undoubtedly be an emotional highlight for all."

For Colour Sergeant Graham Vaughan, Leader of the Euphonium Section from the Royal Marines Band Portsmouth, this was his final performance at the festival having performed over 20 times in the Royal Albert Hall during his 39 years in the RMBS. He said: "The buzz is still the same as when I was a youngster. This has been a phenomenal way to finish my career."

As the ceremonial public facing arm of the Royal Navy, the RMBS has maintained its international engagement throughout 2018 and early 2019, performing around the world to represent the senior service.

In early Autumn 2018, the Scotland Band deployed on HMS Queen Elizabeth as part of Westlant 18, visiting amongst other places, Norfolk, Mayport, New York and Baltimore, supporting HMS Monmouth when their paths crossed in the latter.

In Chile they supported First Sea Lord's visit to the Chilean Navy as part of their bicentenary celebrations; in South Korea they performed at the International Fleet review where they supported the South Korean Navy Band in welcoming the South Korean President.

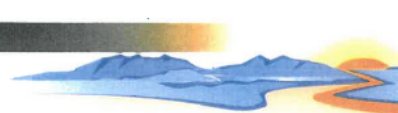
In Mexico they cultivated musical and Remembrance Day links; in Switzerland they performed for the Basel Christmas Tattoo; in Romania they performed to mark the 100th Anniversary of the birth of the

nation, where the UK's participation in the 100th Romanian National Day was vital to the UK-Romania diplomatic relationship.

Finally, in Oman small ensembles and the Corps of Drums worked with the Royal Navy of Oman; and closer to home in Cyprus and Guernsey.

All the music performed at the Mountbatten Festival of Music has been produced, directed and performed by members of the Royal Marines Band Service (RMBS).

**Ōtaki College**  
KIA KAHUA



18 March 2019


Kia ora koutou katoa

I am writing to thank you all for joining us last Monday to honour the service of the Merchant Navy and remember those who gave their lives at sea in WW1.

The SS Otaki Wreath Laying Ceremony brings the stories of wartime courage to life for our younger students. Although we are a small rural College in New Zealand, our students learn through the traditions that have built up around the SS Otaki, her Captain and the Ōtaki Scholar, that they are part of a wider world and that events that happened long ago and far away can still have relevance to their own lives. I feel that this ceremony is an important cornerstone for building an understanding in our students of the values and qualities that we expect them to develop during their time here at College.

Again, my thanks to you for attending the Ceremony and I very much hope that we will see you again on Monday 9th March 2020.

Kind regards



Andy Fraser  
Principal

Nottinghamshire born Captain Tom Crane is the Director of Music of the Royal Marines Band Collingwood. He said: "I feel really privileged to be conducting the finest military band in the world in one of the most iconic concert venues in the world, and I am looking forward to having my family and friends in the audience to share in the experience."



You can watch the 2019 Mountbatten Festival of Music on Youtube.

### Diary Dates

RCCNZ Plaque Wreath Laying Wellington Waterfront  
Thursday 9 May 2019 at 1100hrs

Russia's National Day, Wellington  
Wednesday 12 June 2019

Club Meeting, Anzac Lounge, Lower Hutt Memorial RSA  
Thursday 29 August 2019 at 1100hrs

Christmas Gathering at Otaki  
To be advised

### Subscriptions

As advised at our March 2018 meeting the annual RCCNZ subscription for the 2019/2020 year will be reduced from \$15.00 to \$10.00. A move which will be cheered by all!

### Grandson tracks down aircraft wreckage

The grandson of a Second World War pilot has tracked down the wreckage of his grandfather's plane on a Norwegian mountainside after footage of the crash site emerged on YouTube.



Royal Navy Commander Phil Richardson, from Hampshire (left) journeyed to Norway to locate the remains of the Flying Grumman Hellcat Fighter Bomber, which was hit during a daring raid on a German warship.

His grandfather Lt Cdr Ron Richardson (above right) was 27-years-old when he was sent on a mission to attack the battleship Tirpitz, the pride of the German Navy, that was mounting attacks on the Arctic convoys.

Although he was pronounced dead during the war, the wreckage of his hellcat fighter remained unknown up until now.

It was only after footage which identified a crash site 3,000ft up a remote mountain appeared on YouTube that Mr Richardson was able to pinpoint the exact coordinates of the aircraft's landing point.

A spell of warm weather also helped to expose the site, situated in a secluded area 500km inside the Arctic Circle.

Cdr Richardson, 44, was accompanied by his 75-year-old father Alistair on the emotional trip to the mountainside.

He told BBC Inside Out South: "We saw parts of the fuselage still riddled with bullet holes. And the tail was very clearly still intact.

"Seeing the extent of the wreckage really moves me. I compare it to my own flying career in the navy, and know how close to dangerous situations I have been in. But, fortunately I have always come out the other side of them.



"And so we said a prayer there, we left the cross and reflected on the area where Ron spent his last moments."

Beside the wreckage was an empty grave where Lt Cdr Richardson, originally from New Zealand, was buried by locals. His body was later placed in a military grave in an unknown location.

Source: The Telegraph



*A tramp knocks on the door of the "St. George and the Dragon" inn. The landlady answers.*

*"Could you give a poor man something to eat?" asks the tramp.*

*"No!" yells the woman, slamming the door in his face. A few minutes later, he knocks again. "Now what do you want?" the woman asks.*

*"Could I have a few words with George?"*

### Up Spirits!



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