



Russian Convoy Club of New Zealand

Newsletter
December 2021



Dear shipmates, families and friends



The USS Howard (above), a United States Navy Arleigh Burke-class destroyer, arrived in Wellington Harbour on Friday 26 November 2021 to conduct exercises with the New Zealand Defence Force.



HMNZS Wellington (above) deployed to the Solomon Islands on Monday 7 December 2021 on peacekeeping duties.



CTF150 is one of the Combined Maritime Forces' three task forces in the Middle East and has been under the command of the Royal New Zealand Navy since July 2021. Commander of the CTF 150, Captain Brendon Clark, RNZN, said successful interceptions of US\$26m worth of drugs were the culmination of coordinated efforts of personnel, ships, helicopters, fixed wing aircraft, and unmanned aerial vehicles from across the Combined Maritime Forces nations.

RCCNZ meets for annual Christmas lunch

Our pre-Christmas meeting was a little different this year.

It was decided to repay a little of the wonderful hospitality the club has received over many years by Rear Admiral David Ledson and his wife Barbara at their home in Otaki by hosting them to a luncheon at the Boulcott Farm Golf Club in Lower Hutt.

This was attended by 20 members, shipmates and friends including H.E. Georgii Zuev, Russian Ambassador to New Zealand.

A small presentation to David and Barbara was made as a memento of our long association



The lunch was joined by H. E. Georgii V Zuev, Russian Ambassador to New Zealand (above, third from left).

Massey University student researching the Arctic Convoys

Grace Penlain of Wellington is a postgraduate student at Massey University and is researching the New Zealanders who took part in the Arctic convoys.

"I can't remember when I first heard about the convoys, but I've always been fascinated by them. As someone with a lifelong interest in maritime and military history, I suppose that's unsurprising, but it's more than that for me. There are some stories that just grab you, and the extraordinary challenge and courage of the convoys is one of those for me.

"It surprised me that they were not well known in New Zealand and have been largely unstudied by my fellow historians when we have written so much about the Second World War. Even fewer people seem to know that there were New Zealanders involved. When I decided to do my master's degree at last, I knew I wanted to do it on the convoys – but not just on the convoys themselves. I wanted it to be about people.

"For my research, I am trying to find as many of the New Zealanders who took part (both those who were Kiwis prior to the war and those that settled here and became Kiwis later) as I can, what part they played in the convoys, and (if possible) how that affected their lives.

"I've started gathering names, records, and stories together already but if anyone would be interested in speaking with me or has information they would like to share, that would be much appreciated. I'm also happy to answer any questions about my research".

You can get in touch with Grace via email at:
Grace.Penlain.1@uni.massey.ac.nz

Murmansk

Home to the Naval Museum of the Northern Fleet



The Naval Museum of the Northern Fleet was opened on 16 October 1946 in the building of the House of Officers of the city of Murmansk.

The first to open was the exposition "Defense of the Soviet Arctic during the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945". Visitors are introduced to the events of convoy PQ17 (see image below).

Currently, the museum's expositions contain materials related to the history of the development of nuclear submarines, surface ships and naval aviation, as well as the entire Northern Fleet as a whole. The exhibits cover the period from 1693 to the present.

The exposition is located in nine halls and tells about the creation of the Russian Navy in the North, the Northern Fleet in the thirties, participation in the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945, the development of the fleet in the post-war period. Materials about the first commanders of the Northern Fleet Z.A. Zakupnev and K.I. Dushenov, twice Heroes of the Soviet Union B.F. Safonov, A.O. Shabalin, V.N. Leonov are presented. Here are the works of the sculptor L.E. Karbel, who served during the Great Patriotic War in the Northern Fleet. A special place in the exposition is given to the modern ocean fleet.



In May 2018, a new exposition "Military Murman" was opened, dedicated to the defence of the Kola Arctic during the Great Patriotic War. Several rooms reproduce the atmosphere of frontline Murmansk, which suffered from Nazi bombing on a scale comparable to the legendary Stalingrad. Visitors to the museum will see an equipped bomb shelter with a cinema hall and a typical room

in a pre-war communal apartment, get acquainted with documents and photographs of the period of defence of the city. As exhibits, weapons of that time are presented: hollowed-out rifles, machine guns, mortars and even an anti-aircraft gun. Of particular interest are the works of the famous military photojournalist Yevgeny Khaldey. One of his photographs is presented in the form of a panorama.



The museum's exhibits include ship models, weapons items, flags and banners, personal belongings, awards, documents and photographs of sailors, maps and works of fine art, highlighting the history of the creation and evolution of the Northern Fleet of Russia.

Source: Naval Museum of the Northern Fleet

Women on the Arctic Convoys : Azerbaijan and PQ-17

PQ-17 is one of the more famous convoy missions owing to the terrible losses that resulted from the decision to scatter the ships, which was taken on the false belief that the *Tirpitz* intended to engage the allied vessels. What is less well known is the female presence aboard Soviet tankers that took part in this ill-fated mission.

Female crews were not unusual on Soviet vessels, much to the wonderment of the allied sailors, and there were women present aboard the *Donbass* and the *Azerbaijan* when the ships came under enemy fire (there are even sources indicating that the Captain and the Chief Officer of the *Azerbaijan* were married to members of their crew).

The female crew of the *Azerbaijan* particularly distinguished themselves with their response to enemy attack, which came on the 4 July 1942, in which they managed to save the tanker that was thought doomed by onlookers.

The *Azerbaijan* was transporting linseed oil to the port at Archangel. When the attack came, the tanker was targeted by dive-bombers and torpedo planes. As a result of the bombardment the vessel caught fire and sustained heavy damage.

In the immediate panic, lifeboats were lowered and some of crew members abandoned the ship, which was soon engulfed in smoke. The remaining crew tackled the fires while the heavy gun, manned by women, continued to fire at the enemy.

Upon the realisation that the ship was not sinking, the lifeboats were ordered by megaphone to return to help extinguish the flames. The lifeboats were hoisted back aboard and at last the flames were quelled. Other crew members that had been thrown into the sea were picked up by rescue boat *Zaafaran*.

Given the dire outlook for the tanker the remaining fleet had been ordered to leave the *Azerbaijan*, which had fallen out of station along with the *Navarino* and the *William Hooper* (which were both sunk in the attack). One can imagine the allies' amazement when the tanker was seen limping behind, eventually catching up and returning to its station. The *Azerbaijan* arrived safely at Archangel on 24th July 1942.

Source: Russian Arctic Convoy Museum

Reflections

Lieutenant Richard Anthony "Tony" Ray

Tony was appointed 1st Lieutenant in the Colony Class Frigate HMS Bahamas built by Walsch-Kaiser Co., Inc., Providence, Rhode Island, U.S.A. and based in Londonderry. Being part of the 9th Escort Group the ship was employed on fast convoys to Gibraltar, sweeps in the Western Approaches for U-Boats and a Convoy taking supplies to Murmansk in Russia.



In 1945 Tony was mentioned in a Despatch for distinguished service "For skill, patience & determination whilst serving in HMS Bahamas in towing a damaged ship 160 miles in severe weather". HMS Bahamas K503 is pictured above.

The damaged ship was British destroyer HMS Cassandra which was hit by a Gnat torpedo fired by German U-boat U-365. The entire bow ahead of the forward magazine, including 'A' gun turret were blown off and the structure abaft this to the forward bulkhead of the fuel tanks was wrecked. 62 men lost their lives in this attack. Cassandra was taken in tow for three days (stern first) by the British frigate HMS Bahamas. Later the tow was passed over to a Soviet tug which towed her to Polyarny in Kola Inlet.

The 8 May 1945 was VE Day and Tony had been at sea without a break for nearly 10 years. Bahamas was put into Reserve and on 15 February 1946 Tony was released from Naval Service. He passed away in New Zealand on 22 April 2009.



Photo, taken in Ireland in June 1945, shows from left: Lieutenant F.P.C. Haverfield RNR (Navigating Officer), Lieutenant R.A. Ray RD RNR (1st Lieut), and Lieutenant Commander W.S. Thomson OBE RNR (Commanding Officer).

Contributed by: Cosima Ray, wife of Lt. Tony Ray

Reflections

Norwegian soldiers' repatriation

Current RCCNZ president Derek Whitwam was crew on board HMS Berwick when a company of Norwegian soldiers were repatriated from Rosyth, Scotland to Kirkenes, Norway via Murmansk on 31 October 1944.



Norwegian troops on board HMS Berwick

The story of the Norwegian troops of 2.Bergkompani after HMS Berwick shipped them to Murmansk is as follows:

31 October 1944	Departed Rosyth
6 November 1944	Arrival Murmansk
10 November 1944	Transported by ship from Murmansk to Liinahamari
11 November 1944	Arrival in Kirkenes by Russian trucks, camped in a small village called Sandnes (abandoned German camp). Stayed and trained in the camp until 26th of November.
26 November 1944	The Norwegian troops left Kirkenes area for Tana (18km NW)



The Russian army was in command in the liberated area and the Norwegians were not involved in any combat together with the Russians.

There was orderly cooperation between the Russian and the Norwegian command, troops and locals in this period.



Blazing a Wartime Trail Around Loch Ewe

Tuesday 31st August 2021 saw the official launch of *'Blazing a Wartime Trail around Loch Ewe'*, a new outdoor trail commemorating the vital role that Loch Ewe played in World War Two.



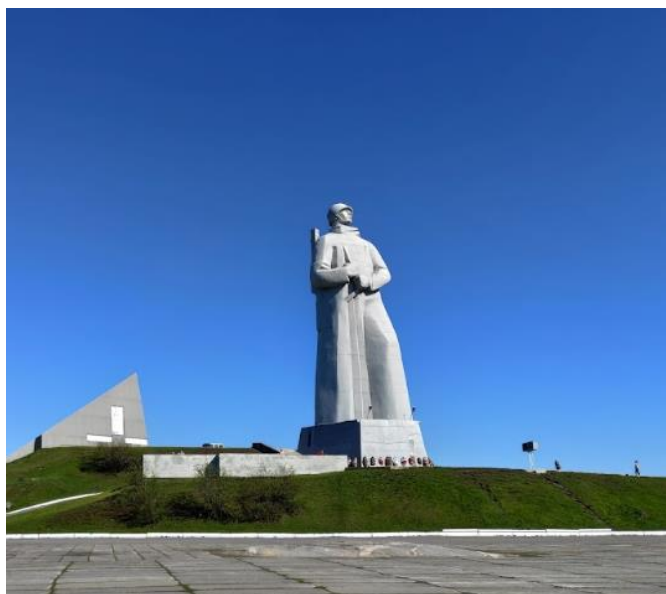
As the strategic gathering place for the Arctic Convoys between 1941 and 1945, remains of the area's wartime activity are still visible around Loch Ewe. The new trail showcases four new bold and atmospheric silhouette public artworks, incorporated with viewpoint benches, new interpretation and mosaic panels created by local schoolchildren.

The trail marks important sites around Loch Ewe and shares the stories of how the local community and landscape was shaped by the war. The launch date of 31st August 2021 was important to mark the 80th anniversary of Operation Dervish, the arrival of the first of the Arctic Convoys of WWII which sailed from Liverpool on 12th August 1941 and arrived at Archangelsk on 31st August 1941.

The trail was opened by Arctic Convoy veteran David Craig and the pupils of Bualnaluib Primary School in Aultbea. Now aged 96, David is among the last surviving Convoy veterans and faced some of the most brutal conditions of the Convoy journeys including enemy attack, horrific weather conditions and freezing sea ice.

Source: Russian Arctic Convoy Museum

Alyosha : A Memorial



The towering 35m tall concrete statue together with its eternal flame stands tall over the city of Murmansk in northern Russia to commemorate Soviet fighters of World War Two.



Thursday 24 March @ Lower Hutt RSA

Thursday 25 August @ Lower Hutt RSA

Thursday 24 November @ TBA

2022

Further details will be advised as they come to hand

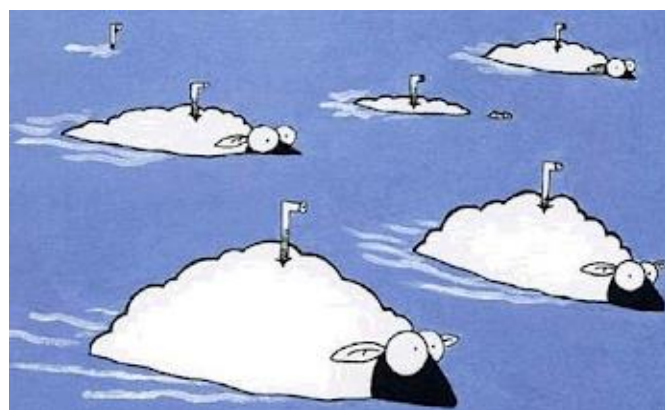
The sea captain and the punk rocker

An old sea captain was sitting on a bench near the wharf when a young man walked up and sat down. The young man had spiked hair and each spike was a different colour ... green, red, orange, blue, and yellow.

After a while the young man noticed that the captain was staring at him.

"What's the matter old timer, never done anything wild in your life?"

The old captain replied, "Got drunk once and married a parrot. I was just wondering if you were my son!"



Ewe Boats!



Up Spirits!



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