



# RACP NEWSLETTER

## SEPTEMBER 2017

### ISSUE 14

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## News

### RACP has a New Home!

We have moved in to the new building we mentioned in our last newsletter! We would like to say a huge thank you to all those who helped prepare the building over the winter.

### Catch “Grand Tours of Scotland’s Lochs: Shelter from the Storm” on BBC iPlayer.

The recently aired episode presented by Paul Murton features some footage of our #LochEwe75 festival from last May. It also shows a dive on a wartime wreck in Loch Ewe. Make sure you watch while it is still available: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b094kc7b>

### #LochEwe75 Commemorative Event: 29th and 30th September 2017

To further our #LochEwe75 celebrations we are holding an event to commemorate the 75th anniversary of PQ18. On the Friday evening we be showing *The Cruel Sea* in Aultbea Hall, and on the Saturday there will be a day of events including a guided tour of our Exhibition, a guided walk around Mellon Charles Boom Defence, and an illustrated talk on the Battle of the Barents Sea by Andrew Choong Han Lin (National Maritime Museum). See the event poster on page 6 for more details.

### Snowdrop Memorial Garden

It is fast approaching time for us to start planting our memorial garden. We are planting it next to our Exhibition Centre to commemorate the 3000 allied

sailors who were lost on Arctic Convoys. It will include some 3000 Snowdrops, and other white flowering plants such as Rhododendrons, Azaleas, Narcissi, Hydrangeas, and Cherry Trees. We also intend to include engraved paving slabs in the garden. One for every million Russians killed during WWII. If you wish you can still donate to this project either online through our JustGiving page, or by text. To donate by text, text:

“SNOW41 £YOURAMOUNT” to 70070.

## Reports

### Our New Home

It has been our goal since we started to have a permanent home for our collection and late last year the opportunity to acquire a building in Aultbea presented itself. The property was built as a bicycle factory and has more recently been used as a butcher’s shop. It needed extensive work to convert it to suit our purposes and an army of volunteers and tradesmen were brought in.



Left to right; Bruce Hudson, George Milne, John Rippon, Stuart Mackenzie

Throughout the winter, the team worked tirelessly alongside builders, electricians and plumbers to convert the building in time for our official opening on the 7th May 2017. Outside, car parking areas were created, fencing painted and signs erected.

Meanwhile, the ladies were busy creating a new gift shop area with the assistance of local joiners. Lots of local gifts and crafts stocked the shelves and the Aultbea Exhibition Centre was ready to open its doors in time for our Loch Ewe 75 Festival in May.



*The new carpark under construction*

On Sunday 7th May it was officially opened by The Russian Consul General Andrey Pritsepov. Our Exhibition Centre has now been open for 4 months and we have had some very positive feedback. We



*Francis Russell and Bruce Hudson working in our exhibition space, under the watchful eye of Peter Harrison.*

look forward to growing our collection and welcoming more lovely visitors.

## #LochEwe75 WWII Festival

In May we put on our weekend festival celebrating the 75th anniversary since the first convoy to leave Loch Ewe for Russia. It was a huge undertaking, with events in multiple locations but was well attended with lots of lovely feedback.



*Photo by Bruce Hudson*

## The Spitfire

One of the main attractions was of course the Spitfire display over Loch Ewe on both days. The Spitfire was owned by Historic Aircraft Collection (HAC), based at the Imperial War Museum airfield at Duxford, Cambridgeshire, and was flown by Mr. Charlie Brown.



*Photo by Nicky Ellakirk*

The aircraft, a Supermarine Spitfire Mk. VB, aircraft serial No. BM597 (civil registration G-MKVB) was one of an order for 1,000 Spitfires's, and was originally delivered to 37 Maintenance Unit (MU) in February 1942. It was then passed to an operational RAF (Polish) Wing and served with both 315 & 317 Squadrons. It was damaged in February 1943 and subsequently did not see further operational service. From 1950 it was designated a Ground Instructional Airframe and was allocated the number 5713M. From then until 1989 it served as a Gate Guard at a number of RAF Airfields. Eventually it was sold to HAC and restored to flying condition.

In 2005 it flew to Malta to take part in the 'Merlin's over Malta Project'.

It took part in our festival in the markings of 317 (Polish) Squadron, coded JH C.

## Re-enactors

We were so lucky to be able to host the Thirteenth Guards Poltavaskaya Rifle Division Living History Group, and the Northern 40s Re-enactment Group. They really brought the 1940s to life for everyone. The T34 tank delighted crowds, as did the replica Spitfire and Messerschmitt.



*The T-34 sat in Poolewe*

## Music and Make-Up



*The D-Day darlings on stage in Aultbea Village Hall*

Huge thanks also to the fabulous D-Day Darlings and Vintage Beauty Parlour, who brought a touch of glamour to our festival. The Darlings were a real highlight and the lovely ladies from the VBP shared some insightful hints and tips on 40s fashion.



*The Vintage Beauty Parlour Girls*

Not forgetting the marvellous Highland Swing Band, of course, who were back by popular demand. They got everyone's toes tapping.

## Yunyi Baltiets

We were privileged to welcome the crew of the Yunyi Baltiets, a sea cadet training vessel that sailed all the way from St Petersburg to join us at our festival. They even managed to assist in a search and rescue mission in the Pentland Firth on their way here.



*The Yunyi Baltiets and her crew as they dock in Gairloch*

## Arctic Convoy Veterans

What made our festival extra special of course, was the attendance of some of the Arctic Convoy veterans, some of whom had travelled from Russia for the occasion. We have greeted British Arctic Convoy veterans to our shores a number of times in the past, but this was the first time that we are able to welcome their Russian counterparts. It was hugely significant that it was be the first time Russian veterans were present at Loch Ewe - the location where convoys departed to Murmansk and Archangel.

We wish to thank everyone who came to our festival for making it such a special occasion.



*Russian veterans in Poolewe Hall*

## An Emotional Visit from a Wartime Deck Hand based in Loch Ewe

This week we received a lovely visit at our Exhibition Centre from 95-year-old Alexander Clark. During the war, Alexander had been a deck hand aboard the Empire Sprite, a tug based in Loch Ewe. He witnessed the sinking of the American liberty ship, the SS William H Welch on 26th February 1944. His tug attempted to



*Alexander and his family at our Exhibition Centre*

rescue the stricken vessel by firing a line. Alexander remembers this action. Having fired the line the tug anchor chain snapped (most unusual but testament to the conditions) and she drifted away. She returned for another attempt, but the liberty ship had broken in two and was lost.

# Collection update

We have added some fascinating items to our collection recently. Some notable additions include: A 1 Krona note belonging to Wilfred Townsend, who served on the Cape Portland during the war. He kept the note as a souvenir of his time in Iceland. During the war, Iceland could not be supplied with coin currency and so it issued its own locally produced 1 Krona notes on poor quality paper. Wilfred's note is dated 1941.



*The Icelandic 1 Krona note*

This Stereoscope would have been used to create 3D images of items of interest from a pair of 2D photos taken by reconnaissance aircraft. It has been kindly loaned by Pool House.



*The stereoscope in its wooden transport case*

A model HMS Onslow, donated by Derrick Westly.



*HMS Onslow*

A model HMS Activity, donated by Brian Wilson, and a model HMS Bluebell, donated by Frank Wilson. Brian also donated a very interesting original Shipyard Architect's Drawing for the building of the Activity. Many thanks to Anthony Wetherhill for transporting these to our Exhibition Centre.



*Anthony holding the model of HMS Bluebell from Frank.*

A Bronze statuette of the Arctic Convoy monument that stands in St Petersburg. It was presented by Yuri Alexandrov from the North Polar Club, St. Petersburg.



*Right: The statue in St. Petersburg. Left: The statuette.*

Willy's Truck manual destined for Russia (see top title). Donated by Roderick Pearce during our festival.



*Willys Truck Manual*

Many of the items in our collection are kindly donated or loaned by members of the public, often relatives of someone who served on the convoys. If you have any items that you think would be of interest, we'd love to hear from you. Do get in touch at [info@theracmproject.org](mailto:info@theracmproject.org)

## Convoys Remembered

### New veteran stories added

We've had lots of interesting new stories added to our veterans' archive recently. The latest additions include Dennis Abbott, senior telegraphist on HMS Bulldog; Ernest Morris, who served on PQ18 on HMS Opportune; Frank Wilson and Harry Wilson, who both served on the aircraft carrier HMS Activity; and Andrew Tully, who served on HMS Scourge. Take a look at our website to read their stories.



*Left: Harry Wilson. Right: Ernest Morris*

We love hearing from veterans and their relatives, particularly when they have an interesting story to share about their experiences on the convoys. Those who served on the convoys can offer insights and anecdotes that we just don't find in the history books. We're on a mission to preserve as many memories as possible for future generations. If you have a story to share then please get in touch.

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](mailto:marketing@theracmproject.org)

## Get Involved

### 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 Centre in Aultbea. 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](mailto: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](mailto: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 Project"

Address:

RACP

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

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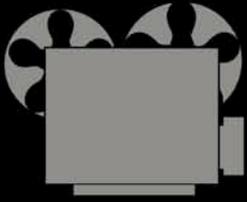
Newsletter produced by Nicky Ellakirk (technical advisor) and Natasha Miles (social media marketer).

Photos and articles contributed by Elizabeth Miles, Natasha Miles, Nicky Ellakirk and Bruce Hudson.

If you would like to contribute to future newsletters (or find any errors or omissions) please contact us at

[admin@theracmproject.org](mailto:admin@theracmproject.org)

# #LochEwe75 Commemorative Event



**FEATURE FILM - THE CRUEL SEA**  
**29 September 7.30PM, Aultbea Hall**



## 30 September

- Guided visit to the RACP Exhibition Centre 10-11.30am
- Guided walk around the Mellon Charles Boom Defence 12-1.30pm
- Recollections of PQ18/QP14 2.30-4pm
- The Tragic Tow of HMS Somali by HMS Ashanti 4-5.30pm
- "The Last PQ Convoy and the Battle of the Barents Sea" - an illustrated talk by Andrew Choong Han Lin (National Maritime Museum) 7.30pm, Aultbea Hall



**29-30 September**  
Aultbea Hall/RACP Exhibition Centre  
Fundraising event for the  
Russian Arctic Convoy Project