



Russian Convoy Club of New Zealand

Newsletter

November/December 2019

Dear shipmates, families and friends

British author delivers lecture to Murmansk students

British writer John Chuter (below centre), son of an Arctic convoy veteran, recently met with students at Murmansk Arctic State University.

John Chuter is a retired Royal Navy officer, historian, and writer. His father (also) John Chuter took part in campaigns QP-13, PQ-15 and SC-97. John Chuter Jr. is writing a biographical book about one of the episodes of Arctic convoy history – the sailing of the *Capira* steamship in 1942.

“There are still many unknown pages in the history of the Arctic convoys. New archival data is constantly being added, and contacts with scientists and amateur historians, including foreign ones, allow us to introduce new materials and documents into the scientific circulation. Our guest today is actually engaged in raising a whole layer of the history of the Arctic Convoys”, says Maria Ilyicheva, Associate Professor at MASU Department of History and Law.



“I started my work in 2000. When my father died, I got some of his documents. Then I studied the archives in the UK, USA, Canada, and online resources. It was very interesting and very difficult to translate Russian documents. It was also interesting to understand what had happened in Murmansk, and what local people thought about the events related to the Arctic Convoys”, said John Chuter who visited Murmansk specifically to meet with students. For some of them, the topic of the Arctic convoys is a sphere of not only general but also scientific interest.

“I am writing a thesis on the history of the Arctic convoys. I am going to focus on the medical provision of foreign sailors. During the war, there was a hospital for them where school N1 is now located. The chef from the Arctic Hotel was specially invited there to cook national cuisine. For example, he made English dishes for the English, and so on”, said Daniil Drobot, a 5th-year student in Pedagogical Education (History and Law).

The book of John Chuter *“Unfortunate Occurrences and Knavish Tricks: The last voyage of the SS Capira”* will be published in one year. At the meeting with the author, Maria Ilyicheva expressed hope that the current visit of the British historian was only the beginning of his cooperation with the University.

Merchant Navy Day commemorated in Wellington

On Tuesday 3 September 2019 a service was held at the National War Memorial Hall of Memories to commemorate the 80th Anniversary of Merchant Navy Day.

Merchant Navy Day is recognised around the world as a day to remember the sacrifice of seafarers who died in war.



President of the Russian Convoy Club of New Zealand Derek Whitwam (above) laid a wreath on behalf of Club members.



The Chief of Navy Rear Admiral David Proctor and crew from HMNZS Otago stood with their Merchant Navy colleagues and veterans to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the Merchant Navy Day.

Obituary

Frank Bertram David Jones



We are saddened to advise that our loyal member and veteran of the Arctic Convoys, Frank Jones, Légion d'honneur (HMS Belfast) Royal Navy P/MX 723787 crossed the bar on 1 October 2019. A well-attended funeral service was held on Friday 4 October 2019 at Knox Church, Lower Hutt.

Royal New Zealand Navy turns 78



The celebration of the 78th anniversary of the Royal New Zealand Navy was held on Tuesday 1 October 2019 at St. Peter's Anglican Church, 211 Willis St, Wellington.

October 1st is officially the RNZN's birthday, marking the day King George VI granted the Navy its title in 1941.

Royal Oak tragedy remembered



Gently bobbing in the calm waters of Scapa Flow on 14 October 2019, these are 835 red carnations (above) – one for each man lost at this spot 80 years ago.

Capsized, torn, crumpled and slowly disintegrating in the cold, dark depths are the remains of HMS Royal Oak, the first British battleship sunk in World War 2.

Relatives made the pilgrimage to the former wartime anchorage of the Fleet, the huge natural harbour in Orkney to join islanders, dignitaries and today's Royal Navy in paying their respects to 835 men and boys killed when the battleship was torpedoed.

Among the sailors were the crew of minehunter HMS Bangor, staff from the RN's regional officer and Northern Diving Group, who perform the solemn duty of diving on the wreck each year to replace the White Ensign which is fixed to the battleship in tribute (below).



With no survivors of the disaster left, the last man who experienced the sinking in the small hours of 14 October 1939 passed away in 2016, it fell to relatives to pay their respects.

A service of remembrance was held at Kirkwall's impressive St Magnus Cathedral, followed by a community ceremony at the HMS Royal Oak Memorial. There, members of the community and Royal Navy personnel placed 1,259 wooden poppies in the ground – one for each person who was on board.

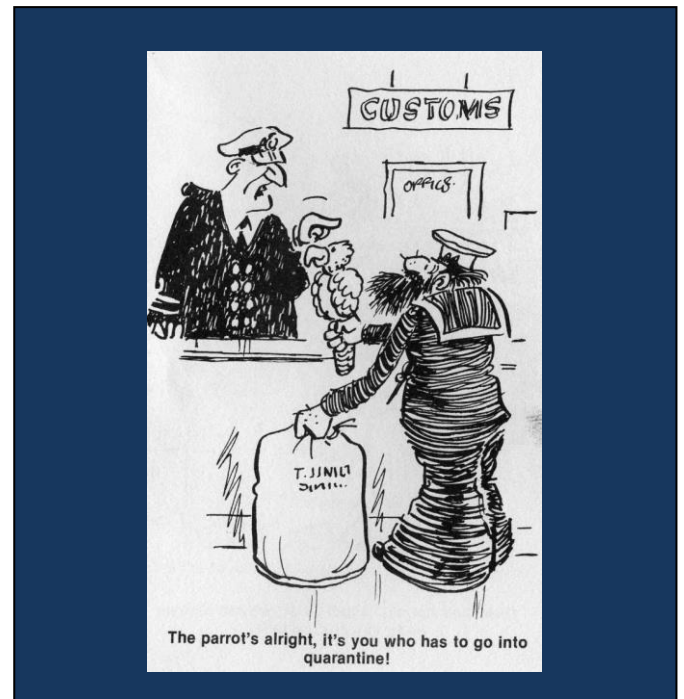
For many years it was thought that 834 lives were lost in the tragedy however recent research has uncovered details of a crew member who died in hospital from burns two weeks after the tragedy. His name has now been added to the Book of Remembrance, bringing the total loss from the attack to 835.

Diary Date

Christmas meeting:

Thursday
21 November 2019
at 1100hrs
60 County Rd
Otaki.

Here's hoping for
the usual Otaki
sunny weather!



Up Spirits!



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