

The Arctic Convoy Club of New Zealand

Newsletter
March/April 2024

Dear shipmates, families and friends

Norwegian production 'THE ARCTIC CONVOY' released

THE ARCTIC CONVOY, a new Norwegian film by Henrik M. Dahlsbakken was selected in the Limelight section of Rotterdam International Film Festival, where it celebrated its international premiere.



THE ARCTIC CONVOY, directed by Henrik M. Dahlsbakken, celebrated its international premiere at the Rotterdam International Film Festival. The captivating large scale action drama, inspired by true events, is set during the crucial stages of WW2 that took place in the freezing Arctic seas.

In 1942, Hitler's war machine seems unstoppable. The Germans invade the Soviet Union and the situation looks dire. To prevent further losses, the Allies are forced to help. Convoys of civilian cargo ships filled to the brim with war material begins the perilous journey to Murmansk and Arkhangelsk.

Ships set off on a deadly journey. Caught at sea without defence or war experience, civilian sailors come face to face with the German superior force in the brutal Arctic seas. Now courage becomes their only lifeline!

THE ARCTIC CONVOY has been sold worldwide including the United States where Magnolia pictures has acquired the rights. The feature has not only been met with great interest from the United States but worldwide with sales to several European and Asian countries.

Director Henrik M. Dahlsbakken commented "It is fantastic to be back with THE ARCTIC CONVOY. The response from the festival is overwhelming, and I'm very thrilled to present THE ARCTIC CONVOY for the excited audience in Rotterdam with the rest of Fantefilm".

THE ARCTIC CONVOY is directed by Henrik M. Dahlsbakken and written by Christian Sibenherz, Harald Rosenløw Eeg & Lars Gudmestad. The film is produced by Martin Sundland, Catrin Gundersen & Thea Benedikte Karlsen for Fantefilm Fiksjon.

[Watch THE ARCTIC CONVOY trailer here](#)

SS Otaki commemoration

As in previous years The Arctic Convoy Club of New Zealand was invited to lay a wreath at Otaki College during the 2024 commemoration of the sinking of *SS Otaki*.

SS Otaki was a New Zealand Shipping Company refrigerated cargo steamship that was built in Scotland in 1908 and sunk by a German merchant raider in 1917. Otaki's loss is notable because although the merchant raider *SMS Moewe* sank her, Otaki damaged *Moewe* enough to force her attacker to return to port, ending her raiding career. *Otaki's* Master, Captain Archibald Bisset Smith, was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross - one of only two Merchant seamen in the war to receive the award. As Merchant Navy personnel were not eligible, he was posthumously enlisted in the Royal Navy as a Lieutenant.

The citation states:

"For most conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty when in command of the *SS Otaki* on 10 March 1917. At about 2.30pm on 10 March 1917 whose armament consisted of one 4.7 in gun for defensive purposes, sighted the disguised German Raider *Moewe* which was armed with four 5.9 inch, one 4.1 inch and two 22 pdr guns, and two torpedo tubes. The *Moewe* kept the *Otaki* under observation for some time and finally called upon her to stop. This Lieutenant Smith refused to do, and a duel ensued at ranges of 1,900 to 2,000 yards and lasted for about 20 minutes. During this time, the *Otaki* scored several hits on the *Moewe* causing considerable damage and starting a fire which lasted for three days. She sustained several casualties and received much damage herself and was heavily on fire. Lieutenant Smith therefore gave orders for the boats to be lowered to allow the crew to be rescued. He remained on the ship himself and went down with her when she sank with the British colours still flying, after what was described in an enemy account as 'a duel as gallant as naval history can relate'".

His widow received the award at Buckingham Palace on 7 June 1919 accompanied by her son, Alfred, who had survived as a prisoner of war after the sinking.

At the 2024 *SS Otaki* commemoration at Otaki College the keynote speech was given by the Vice-Regal Consort H.E. Dr Richard Davies, OStJ, CF.

Club members were honoured to be seated with His Excellency and Otaki College Principal, Andy Fraser, during lunch at the Otaki RSA after the ceremony.



Photo: Ian Carson

Pictured at Otaki from left: Derek Whitwam (President, The Arctic Convoy Club of New Zealand); Syd Wells (Treasurer, The Arctic Convoy Club of New Zealand); and Stan Welch (Convoy Life Member, The Arctic Convoy Club of New Zealand).

Our Treasurer, Syd Wells, would be extremely pleased if the subs for the year 2024/5 could be paid as soon as possible!

Happenings

Heartiest congratulations to our youngest member Lt. Jack Gradwell who was recently promoted to Captain by the Governor-General, H.E. Dame Cindy Kiro. At the present time he is Aide-de-Camp to the Governor-General

Sadly we have to announce the passing of our Life Member George O. Billing (HMS Nabob) on Saturday 10 February 2024. Several members attended a Memorial Service for George which was held in Waikanae in early March 2024.

We are saddened by the passing at Blenheim on 5 January 2024 of our associate member Janette Gilbert, widow of John McEwen Gilbert who sailed on convoys JW58, RA58 and RA59 as a crew member of HMS Activity. We offer a warm welcome to Chris Borrie, who has taken the place of her mother, Janette, as an associate member of the Club.

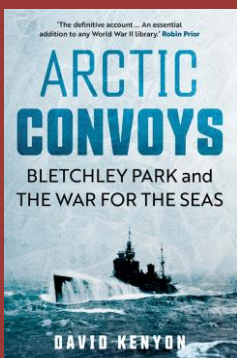
Bletchley Park and the Arctic Convoys

Discover the role of Bletchley Park in the battle to protect the Arctic Convoys to Russia in WWII.

Online : Wednesday 27 March 2024 : 8:00am NZDT

GBP5.00 [Click here to register](#)

Join Dr David Kenyon (Bletchley Park's Research Historian) discussing his new book Arctic Convoys, Bletchley Park and the War for the Seas. In it he examines the role Intelligence from Bletchley Park played in the battles to protect the Allied convoys sailing through the Arctic to Russia between 1941 and 1945. These convoys delivered more than 800 shiploads of supplies to the Soviet Union. Each journey was a battle against the elements, with turbulent seas, extreme cold and the constant dread of torpedoes. The Arctic convoys have been portrayed as defenceless vessels at the mercy of deadly U-boats – but was this really the case? David will discuss the true story of the war in the Arctic, a contest more evenly balanced than previously thought, and describe the vital role played by Bletchley Park in these events.



Our next ACCNZ Events:

- Thursday 21 March 2024 at 11:00hrs
Anzac Lounge, Petone Workingmens' Club, Udy St, Petone
- Thursday 29 August 2024 at 1100 hrs
Anzac Lounge, Petone Workingmens' Club, Udy St, Petone
- Pre Christmas meeting to be advised

Wartime Memory



Sailor's Lunch

A sailor brings his boat up to a restaurant dock to eat lunch.

The dockhand says, "I'm sorry, sir, but I can't let you dine here today. This establishment has a necktie policy, and you are not wearing one."

"Of course I don't have a tie on," replied the sailor, "I'm on a boat!"
"Well, go down below and put one on," said the dockhand.

"I don't HAVE one!" shouted the sailor.

The dockhand, not wanting to turn away a customer, said: "Well, why don't you just find something that approximates a tie. That should be OK."

After some time, the sailor comes out with a pair of jumper cables. "This is all I could find to put around my neck," he said.

Sighing, the dockhand said: "OK, I'll let you in with those, but just don't start anything!"

Up Spirits!



Derek Whitwam
President, The Arctic Convoy Club of New Zealand
Tel: (04) 971 4636 or Mobile: (027) 971 4636
Email: atired.92@gmail.com
Web: <http://www.arctic.org.nz>