



THE ARCTIC CONVOY MUSEUM

SPRING NEWSLETTER 2025



'Wars belong in the Museum'

(Issue 23)

By the Editor

Welcome to the Spring newsletter of the Arctic Convoy Museum and the start of the 2025 open season.

In this edition we will cover what has been happening during the Winter closed period and present our new exhibition. We'll also be covering our exciting plans for the future, and how you can get more involved.



We start with a 'goodbye' and a 'hello'. We say a sad farewell to our Exhibition Centre Manager and Operations Director James Brown, who leaves us to move to Orkney. We are sorry to see him go. In the two

and a half years he has been with the museum he has done fantastic work with both the exhibition and shop, and helped to promote the museum in social media channels. We will miss him a lot and wish him all the best for his future life in Orkney. But we also welcome Stephen Grant (pictured above), who will take over the majority of James's role, and we very much look forward to working with him.

Chairman's Report

Following approval by the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator, the Museum's parent charity is now also called Arctic Convoy Museum, having previously been The Russian Arctic Convoy Project. The reasons for the change were basically twofold. On the one hand, 'Russian' Arctic Convoy is somewhat misleading in that the convoys were not Russian but were multi-national Allied convoys to the then Soviet Union.

The other reason is that we are no longer a project, but a fully functioning museum. And we have more plans for the future, which include a memorial garden on the land we purchased, increased car parking space, and further down the line, an extension to the museum provided we can raise the funds and have the manpower to manage such a project. In the meantime, we hope to have another successful season, despite the difficult economic times and the increasingly uncertain geopolitical situation.

Over the Winter there has been a lot of work to refresh the Museum exhibits, led by our Curator Dr Karen Buchanan and our fabulous team of volunteers. As well as progressing towards our full accreditation as a museum, thanks to their efforts the Museum reopened on 1st April refreshed and ready for this year's visitors.

Curatorial Matters

As mentioned in our Winter newsletter, we are proceeding towards an application for museum accreditation. We have now worked through the first element of the accreditation submission, examining our governance, management and financial matters in line with best practice. We have moved on to the section of the process which looks at how we manage our collections. This is arguably the core section of the application. The museum is required to examine its policy and practice as regards caring for and documenting its collection. There is a national collections management standard called Spectrum, which guides museums on how they carry out their daily activities, such as numbering objects, or moving them around. We are bringing our practices into line with this standard to ensure that all of the objects and archival material we have collected over the past decade since the museum opened receive the best possible care.

We were fortunate to receive funding from Museums Galleries Scotland to purchase an off the shelf collections management system called MODES, which helps museums put the Spectrum standard into practice. Over the winter months, we have been busy tidying up our collections information and ensuring its accuracy so that it could be imported into MODES. The transfer took place in March, and we are now using the system for all of our documentation. It greatly streamlines much of the Curator's role and has all the features we need to manage our information.

Also, during the closed season, we have been redeveloping some of our display areas. The Curator drew up an action plan for this. It was agreed by the board and some members offered to assist with collecting information and images for the new displays. We have changed or refreshed the displays in five areas of the museum. In the uniform room, we have placed on display the two uniforms mentioned in our Winter newsletter, which were donated last year. One is a Fleet Air Arm flying suit that belonged to Allen Burgham of 835 Squadron.

The other is the uniform of Commodore Jack Dowding. Both these individuals were recognised for their distinguished and extraordinary service on the Arctic Convoys.

The rescue of Norwegian refugees from Soroy



Island and the broader story of convoy RA64 is told in another new display area, utilizing some fascinating objects and memoirs in our collection. We have also refreshed our exhibit on air

cover for the convoys to help visitors realise how this developed through the period in which the convoys operated. A large display area focusses on the local story – HMS Helicon at Aultbea and the Boom depot at Mellon Charles. We have also dedicated a memorial corner to the memory of all those who served in the Arctic theatre of war.

Notable acquisitions over the winter months

include a series of artworks by artist Stanley Rogers who served aboard HMS



Victorious. The artworks include interpretations of several of the escort ships involved in the Arctic convoys, particularly on PQ18. The bequest also contains some of Stanley's wartime effects.

We are also delighted to have transferred loan objects relating to veteran Henry Colin Brown

to a donation, which means they have become part of our permanent collection.

Finally, our remote volunteer project is going from strength to strength. Around thirty people from all over the world are currently working through the veteran files that we have been busy digitising. They are helping us organise the files by creating box lists, but also pulling out the stories of the veterans and writing them up in a way that will make them more accessible for future use. We feel very fortunate to have recruited such an engaged and skilled remote workforce to help us with this task. A BIG THANK YOU to them all.

Out and About

It has been a busy few months as regards events too. In January, we held a joint talk with the Royal Airforce Museum at Cosford on a recovered Hampden aircraft, which was part of a squadron sent north to defend PQ18. A recording is available at <https://www.crowdcast.io/c/vl-2025-acm-rafm>



Throughout February and March, we have been working with our local primary schools on a climate

awareness project lead by National Museums Scotland. The pupils have been creating climate messages inspired by some of the objects in our collection. Under the theme 'melting ice, rising seas', we have been revisiting the link between Loch Ewe and the Arctic. The outcome is more than 40 fantastically creative panels by the children that will form part of a climate quilt to be displayed in the future. We are also working with the schools on our VE Day 80 commemorative event. Pupils are designing banners with a VE 80 message that will be displayed in the three main villages in our area, alongside poppy nets made by local knitting groups.

In March, we supported Roddy Maclean's launch of his new book on



the convoys 'Never to Return'. This is the English translation of his 2023 Gaelic publication 'Cha Till Mise' and focusses on HMS Achates and the men who served on her. A recording of the event can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/live/dAnLVNHfVLg>

The Way Ahead Project

The initiatives mentioned above, the accreditation of the Museum, the digitisation of our records, the community outreach, are all elements of our Way Ahead project. A full description of the Way Ahead Project may be found in the Strategic Plan (2024-25). Any member of the Arctic Convoy Museum Charity may ask for a copy of the plan by emailing the Vice Chair at chris.connolly@arcticconvoymuseum.org

Your Trustees

The Board of Trustees has been unchanged over the last few months. There remain vacancies on the Board, however, and we continue to seek talented individuals, who are able to spare some time to assist in taking the museum forward. Trustees meet online every two months, therefore the role may be filled remotely. If you feel you may be able to contribute, please get in touch (see back page).

The full list of ACM trustees is now:

Peter Harrison (Hon President)
Francis Russell (Chairman)
Chris Connolly OBE (Vice Chair)
Elizabeth Miles (Hon Secretary)
Ed Duncan
Douglas Gibson
David Freeman LVO
Jenny Wiseman

Annual General Meeting

Following the success of last year's 'email' AGM, the Board has agreed to repeat the process this year. A significant number of Members were able to take part in the process without having to travel to Loch Ewe or attend via video link. Therefore, Members of the charity will receive an email calling notice around the end of May, followed by papers shortly thereafter. Members will have the opportunity to raise issues for discussion at the AGM.

80th Anniversary of VE Day – Cove



Once again, the Museum will be hosting a memorial event at Cove at 1100 on Saturday 17 May. This year will mark the 80th Anniversary of VE Day and we hope that you will find time to join us on the day. And we are very much hoping for the same weather as last year!!

The Museum on the telly!

In our last newsletter we reported on the National Geographic filming that took place last summer. The episode featuring Loch Ewe was aired on April 7th on the National Geographic channel, then later will be shown on Disney+ plus to a potentially whopping 124.6 million subscribers. Watch out for the special thanks in the credits to the museum!

Veteran News

John Shannon It is with regret that we have to announce the passing recently of a 108-year-old veteran, John Shannon. John was a RN Lieutenant stationed here for three years during WW2 along with his young family and lived in a cottage opposite Inverewe Gardens. His task, along with a flotilla of other small ships, was to lead the assembling convoy merchant ships in and out of the loch and to their designated anchorages.

John first made contact in December 2019 via a letter he sent to the Gairloch and District Times (G&DT) enquiring if anyone recalled the military unit that was stationed along the Poolewe seafront, where the Caravan Club now has the site. From that point on the Arctic Convoy Museum has been in regular contact and Bruce Hudson has visited him several times in his care home in Harrogate.

Right up to the end John was full of stories from those times, some of which were published in the G&DT. These experiences are now recorded in the museum's files as a superb historical record of those times. After a short illness and hospitalisation, John passed away peacefully. The museum was represented at his funeral.

Fred Jewett. Just before publishing this newsletter, we heard about the loss of Leading Seaman Fred Jewett. With his permission, we include a tribute to Fred by Tim Lewin, son of Admiral of the Fleet The Lord Lewin, who served with him in the convoys. As well as being a fitting testament to Fred's wartime career, his story captures what it was like to serve in the convoys. Tim writes:

As Great Britain builds up to the celebrations of WWII Victory +80, I am sorry to say we lost a great stalwart of the war at sea last week; my dear friend Leading Seaman Fred Jewett slipped quietly across the bar at the age of 102, one of the last RN sailors who served his country from the first to last days of the War. Holder of the Legion d'Honneur, Ushakov

Medal, the Arctic, Atlantic, Mediterranean, Normandy medals and the Sword of Honour from the Russian veterans, who shared the perils of the Arctic with him. I inherited Fred when my father died, together we did the memorial to the US Volunteers to the RN in the Painted Hall at Greenwich, we did the Malta Memorial on Tower Hill and many smaller tributes to the fallen, now they can stand him a tot wherever it is old sailors gather when off life's duty.

THE MAKING OF FRED The current recruiting advert for the Royal navy goes "I was born in a small town, but I was made in the Royal Navy". And so it was for Fred. When war came in 1939 Fred joined the RN as a career move, he took the first step to becoming a professional mate-lot. Sent to the legendary British training establishments for sailors, HMS Ganges in Suffolk, Fred went through the most rigorous and disciplined training which included climbing the 175-foot-high former mizzen mast of the original wooden wall fighting ship, Ganges. Not only did he climb the mast, he stood on the plate-sized button at the top, the lightning conductor clenched between his knees sending semaphore signals the World at large.

From Ganges Fred was sent to the cruiser HMS Phoebe, a post that was cut short when a badly secured hatch cover fell on his foot, fortunately it was jammed by its securing chain before too much damage was done or we would have had Fred lining up for Long John Silver impressions; but it was enough for a hospital break and transfer on recovery to a new ship. This was when Fred's real War at Sea began.

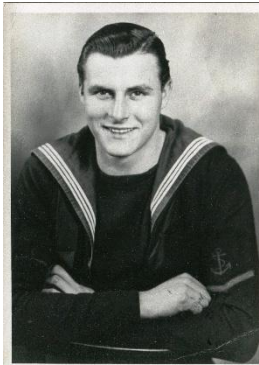
As winter came in 1941 Fred was posted to HMS Ashanti, the luckiest ship in the Navy. Why? In the months before War began the brand-new Tribal class destroyer Ashanti made a visit to the Gold Coast to greet the people for which she had been named, the Ashanti warrior tribe of what is now Ghana. The ship was showered with gifts but the most important was a little black wooden Ju-ju, presented by the chief witchdoctor of the Asantehene with the promise that as long as the Ju-ju remained in the ship no harm would

come to her. Are sailors superstitious, not 'arf! The Ju-ju was firmly fixed, secured for sea, to the searchlight platform just behind



the 4-barrel Chicago piano mounting where he could be afforded full respect by all who passed. Woe betide those who failed in this duty. A sailor named Merton did, the next day he fell down a ladder to the iron deck injuring his leg and was invalided ashore. The Ju-ju was not there to protect non-believers. To understand the degree of Ashanti's luck I should tell you that when War broke out there were 16 Tribal class destroyers, when it was over there were only 4, including of course Ashanti. The ship, and Fred, made 12 Russian convoys and as a welcome break in between, the War's most dangerous convoy, Operation Pedestal, to save Malta. As all around were bombed, torpedoed or sunk, Ashanti became the flagship. Returning from Malta, Fred was on watch when he saw the tracks of two torpedoes streaking directly for the middle of the ship, they passed beneath and disappeared to the distance on the other side, the Ju-ju at work! From Malta it was directly back to the Arctic. Returning from Murmansk with a convoy Ashanti spotted a U-boat on the surface, chase given with much shooting and depth-charging, to no visible success. Ashanti returned to the convoy and changed places with her sister ship Somali to refuel. Twenty minutes later, Somali in Ashanti's usual place, was torpedoed in the engine room. She didn't sink, and then began the great adventure of the Long Tow. Ashanti (with Fred) towed the crippled ship 600 kilometres towards the safety of Iceland but as that safety loomed, a violent arctic storm engulfed them. Somali broke in two and began to quickly sink. Fred and others were on the nets trying to pull survivors from the freezing sea.

Fred's close friend Lofty Goad dived in and rescued Somali's captain. This was 1942, September 24th, Fred was just 19 years old.



At the end of 1942 Ashanti was knackered (*Ed – that is an accepted naval expression!*), she went into dock for a refit, Fred by then, despite his youth, was an experienced and skilled sailor, something the wartime RN had never

enough of. He was posted to the brand-new destroyer Vigilant in which he then made another 10 Arctic convoys totting up a record 22 in total. As a short break from the “Kola Run”, Vigilant did her duty on the gun line for D-day, Fred the by then hardened gunnery rating was there banging away at the enemy positions with Vigilant's main battery earning the affection and respect of La France, and the Legion D'Honneur for his participation.

The War was not all pain and suffering, for a young man in the Navy it was exciting, his ship was his home, his friends were close, the old expression “do or die” was always in mind but only for someone else. For those intense years of 1942-3 Fred served with my father, a whole 3 years older. A bond that lasted a lifetime was forged, a bond not possible to recreate, or understand, in peacetime. When my father died in 1999, he left me with two requests, “look after the old chaps, and keep an eye on Fred”. So, there it is, that's how Fred and I met and our own adventures began.

Fred Joined the Royal Navy as a boy seaman, six years later he was a leading hand, a GI (Gunnery Instructor) a senior, skilled, experienced, and highly capable seaman. It was those six savage years of Navy that made Fred who he is, and we loved him for it.

Fred crossed the bar in the final days of March 2025, back again with his former Ashanti gunnery officer, filling the time between dealing

justice to the enemy with endless games of “Battleships” and splicing the mainbrace, Fred was one of the very best. **Tim Lewin, 1 April 2025**

Our New Honorary Member

The Museum is pleased to welcome our newest Honorary Member, Professor



Valentina Golysheva, formerly of the Northern Arctic Federal University

in Archangel, where she used the history of the Arctic Convoys as a teaching medium for her English courses. Valentina's interest in the convoys originally stems from her father Georgy Pavlovich Golyshev, who lost his life in 1944 in Convoy BD-5. She has long been a friend of the UK's Arctic Convoy community and last year was in Liverpool to launch her latest book ‘See You in Liverpool. Convoy Veterans' Voices in Poetry and Prose’ at the Western Approaches Museum. There she met with veterans Edwin Leadhead and Roy Elwood, and Eva and Helga, the daughters of a former Norwegian radio operator Goodbrand Kramvik. We hope to see her at the Museum soon.

Finally....

We are taking orders again for our popular ship silhouettes. If you



have a connection to an Arctic Convoy Veteran and would like to sponsor a ship silhouette to be displayed in the museum, or to have one made to display at home, then please get in touch and e-mail manager@arcticconvoymuseum.org

For our online shop, please see the website.

Get Involved

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: www.arcticconvoymuseum.org/history-learning/convoys-remembered/

Volunteer. We welcome any offers of help, particularly from those able to offer the odd afternoon in the summer in our Museum. If you would like to be involved in our project in any way, no matter how small, please contact Elizabeth Miles at info@arcticconvoymuseum.org

If you would like to help as a ‘Remote Volunteer’, please contact our Curator, Dr Karen Buchanan directly at karen.buchanan@arcticconvoymuseum.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 or Loch Ewe during wartime and you think it may be of interest to us, then please contact the Curator, Dr Karen Buchanan at karen.buchanan@arcticconvoymuseum.org

If haven’t already joined, become a Member. For just £10 a year, become a Member for free admission to the Museum and access to news and information about the Convoys. Contact manager@arcticconvoymuseum.org for an application form.

Make a donation. Help us continue our work. You can find our Just Giving page (Arctic Convoy Museum) here:

<https://bit.ly/3RIsXAF>

or, if you prefer to donate by cheque, please make it

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If you would like to contribute to future newsletters

(or find any errors or omissions) please contact us at

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