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OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE NORTH RUSSIA CLUB

12/89



**North Cape Edition**

*Buller*

A CHRISTMAS MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

TO ALL CLUB MEMBERS AND THEIR FAMILIES.

I AM VERY PLEASED TO BE ABLE TO EXPRESS ON BEHALF OF AUDREY AND MYSELF OUR SINCERE WISHES FOR A VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY, HEALTHY NEW YEAR. AS WE MOVE FORWARD INTO THE 1990'S MAY THE FRIENDSHIP AND CAMARADERIE CONTINUE TO THRIVE WITHIN OUR UNIQUE CLUB.

WARMEST REGARDS.

*Norman*  
N. Batchelor, Chairman.

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E D I T O R I A L

Immediately following the publication of the last edition a letter was received from club member Alex Armstrong - here is an excerpt:

I notice that Northern Light has no ISSN number. There is no cost involved in obtaining same, except the supply of 3 copies to the British Museum. This protects the copyright, but more important ensures the magazine is forever preserved. It is also instrumental in bringing to the notice of libraries both at home and abroad, who may become regular subscribers. Like it or not, 'Northern Light', copy by copy is building up into a complete history, not written by a historian at second hand, but by the people there and on the job at the time. Also, there is the genealogical aspect when sometime in the future, provided progeny propagate at regular intervals, someone wonders what their ancestors did in WW2. By definition of it's Constitution the North Russia Club must come to an end when the last old salt loses his marbles or slides thru' the purple curtains, but the 'Northern Light' would remain.

Sincerely,  
Alex. Armstrong,

This was followed up with an application and Northern Light was allocated a number - it is ISSN 0958-1014. In 1990 the magazine will also have a price (or prices) printed on the back. This will not (repeat not) apply to club members who will always receive a free copy as one of the advantages of membership of our club. The price is solely for the information of libraries, mainly overseas.

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Looking ahead to future editions, we intend to maintain the 'special theme' editions, your letters and responses prove that they are what you want. 'CARRIERS' and 'RED DUSTER' have been very popular, let's hope that 'NORTH CAPE' continues the trend. So, you scribes, here is advance warning for the 1990 themes.

March 1990: "THE KOLA PENINSULA". Were you based in Polyarnoe, Vaenga, Archangel, Murmansk or elsewhere? Were you landed as a survivor, or did you 'enjoy' a long stay at anchor in the Inlet or White Sea? We want your stories.

June 1990: "SMALL SHIPS" It will be the turn of the minesweepers, drifters, trawlers, rescue ships, submarines and smaller merchant-ships. In fact nothing larger than a corvette.

Sept. 1990: "CRUISERS & CARRIERS" it's your turn.

DEC. 1990: "THE 'O' BOATS" This edition will celebrate the 48th anniversary of the Battle of the Barents Sea.

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To start our chapter on the battle we include a couple of letters which concern K.M. 'SCHARNHORST' but are not about that fateful Boxing Day in 1943.

A letter from Alex Anderson, as mentioned on the previous page: "My father was master of the S.S. 'SHREWSBURY', Capper Alexander, and he was caught by 'SCHARNHORST' and its consort between Dakar and Gibraltar in 1940. Sailing in unescorted convoy, the day their escort was due to arrive, 'SCHARNHORST' appeared instead. I remember him saying many more lives would have been saved, but for a foolhardy action by one ship in opening fire with a four inch. He was picked up by the S.S. 'BLAIR ATHOLL' who had been so far behind the convoy, she had escaped un-noticed. Nice days work for 'SCHARNHORST', eighteen ships in one day. My father survived the war in command of a C.A.M. ship 'EMPIRE CLIVE', later renamed 'CHARLBURY'. All this has little to do with the Arctic, but keep taking the tablets!"

And now, 'The Admiral's Turkey' story from John Beardmore: "During our stay alongside at Polyarnoe in the Kola Inlet, just before Christmas, 1943, H.M. Corvettes 'POPPY' and 'DIANELLA' received a visit from the C. in C. Home Fleet, Admiral Sir Bruce Fraser R.N. (flying his flag in 'DUKE OF YORK') following his conference with his Russian opposite number Admiral Golovko.

After visiting 'POPPY', Admiral Fraser was piped ashore onto a snowbound jetty at Polyarnoe accompanied by his personal staff and under the ever watchful eyes of the Russians.

Suddenly and without warning he gathered up a fistful of snow and hurled it at his Chief of Staff. Within seconds a short snowfight had occurred between the Senior British Naval Officers with the astonished Russians looking on. It was extremely amusing and indeed, strangely enough, rather touching, as we realised that even Senior Officers were also human beings like ourselves.

Before he left us Admiral Fraser typically enquired after the Christmas welfare of the corvettes and, learning that they had no turkeys, still fewer Christmas puddings, ordered that sufficient of these commodities should be sent over from the flag-ship which sailed away on 20th December to be engaged in the Battle of North Cape six days later. In the meantime, 'POPPY' and 'DIANELLA' sailed on the 23rd December with the homebound convoy RA55A consisting of 22 ships in ballast plus their escorts.

Christmas day found us south of Bear Island hove to and heading into a Force 11 gale of great intensity. The heavy seas had swamped and extinguished our galley which was on the upper deck and could not be rekindled. Our much anticipated Christmas dinner was abandoned. Instead we had to manage with thick corned beef sandwiches and mugs of 'kye' laced with rum. Boxing Day saw the battle of North Cape and the sinking of 'SCHARNHORST', during which our convoy was directed towards the north-west as, apart from U-boats, we were not directly threatened. It was not until some days later when we reached the comparatively calmer waters between Iceland and Scotland that we were able to enjoy with some relish what was recorded in the ship's log as 'Admiral Fraser's Christmas Dinner'.

This gesture was, of course, typical of the man, and it was many years later when Lord Fraser of North Cape, as he became, was in his eighties that I was able to relate this story to him. The Admiral was not only amused but I suspect rather pleased that he should have been remembered, like Lord Nelson, for his consideration for the welfare of the men under his command as well as for his naval victories".

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ABOARD H.M.S. NORFOLK DURING THE BATTLE

by  
'Knocker' White (ex-Ldg.Seaman)

You asked for it! Here is my **SCHARNHORST** story - I hope it is good enough for N.L.18! I joined the R.N. as a boy entrant (place of birth Ennis Co. Clare.) My 'oppo' H.West (from Co. Cork) enlist as a Boy at the same time. We both went through training together and joined **NORFOLK** as boys.

Force One which had been spotted by German Reconnaissance planes was made up of cruisers **BELFAST**, **NORFOLK** and **SHEFFIELD**, under Vice Admiral Robert 'Nutty' Burnett. They stood further north to cover the passage of not one, but two convoys, **JW55B** going to Russia loaded, and **RA55A** coming back empty. At 0840 we picked up **SCHARNHORST** by radar, she was at this time 36 miles away from the convoy. The range between the German ship and the British cruisers was 35,000 yards and it was not until 0921 that **SCHARNHORST** was actually in sight. At 0924 fire was opened and the last action between big surface ships in the European war had begun. At this stage, only the 8" guns of **NORFOLK** were effective and they were opposed by the 11" guns of **SCHARNHORST**. **NORFOLK** scored the first hit with either her second or third salvo which carried away the enemy's main radar and put her port high-angle fire control director out of action.

The old **NORFOLK** had had an eventful war career. Built on the Clyde and launched on 12th December 1928, this 'Washington Treaty' 10,000 tonner, elegant with her three funnels and 8" turrets had been battered by interminable gales escorting Atlantic convoys, been attacked by enemy aircraft, U-boats and by **BISMARCK** and **PRINZ EUGEN**. Now pitching in very heavy seas and shipping it green along the length of her fore-castle, she trained her guns on the fleeing **SCHARNHORST** and opened fire again. The German ship replied with rapid salvos from her aft triple 11" turret and at once began to straddle the cruiser. It was with the fourth or fifth salvo that she scored her first hit of the engagement. An 11" shell struck the barbette of the Royal Marines 8" turret, putting it out of action and killing or wounding a dozen men. A few seconds later another shell struck **NORFOLK** amidships, doing much more damage (my 'oppo' H.West, was killed). A large fire started in the funnel area.

On return to Murmansk the casualties were taken ashore to hospital. I was the leading hand in charge of the party who was sent ashore to bring back those casualties who were fit enough to make the journey to U.K. Oh my God, what I saw I could not believe, it was appalling and a shock to all. The conditions, due to the acute shortages being experienced by the Russians was beyond belief. It was actually in this hospital that my 'oppo' died.

May God Bless All Those Who Gave Their Lives.

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ABOARD THE DESTROYER SCORPION

by "Scouse" Parry.

Dick, As you know our Naval careers were very similar, boy seamen in 1935, petty officers in 1950, both of us aboard destroyers during the battle, we may have seen and experienced this action differently, but let me give my 'remembrances' of so many years ago.

As a petty officer i/c Asdics aboard the new destroyer **SCORPION**, we were in company with C. in C. Home Fleet in **DUKE OF YORK** and the cruiser **JAMAICA**, together with our sister ships, **SAVAGE**, **SAUMAREZ** and the Norwegian **STORD**. I have difficulty in recalling the sequence of events all those years ago, but I do remember the parts played by our group on Boxing Day 1943. **K.M. SCHARNHORST** displacement 32,000 tons was faster than most of our ships, except for the nine-month old "**S**" CLASS destroyers (over a short distance).

**DUKE OF YORK** displacement 44,640 tons was understood to be speedy, but did

not handle as well in bad weather as the German vessel.

Convoy **JW55B** was being protected by the 10th Cruiser Squadron **BELFAST**, **NORFOLK** and **SHEFFIELD** together with destroyers **OPPORTUNE**, **MUSKETEER**, **MATCHLESS**, **VIRAGO** amongst others, and had engaged **SCHARNHORST** between forenoon and afternoon watches on December 26th. - the C. in C. was making all speed to put her in position for engagement, Our leader **SAVAGE** (Cmdr. Meyrick) was instructed to leave **DUKE OF YORK** and **JAMAICA**, and us four escorting destroyers to proceed at maximum speed, independently, and engage the three German destroyers **Z29**, **Z38** and **Z30** who had left **SCHARNHORST** and were steering a course towards the convoy now that **BELFAST** with Force One and the four destroyers had been drawn away from the convoy in pursuit.

Admiral Bey, the Officer Commanding the Northern Battle Group instructed the Captain of **SCHARNHORST** Captain Hintze to avoid action with **DUKE OF YORK** and concentrate on our cruisers and destroyers.

At about 1600 hours **DUKE OF YORK** opened fire at about 13,000 yards, from what I could see from the rear of the bridge (Asdic cabinet) on **SCORPION** where my crew were keeping underwater ranges on the **SCHARNHORST** the German had been taken by surprise, and had not realised that **DUKE OF YORK** and **JAMAICA** were to the south of her, and from the glare of the Star Shell from **JAMAICA** it appeared that **SCHARNHORST**'s turrets were trained fore and aft. Admiral Bey was altering course, in order to avoid the various vessels pursuing **SCHARNHORST**. The weather was becoming worse, and the German destroyers had disappeared.

The situation at 1730 was that **DUKE OF YORK** was southward, **JAMAICA** to the south-east and **SAVAGE** and **SAUMAREZ** on **SCHARNHORST**'s port quarter: **SCORPION** and **STORD** on the starboard quarter, we were preparing for a torpedo attack, at that time all cruisers were out of range, and the C. in C. ordered the "**S**" class to attack **SCHARNHORST** with torpedoes and "slow her down" - **STORD** and ourselves went in on the starboard side and fired four "fish" each at 1,500 yards, one "wag" was heard to shout "Get out the wires and fenders, we're going alongside the bastard".

Our skipper, Lieut.Cmdr. Clouston, who reported to C. in C. later "at 1,000 yards sir, we fired, Jerry didn't; I think she is having difficulty with her ammunition supply". **STORD**'s captain was Commander Storreheil (later to become C. in C. of the Norwegian Navy) inflicted one hit and ourselves a further one. **SAVAGE** had been disabled with **SAUMAREZ**! At about 1900 **BELFAST** opened fire again once we had withdrawn, three destroyers were helping our leader **SAVAGE** who was badly damaged. **DUKE OF YORK** and **JAMAICA** blazed away at about 15,000 yards trying to administer the Coup de Grace. Unable to do so, the C.in C. again ordered the destroyers to "SINK **SCHARNHORST**" and torpedo attacks were made or attempted by **SAUMAREZ**, **SCORPION**, **STORD**, **MUSKETEER**, **MATCHLESS**, **OPPORTUNE** and **VIRAGO**, several hits were recorded and claimed. All large ships withdrew from the melee, because of the number of destroyers in the area, our officers were congratulating one another as **SCHARNHORST** went down by the bows with her screws still turning after rolling over to starboard to the capsized position to sink in those frozen waters!

Lieut. Berrisford and I listened to the underwater noises on the oscillator in the asdic dome, as she went down and started to break up, the position was marked on the Range Scale as 2,000 yards off our Port Bow - 72° 16" North, 28° 41" East, then our attention was drawn to the desperate plight and struggle of so many men in that terrible water, all enemies, all Germans, but all men.

The story of the survivors is related at the conclusion of the article.

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## ABOARD THE 'SAVAGE'

Excerpts from a 21 page epistle by Bob McAllister

The battle which took place off North Cape will be recorded, no doubt as probably the last classic action fought between a Capital and lesser ships. The true significance however, is that the outcome had decisive strategic efforts, on events, in other Theatres of the Second World War. Future naval historians may think it remarkable, that such an encounter, the old fashioned form of shooting match, should have been possible, after more than four years, of maritime warfare, in which Aircraft and Submarines had more than proved themselves.

I can now say, that I look back with much pride, that I was given the great honour, to be a small part of this historic 'Action' as a young A/Petty Officer QR2. I was in the Destroyer **SAVAGE** (Cdr. Mayrick) she was leader of the Destroyer Division, consisting of three others, **SCORPION** (Lt. Cdr. Clouston), **SAUMAREZ** (Lt. Cdr. Walmsley) and the Royal Norwegian Navy **STORD**. Of course, I can only relate my ship's divisional part in the action. We were lying in the harbour of Akureyri, alongside **DUKE OF YORK**, this harbour was on the very bleak Northern coast of Iceland, the Force refuelling harbour. BRR!!!

Leave had been granted, I was ashore with a couple of chums, in the local cinema in fact, after a while a flash on the screen informed us to return forthwith to our ship - promptly! When arriving back, the Quartermaster on watch, informed us of a large Officer's conference taking place in the C.in C's quarters on **DUKE OF YORK**. I, being a young A/PO QR2 went to my mess, of course to get the 'Buzz'. Remarks being made around "I bet we will be at sea very shortly". At this time, another gale was blowing up, just our luck, we thought, although on the other hand, we felt that if we had to leave harbour, it would be better to be at sea, than stuck in this hole of a place, believe me, we were even missing Scapa Flow. The meeting we were informed was in connection of Convoy JW55B and **SCHARNHORST** and her escorts being at sea and they didn't know that British Naval units were refuelling at Akureyri.

U-Boats did not seem to have been molesting the JW Convoy, and the Luftwaffe in Northern Norway was, at that time too weak to carry out reconnaissance duties, so it was thought that **SCHARNHORST** was going to have a go. So we up anchored and proceeded to sea on Christmas Day, during the First Dog, at full speed, steaming through a raging Arctic gale, and of course total darkness, in the general direction of North Cape. Picture it - the '**DUKE**' and on each side of her bow **SAVAGE** and **SAUMAREZ** to her starboard and **SCORPION** and **STORD** to her Port, and just five cables astern the 6" Cruiser **JAMAICA**. Next morning, on Boxing Day, we closed up at Action Stations at 0800, what a lovely Christmas, stuck aft there, at my action Station 'Y' 4.5, it was really filthy weather, so bitterly cold and miserable, anyway we didn't moan too much, after having been told of **SCHARNHORST** and that, what we were after, was to put her on the bottom. Anyway, that's why we joined!!

As I stated earlier, I can only relate my part in the action. The first engagements with the enemy had taken place between 0840-1500 and the beginning of the final engagement between **SCHARNHORST** and **FORCE TWO** between 1500 and 1900, and the final stages between 1845 and 1945. The story then as I saw it was, that **SCHARNHORST** was being engaged by **BELFAST**, **NORFOLK** and **SHEFFIELD** with **DUKE OF YORK** at a distance. **SCHARNHORST** was moving away at 22 knots, when Admiral Fraser ordered us in from astern of her, at full speed, to close to 10,000 yards. I am sure that the speed we were going was in the middle 30s, I should say at about 35 knots. Anyway we were flat out! As we moved in **SCHARNHORST** started to fire Starshell, which I well remember straddled us, lighting the upper decks from stem to stern, being a gunner out in the open, I must say it was disconcerting.

My part of the action was as follows. I was OOs of 'Y' gun. I received a message over the sightsetter's phone to return fire with Starshell - the other '**S**' boats received the same order. After a few rounds my gun was not bearing, we were up against the safety rail. So we Checked Fire and stood by with H.A.D.A. shells. When **SCHARNHORST** was illuminated, **STORD** was ordered to carry

out a torpedo attack. But she was seen by the enemy who turned, 'combing' the tracks. **STORD** fired her eight fish, all missed unfortunately, at 1800 yards we all thought that she was going to ram **SCHARNHORST**. **SCORPION** fired next scoring one hit, giving **SAVAGE** and **SAUMAREZ** a great chance. **SAVAGE** at full speed, turning to 35°s to port, hard over, quickly training her tubes to starboard and at approx. 3,500 yards scored 3 hits. At this point in turning my gun came to bear. Without delay, I gave the order locally to Open Fire, which my lads did! with much gusto. They were a great guncrew. Of course we never knew of any hits on her, but I am sure we were in with a great chance. The poor old **SAUMAREZ**, also at top speed, was hit by shells passing through her Director under her Rangefinder, without exploding but causing really severe splinter damage and reducing her speed to 10 knots on one engine. One officer and ten ratings were killed and eleven ratings badly wounded. She fired four 'fish' and scored one hit, putting up a really great fight.

I remember, although I didn't take much notice at the time, during the heat of the action - the ship at full speed turning to Port, laying over to Starboard, gunwhales awash aft, the depth charge deck was really under. Good job the Tiller Flat hatch was secure, and of course, standing where I was, in rear of my mounting, the training rack and part of the gunshield, under water. I was very lucky not to have been washed over the side and gone for ever. Now having completed our successful run, under a great skipper, I can assure you, we got to hell out of it. After this onslaught, the C.in C. brought **DUKE OF YORK** and **JAMAICA** towards the German ship. On the other side of the story Admiral Burnett's Cruisers **BELFAST**, **NORFOLK** and **SHEFFIELD** and not forgetting the great 36th Division **MUSKETEER**, **MATCHLESS**, **OPPORTUNE** and **VIRAGO** having all carried out a great part in **SCHARNHORST**'s departure to the bottom. Of course, that is a separate story, as is the part played by all escorts and ships of Convoy JW55B. At 1901 **DUKE OF YORK** and **JAMAICA** re-opened fire as did Admiral Burnett's cruiser **NORFOLK**, but she had to cease fire after just two salvos as there were too many vessels in the area!! It was a way of clearing the scene!

**SCHARNHORST** was now being blasted to hell and back, her original proud sleek silhouette was no longer recognisable, she had lost steering way, her fore guns out of action, fires had broken out in many places including the upper deck. **DUKE OF YORK** and **JAMAICA** continued to hit her, wreaking havoc. She was now listing badly where the '**S**' Destroyers had hit her. Many more hits, both gunnery and torpedo were registered by Admiral Burnett's Force. At last the great battle cruiser had had enough - no one saw her go down really, because of a great blanket of smoke. The actual time was 1948 and the navigational position 72° 16' North 28° 41' East.

Now, this is not my analysis but reference from a book and is stated to be a conservative estimate, that she was hit by eleven 'fish', and this punishment was in addition to many, many hits from 14", 8", 6" and 4.5" guns. God! what a tough ship and very gallant crew of officers and men, one must give them credit. I know it was one of the great proud times of my life. All this story was part of my young life, I will always remember it, and of course I was 'born in a Pussar's blanket', so to speak. I consider myself very lucky, to have been part of it, with so many great shipmates and friends. I am glad I was born at the right time.

I must conclude by saying, the loss of **SCHARNHORST**, and the removal of the power-nucleus of the German Navy's Fleet in being, had altered the whole strategic picture, directly and indirectly. It affected the balance of power in every theatre of Global War. Finally, I would like to say, all those brave chaps, who served up in Russian Waters and in billets ashore, I take my hat off to. In our old age we will have our memories, of chums lost, God Bless Them.

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FROM 'OPPORTUNE'S' CAPTAIN

'Stormy' Fairweather asked me to let you have any recollections etc. of the **SCHARNHORST** action. Owing to old age (just on 85) my memory of past events is almost nil, but I turned up the following - it was amongst my old papers compiled by a young chap whilst serving in **OPPORTUNE** when I was her captain.

John Lee-Barber.

From the ship' log:

- 26th Dec. 0915 Hands to Action Stations.
- 0928 Flares and flashes observed.
- 0955 Joined **BELFAST, NORFOLK** and **SHEFFIELD**.
- 1130 Rejoined convoy.
- 1225 Enemy sighted in poor visibility.
- 1238 Opened fire - **enemy** turned away. Enemy presumed to be **SCHARNHORST**. No opportunity to fire torpedoes.
- 1703 Increased to 32 knots, continued to shadow enemy.
- 1902 Altered course to close enemy in order to fire torpedoes. **SCHARNHORST** firing tracer over us, no hits.
- 1910 Enemy reported damaged.
- 1929 Closed **SCHARNHORST** to within 3000 yards and fired four torpedoes - two possible hits obtained.
- 2115 **SCHARNHORST** reported sunk.

Prior to initial contact with the enemy the wind was blowing hurricane force but it gradually eased down during the engagement.

27th Dec. Returned to Kola Inlet to refuel.

28th Dec. Left Kola Inlet for second time.

31st Dec. Whaler lost through bad weather.

1944

2nd Jan. Arrived Scapa Flow. For once this seemed quite a friendly place.

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FROM 'POPPY'S' NAVIGATING OFFICER

Published in a local newspaper in July 1986, the chart is now on permanent view onboard H.M.S. BELFAST

WHILE recently raking over the ashes of memory of the Second World War in the loft of his Petersham home, local actor John Beardmore re-discovered in an old naval suitcase, undisturbed for over 40 years, his original plot of the action of the sinking of the Second World War German battleship "Scharnhorst" during the drama off the North Cape on Boxing Day 1943.

John had himself executed the plot while serving as navigating officer on board corvette "Poppy" part of the close escort of Russian Convoy R.A. 55A which escaped unharmed during the action.

"I realised that this was probably by now an historic

document", said John this week.

"I offered it to the Imperial War Museum to be presumably pigeon-holed, as I did not feel justified in keeping it.

"But the museum staff were delighted and accepted my plot made up from the many wireless messages pouring in during the action, and which represented in their words 'A unique and detailed record of the action'."

The chartroom and plotting facilities in corvettes and minor vessels during the war were pretty basic. There was no automatic plot as in cruisers and all plotting had to be done accurately by hand, which makes the survival of the document more surprising.

"The museum have not only accepted my plot of the action but intend to display it to the public permanently on board HMS Belfast, which also took part in the Battle of North Cape.

"I am naturally delighted that my old ship the "Poppy" which saw valiant service in the Allied cause in the war and has long since gone to the knackers yard will be remembered in this way, together with all those fine men, mostly in their twenties, who served."

John who had a long association with the Richmond Shakespeare Society has also appeared in "Rumpole", "Bergerac" and "Doctor Who", on television.

A 'JW55' MERCHANTMAN'S VIEW.

By Syd Scott


I was there, and here are a few jottings from my bad memory. I was a Radio Officer and my two colleagues and I were allocated the **OCEAN PRIDE** lying in Middlesborough. When we approached a line of ships only one was flying a large red flag and notices "Danger Explosives". Hoping this was not the one we tentatively asked her name and the Second Mate confirmed that it was and said, "Guess where we are going". They were fitting 'ice-boxes' over the portholes so it was fairly obvious. We all immediately went ashore to the Post Office to make out official wills!

At the Convoy conference at Loch Ewe it was more or less conveyed to us that this convoy, (JW55, I think), was meant to be some sort of trap to draw out the **SCHARNHORST**, - the cheese-bait in fact!! Of course we were assured that there would be sufficient outer escort to deal with this possibility.

She did come out, to cut a long story short, and contrary to the Christmas spirit she started to lob a few shells around, not considered to be 'Good will to all men' particularly if you are carrying explosives and Glycol. She was eventually attacked as the trap closed and we watched the flashes in the far distance, as of course the action was fought in arctic darkness at that time of year. I know that there were very few survivors, but it was a sobering thought that they had the choice of burning or freezing, and I wondered what I should have done in the same position. (Editor's note: Syd, the vast majority of them had no choice what-so-ever, being trapped in the bowels of a raging inferno!)

We went on to Archangel and were there for about a month in that godforsaken area across the river which was frozen over of course. To get to the town we had to walk over the ice and navigate a log thrown over the water where the ice-breakers had operated. No mean feat. In town it was a case of going to the Interclub or hotel and being 'attacked' by hungry children trying to cut your pockets open in case there was any food or chocolate there.

I enclose the final message from the Convoy Commodore to all vessels on the completion of the voyage. The original is badly damaged but thanks to the Marconi Company I have had a copy made on their modern forms.

 COPY THE MARCONI INTERNATIONAL MARINE CO. LTD. A GEC - Marconi Electronics Company <b>MARCONIGRAM</b> RADIO/TELEGRAPH/TELEPHONE/TELEX					CHARGES IN STERLING				
Prefix SS.		Office of Origin		No. of Words 55		Date filed 28.12.43		Time filed 0950	
Service Instructions		Sent by		Sent Via		Date Sent 28.12.43		Time Sent 0950	
AAIC - GB08		All ships of Convoy From Commodore Admiral Boucher.		TOTAL £		Duration		Mins.	
*DELETE IF NOT APPLICABLE									
I congratulate all Captains, Officers and men, on a fine feat of hard steaming skill and endurance, in what has been under Gods hand a successful and historic voyage. Good luck and may we sail together again.									
M.W.S. BOUCHER R.N.R.									
Form S.1 Printed in England					CONDITIONS OF ACCEPTANCE DETAILED OVERLEAF				

## "A SEAGULL'S EYE-VIEW"

By Maurice Cross

Twas Christmas night on the Oggin, or rather Boxing Day, and I had the Middle. It was the usual dark, filthy Arctic night with a gale force 9 to 10, causing tinned Christmas pudding to jingle inside me like a leaden weight. The gyro compass had packed in, so the captain was dead niggled - especially when the quartermaster reported that the magnetic compass card kept veering off course under the malign influence of the Magnetic Pole.

"Tell the radar op. to report any variation on our distance with that tanker" the captain shouted above the wind's howl. Then the radar packed in. "What!" roared the captain, "Get the radar mech. off the gyro and up here on the radar".

The best part of the watch was 'Jimmy the One' emerging backwards from the chart caboose with his duffle coat hood tossed back, when we hit a milestone and three tons of oggin crashed down on the bridge - most of it down Jimmy's neck. Squealing with rage and shock he leapt to the wind-dodger, shook his fist at the raging elements and shouted "the slings and arrows of outrageous bloody fortune!!"

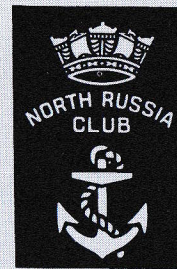
The W/T office buzzer clamoured Emergency! Emergency! I nipped across to the W/T voicepipe and swiftly pulled up the string (highly technical stuff in those days) and removed the pink signal form from the container. It was from Whitehall W/T. 'Admiralty appreciates that SCHARNHORST is at sea' T.O.O. 0319. "Appreciates! appreciates!" snarled the captain, "I don't appreciate it get that bloody radar working Number One, or we'll be up that tanker's backside or half way across Bear Island." We were homeward bound on Convoy RA55A.

After the SCHARNHORST panic stations started, both convoys (one coming, one going) were told by Sir Bruce to push off north out of the way. But not before he pinched four of our fleet destroyers (MUSKETEER, MATCHLESS, OPPORTUNE and VIRAGO) to join the Murmansk-bound JW escort and later join Force One Cruiser Group.

So our convoy was left to the ministrations of V & W destroyers, corvettes, sweepers, etc. Up north we steamed, away from SCHARNHORST's 11" broadsides. The wind reached force 11. Ruddy great waves the size of the Mendip Hills thundered by. Our radar and gyro were back in action, so the captain had regained his usual sang-froid. Then one by one the V & W's flashed, "Heaving-to, to ride out the weather". Because of our shorter, round-bottomed shape, we were riding the giant waves like a rollercoaster, while the long, lean V & Ws, were plunging head-on and shaking their guts out. So to our amazement, especially the captain's, we in SEAGULL found ourselves Senior Officer of the escort. Fortunately our radar and gyro were still working or we may have led them all across the North Pole. The captain rose to the occasion magnificently and struck Nelsonian poses on the compass platform - no doubt already anticipating the scrambled egg on his cap.

As we only carried four V/S staff, we bunting-tossers were on permanent watch as Morse was flashed about in all directions. "Well chaps, what do you think of being Senior Officer of an ocean-going escort?" beamed the captain. "Bloody terrible" I thought, but said "Splendid sir, splendid" (Creeping again). What has this got to do with the SCHARNHORST caper did you say? Well not much really. I just thought that you 'flash harry's' on the big ships and the fleet destroyers might like to know what the other half were doing, as the big bricks and tinfish were flying about down south. Not that I was breaking my neck to be with you brave lads of course. If it came to a choice of 11" projectiles whistling through the bulkhead, or shipping it green up with RA55A, I knew where I'd rather be - yes, you guessed it - in the bar of the Seven Stars, with a pint in one hand and a blonde in the other!

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On behalf of the President, Vice Presidents, Officers and Committee, I wish you all a Very Happy Christmas and a New Year of Prosperity, Good Health and Peace.

Our membership continues to increase and at the last count stands at a healthy total of 816, thanks to the continued good recruitment work of our Membership Secretary Les Sullivan. Les of course is our 'Jack Dusty' also, and he has something to say to you on a following page, I urge you to give him your orders for Christmas Cards without delay.

1989 must surely have been the most comprehensive and successful since the club's formation. The functions have all been enjoyable, with the accent on the 50th Anniversary of the Outbreak of War. In early March we held a Members Only reunion at the Victory Services Club at Marble Arch. This was followed by a Dinner Dance in April at Rochester, hosted by the Kent Boat & Ski Club of which I am President and Founder. This was followed in May by another tour to Moscow, Leningrad and Murmansk - it was so successful that Dick has already drawn up plans for a further visit in 1990 - on this occasion we will be joined by members of the Russian Convoy Club. In July, we held the A.G.M. week end. Commencing on Friday night with a 'block-booking' at the Royal Tournament followed by the A.G.M. and a Buffet Dance with 184 members and ladies in attendance. It was a super weekend, but this was followed by what was, without doubt, the most rewarding and memorable function ever organised by the club. This was our Commemoration and Thanksgiving Weekend to mark the 50th Anniversary of the Outbreak of War.

On Saturday morning, 2nd September, 40 members assembled at Brookwood Military Cemetery to lay a wreath on the Russian Memorial. We were accompanied by members of Woking R.N.A. and a bugler from the Scots Guards based close by at Pirbright Camp. A short service followed and this was conducted by the Rev. Gordon Taylor of St. Giles in the Fields, who is a member of N.R.C. and a serving padre veteran. This ceremony will be repeated in 1990 and we intend to invite members of the Russian Convoy Club. That evening we held a most enjoyable 'Those Were The Days' Buffet Dance - what memories, what nostalgia and what singing!!!! We were all young again, but, oh the pain and hangover the following morning! But this didn't stop everyone from being prompt on Church Parade aboard H.M.S. Belfast. Dick had arranged a seating plan for 185 on the Quarterdeck, but we had to hurriedly find additional seating on benches, bollards, gratings and guard rails. A poignant but rewarding service was conducted by Canon Colin Craston, Chaplain to H.M. The Queen. The lesson was read by Captain F.A. Collins R.N. and music was provided by Malling Youth Brass. We must record our very sincere thanks to Captain Collins and to the Imperial War Museum for providing the facilities aboard Belfast. We were also pleased to have the President of the Russian Convoy Club, Captain C. Francis and Mrs Francis in the congregation. Photographs of the congregation etc. are available from Chris Darge, (contact me on 0634 32884)



Saturday 21st October saw our gathering for the 5th Annual Dinner Dance, this year coinciding with Trafalgar Day, attended by 175 members and ladies. A highlight was the appearance of Vice Chairman Ernie and Biddie Skelton as Lord

Horatio Nelson and Lady Hamilton, resplendent in full uniform and period dress. A wonderful evening was tinged with some disappointment and sadness, because of the absence of Dennis and Ivy Whitehouse and of Dick and Peg Squires who unavoidably had to make a late cancellation, due to being involved in a traffic accident a few days earlier. The chairman read the following letter from Denis during the after-dinner speeches:-

"Please pass my regards to all members and their wives at tonight's Annual Dinner. I am sure they will have a most enjoyable evening as we always do. My one request to you all is, please keep alive that special bond we of the North Russia Club have, and give to your Chairman Norman, Hon.Sec. Chris, and Asst.Hon.Sec. Dick, all the support for their efforts on your behalf. Finally, may I say thank you for the honour of making me a Vice President and Life Member.  
Yours in N.R.I. **Dennis Whitehouse.**

During the evening arrangements were made to send Peg and Dick a 'Get Well' card together with some flowers and a bottle of 'medicine' (Dick's reply is to be found later in this newsletter.) Our guest speaker at the dinner was Raymond Corcoran, Chairman of Mansfield R.N.A. who had entertained us to a Buffet Lunch earlier in the day.

By the time you read this, we will have attended the Field of Remembrance at Westminster Abbey in the presence of H.M. Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother. We will be planting Poppy Crosses on the Arctic Campaign Veterans plot in company with representatives of the Russian Convoy Club. On 2nd. December the 5th Anniversary of Formation Buffet will have taken place at the Victory Services Club.

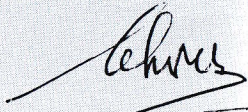
Now, a few words about the main component in our club, **Northern Light**. The only component that we can all share, as it drops through everyone's letter box. Happily, we have a good Ready-Use Locker of contributions for future editions, but keep them coming in, particularly if they refer to the four main topics listed on Page Two.

**1990 DATES FOR YOUR DIARIES**

- SATURDAY 24TH FEB.** Member's Evening at Victory Services Club, Notification & Booking Form enclosed.
- SATURDAY 21ST APR.** London & Home Counties Members & Ladies Dinner At Kent Boat & Ski Club, Cuxton, Rochester. Notification & Booking Form in March Northern Light.
- SATURDAY 5TH MAY** Annual Tour to U.S.S.R. (Leningrad & Murmansk only)  
**TO** (Including 45th Anniversary Victory Celebrations & Wreath laying at sea.) Nearly fully booked now, contact Dick if interested 051-487 9567.
- SATURDAY 12TH MAY.** Members Reunion Buffet at Royal Sailors Home Club, Portsmouth.
- SATURDAY 19TH MAY.** Annual General Meeting followed by Members & Ladies Buffet Dance at Victory Services Club, London.
- SATURDAY 14TH JULY** Block Booking for Royal Tournament at special prices.
- FRIDAY 27TH JULY** Wreath Laying Service at Brookwood Military Cemetery's Russian Memorial.
- SATURDAY 28TH JULY** 6th Annual Dinner Dance at Swallow Hotel, South Normanton, Derbyshire.
- SATURDAY 20TH OCT.** 6th Annual Formation Reunion Buffet at Victory Services Club, Marble Arch, London.
- SATURDAY 24TH NOV.**

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**USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS**

- |                                  |                                 |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| CHAIRMAN.....0252 314422         | HON. SECRETARY.....0634 32884   |
| VICE CHAIRMAN.....0304 202704    | HON. TREASURER.....0844 52765   |
| EDITOR/TOUR LEADER..051 487 9567 | MEMBERSHIP/SLOPS....0278 683579 |
| WELFARE.....0554 64935           | MEMORIAL FUND.....0707 55846    |
| BLUE NOSE CERTS.....01 427 4982  | UNION JACK CLUB.....01 928 6401 |
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**"WELCOME ABOARD" TO THE FOLLOWING NEW MEMBERS.**

- |                     |   |
|---------------------|---|
| Thomas G Annal      | 49 Wesfield Road, Trowbridge, Wilts BA14 9JW.                         |
| George F Ashby      | 4 Winsfield Avenue, Allesley Park, Coventry CV5 9JW.                  |
| Benjamin H Beeston  | Harrison, 35 Morgans Rise, Bishops Hull, Taunton, Som's't, TA1 5HW.   |
| J H Britton         | 52 The Wade, Welwyn Garden City, Herts AL7 4LG.                       |
| John C Chittenden   | 68 Upper Grotto Road, Strawberry Hill, Twickenham, Middx. TW1 4NF.    |
| D M Francis         | 39 Langland Road, Llanelli, Dyfed SA15 1BR.                           |
| James Galloway      | 22 Hyvot Green, Gilmerton, Edinburgh EH17 8PH.                        |
| Dr D L Hadley       | Overholm, Dalbeattie, Kirkcubright shire DG5 9HX.                     |
| Albert H Hitchcocks | 5 Ronald Drive, Lidget Green, Bradford, W.Yorks BD7 2AX.              |
| William A Horton    | Seven Seas, 7 Ywaun, Ynysbwl, Mid Glamorgan CF37 3HZ.                 |
| William L Jones     | 20 Burrows Road, Melyn, Neath, West Glamorgan SA11 1TA.               |
| Cyril Lunn          | 35 Glamis Avenue, Heywood, Lancs OL10 2LX.                            |
| Wilfred G Reynolds  | 49 Gordons, Pitsea Road, Basildon, Essex SS13 3DZ.                    |
| D H Rutter          | Grug-Y-Mynydd, Cilgwyn Road, Newport(Pembs), Dyfed.                   |
| Dr N W Sargent VRD  | Forge House, Marsh Gibbon, Bicester, Oxon OX6 0ET.                    |
| Sydney Sayers       | Hazeldene, Low Road, North Tuddenham, Dereham, Norfolk NR20 3AB.      |
| Donald J Sherrard   | 16b Devonshire Avenue, Sheerwater, Woking, Surrey.                    |
| Robert R Thomson    | 2 Fernie Hill Square, Gilmerton, Edinburgh Scotland.                  |
| W J Turner          | 5 Alveston Walk, Sea Mills, Bristol BS9 2NJ.                          |
| Cyril Walker        | Pengale Cottage, Churchtown, Michaelstow, St Tudy, Cornwall PL30 3PB. |

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**CHANGES OF ADDRESS**

- |              |  |
|--------------|--|
| G A Chambers | 6 Waterlake, Sturminster Newton, Dorset QP10 2PT.        |
| R N Dougall  | Box Bush, Walberswick, near Southwold, Suffolk IP18 6UL. |
| J Fildes     | 6 St Mary's Villa, Battle, East Sussex TN33 0BY.         |

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**AMEND PREVIOUS LISTS**

- |          |                                 |
|----------|---------------------------------|
| J Wooley | Should read <u>J Woolley.</u>   |
| R Dougal | Should read <u>R N Dougall.</u> |

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**"ROLL CALL" OF SHIPMATES.**

- |               |               |             |                 |             |                     |
|---------------|---------------|-------------|-----------------|-------------|---------------------|
| ACTIVITY      | B.H.Beeston:  | BERRY       | D.M.Francis:    | BULLDOG     | C.Lunn; D.H.Rutter: |
| CAMPANIA      | D.J.Sherrard: | CAPRICE     | S.Sayers:       | CHASER      | B.H.Beeston:        |
| EMPIRE PURCEL | W.G.Reynolds: | NAIRANA     | N.W.Sargent.    | JAMAICA     | W.L.Jones:          |
| KENYA         | R.R.Thomson:  | LEDBURY     | A.H.Hitchcocks: | LOTUS       | R.R.Thomson:        |
| MARTIN        | J.H.Britton:  | OFFA        | T.G.Annal:      | PYTCHLEY    | W.L.Jones:          |
| QUEEN         | B.H.Beeston;  | D.L.Hadley; | N.W.Sargent:    | SAMTREDY    | J.C.Chittenden.     |
| SHEFFIELD     | W.A.Horton:   | TRACKER     | B.H.Beeston;    | J.Galloway: |                     |
| TRINIDAD      | W.J.Turner:   | VINDEX      | J.Woolley:      | ZEPHYR      | G.F.Ashby:          |
| WHITEHALL     | C.Walker:     |             |                 |             |                     |

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**WITH DEEP REGRET WE REPORT THAT THE FOLLOWING MEMBERS HAVE "CROSSED THE BAR".**

<p>F.ADLINGTON of Southampton ex H.M.S. BERWICK  A.ALLSOPP of Nottingham ex S.S. EMPIRE TIDE  H.C.M.P.(Jan) COLES of Cheltenham ex H.M.S.MOUNSEY  R.TAPPIN of Southampton ex H.M.S. KEPPEL</p> <p style="text-align: center;">R. I. P.</p>
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**"MISSING PERSON"** We are trying to trace **George Egan** who served on **ONSLAUGHT** when she commissioned - if you know his whereabouts please put him in touch with, Jack Cotterill, 12 Ryan Crescent, Riverstone, New South Wales 2765, Australia.



**NEWS FROM 'JACK DUSTY'**

Firstly, may I point out to the many members who have paid for items on the Slop List, and who are awaiting delivery of all or part of their order. That this is due to delay from the manufacturers who require bulk orders before they commence the manufacture of items. Rest assured that you will receive your orders as soon as they are received by me. I would also point out that many of you who completed the questionnaire on items we should stock, have not responded since we prepared our Slop Chit List. If you have lost your list please apply for another or if you have your uncompleted list - be careful that you dont miss the boat. The Christmas Cards are proving very popular and you are advised to get your order in quickly. **They are 10 for £2.50 (25p each) but please add a little on, to cover mailing to you.** For quick reference here is my address:- **L.SULLIVAN, 2 BROADLAWN, WOOLAVINGTON, BRIDGWATER, SOMERSET TA7 8EP.**

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**WELFARE**

A short reminder from our Welfare Officer asks us to state that he is always ready to give advice or help. If you, or your fellow shipmates are in any real difficulties, dont be embarrassed, please contact him. His name is **E.R.(Ron) PHELPS,**  
**89 TYLE TEG,**  
**GARDEN SUBERBS,** **TELEPHONE 0554 64935**  
**BURRY PORT,**  
**LLANELLI,**  
**DYFED SA16 OSR.**

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**"RUNNING THE GAUNTLET"**

Fontana Paperbacks have sent us details of a new book written by club member Frank Pearce (ex-TRINIDAD). "We are pleased to announce that his new book, **RUNNING THE GAUNTLET,** with a Foreword by Admiral of the Fleet, Lord Lewin, was published in Fontana Paperbacks on Thursday 12 October 1989. The book is available at all good bookshops, priced £3.50.

As someone who experienced some of the worst aspects of the Arctic War, Frank Pearce would be willing to autograph copies sent to him enclosing a large stamped addressed envelope for the book's return. His address is 61 Longmead Road, Paignton, Devon TQ3 1AX"

Amongst Frank's numerous other books are **THE SHIP THAT TORPEDOED HERSELF** and **LAST CALL, EDINBURGH.**

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**A LETTER FROM PEG & DICK SQUIRES  
TO ALL WHO WERE AT THE ANNUAL DINNER DANCE**

Dear Shipmates and Ladies,

On Saturday night we sat at home nursing our bumps and bruises from a car accident, but living through the evening with you in spirit. It was a great tonic when some of you broke off from the festivities to phone us.

On Monday afternoon Bill and Edie Ford arrived bearing that wonderful card signed by you all, a bouquet that defied description and a bottle of 100% Proof medicine - without a label restricting dosage to three times a day!

We sincerely thank you all and will always remember your kindness. Indeed, "The friendship of our club is like a warm coat on a winter's day".

God Bless You All.

Peg & Dick Squires.

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**ACTION STATIONS "A" GUN**

by

**A.B.Len Phillips, HMS Opportune.**

The formation and role of Force One has already been told, but here is the recollections from the Focsle!!

I remember well that we were stationed well in front of the cruisers, the weather was atrocious and on 'A' gun we only had a protective shield around the gun, no turret to keep out the foul weather, we were steaming at maximum speed, we used ropes around our waists attached to the gun shields as safety lines.

We were recalled to Action Stations late in the forenoon watch, the Cooks of the Mess were just returning from the Galley when the alarm bells sounded. We were to be closed up until late into the second dog watch.

The eventual chase and action was to go on all day long, the Cruisers astern of us firing over our heads, the tracers could be seen quite clearly as could those of **SCHARNHORST's** 11" guns. We continued to fire with our puny 4" but after a while ceased firing. Difficulties were being encountered by the Destroyers as the weather continued to batter us, it was becoming a thought that there could soon be a disaster from the weather alone, at a stage during the ensuing battle, our skipper John Lee-Barber had noted the plight of our gun crew and ordered us to fall out as our position had become impossible and we were serving no purpose at the time. Some time later it was brought to our attention that the weather had forced the German destroyers to retire and they were bigger than ours.

Contact was made and lost with the German Force, we were then told that the C. in C. with Force Two was closing the battle fast, this was a great relief. The ensuing battle was taking place in semi-darkness, gun flashes were the only indication of a ships position. As **SCHARNHORST** lost speed we were able to close her, orders were given for the destroyers to engage with torpedoes - our turn had come, this was our main armament!! Our gun crew had a grandstand view as we went in and fired the first four of our torpedoes, we then turned and fired the other four tubes. **SCHARNHORST** seemed to be glowing, there was so much firing and explosions. We had then retired from the area as other ships followed to deliver their deadly cargo, eventually there was silence and we were informed that **SCHARNHORST** was sunk.

Then came the order "Splice the Mainbrace" What celebrations!!

A sight I shall always remember is the welcome home we received at Scapa Flow as conquering heroes, the whole fleet was assembled to cheer us home. Dont forget that the same ship had sunk thousands of tons of our shipping and taken the lives of many of our shipmates.

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**VESSELS THAT TOOK PART IN THE BATTLE OF NORTH CAPE**

**(Including Convoy Escort and Support ships)**

**Originally published in Northern Light, Page 10.**

H.M.S. Duke of York.	H.M.S. Meteor.	H.M.Nor.S. Stord.
H.M.S. Belfast.	H.M.S. Milne.	H.M.S. Virago.
H.M.S. Jamaica.	H.M.S. Musketeer.	H.M.S. Westcott.
H.M.S. Norfolk.	H.M.S. Onslaught.	H.M.S. Whitehall.
H.M.S. Sheffield.	H.M.S. Opportune.	H.M.S. Wrestler.
H.M.S. Ashanti.	H.M.S. Orwell.	H.M.Nor.S. Acanthus.
H.M.C.S. Athabaskan.	H.M.S. Scorpion.	H.M.S. Dianella.
H.M.S. Beagle.	H.M.S. Scourge.	H.M.S. Honeysuckle.
H.M.C.S. Haida.	H.M.S. Oxlip.	H.M.S. Poppy.
H.M.C.S. Huron.	H.M.S. Gleaner.	H.M.S. Seagull.
H.M.S. Impulsive.		
H.M.C.S. Iroquois.	<b>K.M. Scharnhorst.</b>	
H.M.S. Matchless.	Z79. Z30. Z33. Z34. Z38.	
H.M.S. Saumerez.	R56. R58. R121. U277. U314.	
H.M.S. Savage.	U354. U387. U601. U716. U957.	

THE LAST DRAMATIC ACTION - MINUTE BY MINUTE

- 1901 hrs. DUKE OF YORK and JAMAICA opened fire at a range of 10,400 yards. NORFOLK opened fire but checked after two salvos as she was having difficulty in keeping SCHARNHORST in sight. Between 1901 and 1928 hours it was observed that the enemy's speed had fallen from 20 to 5 knots.
- 1915 hrs BELFAST opened fire. Range 17,000 yards.
- 1925 hrs JAMAICA fired three torpedoes to SCHARNHORST's port side, one of which misfired. Range 3,500 yards. No hit was observed but it now appeared that SCHARNHORST had stopped.
- 1927 hrs BELFAST fired three torpedoes to the starboard side at a similar range to JAMAICA, but could only claim one 'probable' hit. Both cruisers hauled round to fire their remaining torpedo tubes, meanwhile JAMAICA engaged SCHARNHORST with gun fire.
- 1928 hrs DUKE OF YORK checked fire because of the number of our destroyers in the vicinity.
- 1931 hrs 72nd Sub-division of the 36th Destroyer Division (OPPORTUNE and VIRAGO attacked at a range of 2,100 yards. One hit reported.
- 1933 hrs 71st Sub-division of the 36th Destroyer Division (MUSKETEER and MATCHLESS), attacked from the north-east on SCHARNHORST's port quarter; MUSKETEER fired four torpedoes at a range of only 1,000 yards. Two or three hits observed between funnel and mainmast. MATCHLESS followed, but could not deliver her attack as a heavy sea hit her torpedo-mounting while the tubes were being trained. The traversing gear was so badly strained that the attack could not be delivered from that side. When Matchless had hauled round and came in again to attack again on the SCHARNHORST's port bow the battle-cruiser had sunk.
- 1933 hrs OPPORTUNE of the 72nd Sub-division of the 36th Destroyer Division fired another salvo of four from 2,500 yards and secured a hit.
- 1934 hrs VIRAGO of the 72nd Sub-division fired seven torpedoes from a similar range and secured at least two hits, she also opened up with gun fire whilst retiring.
- 1937 hrs JAMAICA fired another three torpedoes from 3750 yards. Two underwater explosions were recorded after the appropriate 'running' time, but hits were not directly observed as SCHARNHORST was obscured in clouds of smoke.
- 1948 hrs BELFAST fired starshell to illuminate the target for further attack, but only drifting wreckage could be seen. MATCHLESS reported that SCHARNHORST was no longer afloat.
- Northern Light's editor, sat at the firing levers on MATCHLESS's torpedo tubes, claims to have been one of the last persons to see the hazy glow and smoke that was one of Germany's finest vessels of war.

Times obtained from official Admiralty reports and Imperial War Museum records.

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S I G N A L S & R A D I O M E S S A G E S

THE FATEFUL LAST SIGNAL RECEIVED BY SCHARNHORST FROM  
GERMAN NAVY COMMAND

To: Commanding Officer K.M.Scharnhorst.  
From: Kriegsmarine - Grand Admiral.

25/12/1943-2330Z+1

- (a) Important enemy convoy carrying food and war material to the Russians further imperils our heroic Army on the Eastern Front. **We must help.**
- (b) Attack convoy with **Scharnhorst** and destroyers
- (c) Exploit tactical situation with skill and daring. Do not end the engagement with a partial success. Go all out and see the job right through. Best chance of success lies in superior firepower of **Scharnhorst**, therefore try to bring her into action and deploy destroyers accordingly.
- (d) Inform crews accordingly. I have every confidence in you.

Heil und Sieg

DONITZ, Grossadmiral.

FROM WINSTON CHURCHILL TO JOSEPH STALIN

PM to Premier Stalin 27 December 1943

The Arctic convoys to Russia have brought us luck. Yesterday enemy attempted to intercept with battle-cruiser **Scharnhorst**. Commander-in-Chief Admiral Fraser with **Duke of York** (35000 ton battle-ship) cut off **Scharnhorst's** retreat, and after an action sank her.

Am much better, and off to Marrakesh for convalescence.

CHURCHILL

STALIN'S SHORT BUT CORDIAL REPLY

I shake your hand firmly.

JOSEF STALIN

WINSTON CHURCHILL TO ADMIRAL FRASER

Everything comes to him who knows how to wait.

P.M.

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FROM DUKE OF YORK'S NOTICE BOARD

Submitted by Douglas Jones

26th December 1943 Closed Up for Action Stations at 0830 Action completed at 2000 Stood Down from Action Stations at 2200 First engaged enemy with 14" armament at 20,000yards at 1630 Total number of 14" projectiles fired - 446 Total number of 5.25" projectiles fired - 800
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THE POST MORTEM

By 'Coroner' Maurice Cross

A major factor affecting the SCHARNHORST's demise was the poor quality of their radar, which was a gunnery-radar system and could not give a picture of the whole horizon and it's accuracy was never closer than 2 degrees.

If the German system had been equal to the Royal Navy's, she probably could have picked off the Force One Cruisers at long range, and fore-warned of DUKE OF YORK's approach, could have had it away at 33 knots.

Admiral Bey in SCHARNHORST contributed to his ship's fate by sending his destroyers back to base because of the heavy seas. Also, his concern for his 'little ships' made him break W/T silence by contacting Kriegsmarine H.Q. which alerted a British monitoring unit that SCHARNHORST was at sea.

So, superior British radar, superb British gunnery, the courage of the destroyer crews, combined with Admiral Bey's clangers, sealed the fate of the Battle Cruiser SCHARNHORST in those storm-wracked waters off the North Cape.

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THE STORY OF THE SURVIVORS

Syd Scott's statement on Page 9 that "they had the choice of burning or freezing" is, perhaps, very true for those members of SCHARNHORST's crew who were in reach of the upper deck, but not for the majority who were trapped in the sinking hull. It is recorded that Captain Hintze, after ordering 'Abandon Ship' he instructed the crew "Dont go overboard to Starboard, go over from the Port, and slide from the rail into the sea". Some crew members refused to leave the sinking vessel, whilst the vast majority who did go perished in those terrible waters. The 36 who were picked up by SCORPION and MATCHLESS were but a few of those whose pitiful cries for help could be heard, but could not be reached or saved. In my opinion, there can be little credibility in the statement that, whilst swimming, some sailors could be heard singing; "On a sailor's tomb.....no roses bloom...."

The account of the survivors eventual transfer from the two destroyers to DUKE OF YORK at Polyarnoe is well chronicled, as is their voyage to Scapa. But what has happened since then? They were separated in London, when eight went to P.O.W. camps in Canada and twenty-seven to the U.S.A. One was returned to Germany as part of an exchange of prisoners.

John Horton, Hon. Sec. of the HMS Matchless Association has on several occasions tried to make contact with them. To the best of his knowledge, nine are dead, one cannot be traced, three live in East Germany and one is (or was) resident in Reading. Twelve to fifteen of them usually attend the bi-annual reunion of the Scharnhorst Veteran's Association.

R.D.Squires, Editor.

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WHERE WERE YOU THEN?

AS A TAILPIECE TO 'NORTH CAPE' WE ASKED COMMITTEE WHERE THEY WERE WHEN THEY HEARD OF THE SINKING - HERE ARE THE ANSWERS

First, **CAPT. KENNETH CLARKE** our President: "I was in Polyarnoe on Boxing Day 1943, as Base Supply Officer, North Russia, having been there nearly a year by then. At that time of the year particularly, wireless communication was bad - intermittent at the best - but we had information of a sort that SCHARNHORST was at sea in northern waters and that DUKE OF YORK with the C. in C. H.F., was approaching the area.

I cannot remember when we heard of the battle and the sinking, but I clearly remember DUKE OF YORK coming into Kola Inlet immediately after and Admiral Fraser, coming ashore at Polyarnoe, and, with other officers, being introduced to him. He said he did not envy me in my job - about the only person ever to say so.

I remember, too, going up the Inlet to try to cadge a few supplies from DUKE OF YORK. Her Commander (S), thinking we were starving, had his cooks (bakers) up half the previous night producing 1,000 loaves for us. To his great consternation I had to refuse them, having nowhere ashore to stow even a few of them away from the rats. I reckon they were eating stale bread on the ship all the way home to U.K.

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Several of our members were in Polyarnoe at that time, but as our President was one of them I will refrain from calling them 'Barrack Stancheons', I'll just say that they had 'Quiet Numbers'. **CHRIS TYE**, who was one of them says, "Ashore, we were more cosy than yourselves at sea, there was a buzz of activity with all the radios in the surrounding Stations crackling madly. Myself, a mere one-badge Killick Writer, not Communications, but on the S.B.N.O. North Russia staff. I spent all night and all the next day running back and forth between Base Station and the Captain's Office, clad in pyjamas and dressing gown, with the signals as they came in and I recall reading each one on receipt and again on the way to the office. A fascinating build up to the action and the eventual sinking as it was happening. The whole scene unfolding before my eyes, an unforgettable experience with thoughts of those taking part, in such atrocious weather. Where you experienced the action itself, I knew of and followed on from the moment SCHARNHORST left the Christmas Card setting of the Norwegian Fjord on Christmas Day to the sinking of the blazing hull - it was just 24 hours in the life of a Captain's Runner!!!"

(Clad in pyjamas and dressing gown!!! not a pretty sight! Editor.)

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**RON WREN's** reply was: "The admiralty had a peculiar sense of humour about H.M.S. KENYA, giving her many contrasting tasks. A hammering in Arctic waters and just for fun another hammering in the Med., including 'Fish' inboard. They needed a change! so they sent us to the Indian-Pacific Oceans for a little go at the Japs. But we had fun at Calcutta Races; seven firsts, one place and the Tote Double to share between eight of us. How do you spend 786 rupees the day before you sail for a Combined Operation against Japanese occupied territory?"

We all went to 'Firpo's' where, unless you were very top brass or American, you couldn't afford Top Floor. On the Top Floor that night we had the very best food, booze and ladies to dance with....we heard about the SCHARNHORST sinking on a crackling Indian Commando radio, quartered on the Focsl of our ship on the voyage to the island of Sabang, held by the Japanese.

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Continued over/

**WHERE WERE THEY THEN? (Continued)**

Our Vice-Chairman **ERNIE SKELTON**, was swinging round a bouy onboard the converted carrier H.M.S. PRETORIA CASTLE at Tail of the Bank when he heard of the sinking. But his thoughts immediately went back to 12th February 1942 - that was the day that **SCHARNHORST**, **GNEISENAU** and **PRINCE EUGEN** made their dash up the Channel. Ernie was in Dover that day and was glad that she didn't toss 14" visiting cards on the town as she dashed by. He also offers us some absolutely useless information - 12th February 1942 was also the day that soap was rationed in U.K.!!

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**ARTHUR WILLIS** was also swinging around a bouy that day too! onboard **BELLONA** at Scapa Flow and had enjoyed a Christmas 'run ashore' (if enjoyed is the right word for a 'run ashore' to the Fleet Canteen at Scapa). **BELLONA** had commissioned at Glasgow the previous September with a very young crew and was still 'working' up not knowing what was before them. Many of the crew were at sea for the first time. The Communications ratings were full of news of the triumphant battle and the Captain made a formal announcement over the ship's S.R.E. system. As the victorious fleet returned to harbour a few days later, the ship's company manned the upper deck to ' Cheer Ship ' as each ship steamed by. There was a special cheer for the Norwegian **STORD** which sailed in last of the line. The Captain said how much he would have liked to have been involved. Most members of our young crew were relieved that they had missed it all!

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Believe it or not - here's another one 'Swinging round the Bouy' it's **FRANK 'Jimmy' GREEN** who says, "I spent Xmas Day 1943 aboard **SWIFT** swinging round the bouy at Scapa. Extra tot followed by bangers and mash. A Yank destroyer off the Port side provided 'entertainment' by throwing oranges over the side and using them for target practice. Kids on the mainland didn't have an orange for Xmas and some verbal broadsides were fired at the Yanks. No shore leave! When **MATCHLESS** anchored in Scapa on her return from North Cape I went over from **SWIFT** to sink a few tots with an old school mate, Petty Officer Jack Horton who had sent a message over 'Anyone aboard Swift from the Stoke area?'"

A serious note from the editor - I was in the same mess as Jack Horton and I now have a very good idea who was the 'minesweeper' when my tot disappeared!! one you owe me Frank.

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Blimey, I wish I hadn't started this topic - here's one who was actually on Christmas leave - but look what happened to him!!

Treasurer **ERIC RATHBONE** admits, "I was on Christmas leave on Boxing Day 1943 and visited my future wife at Farnham Common, Berkshire, where she was serving in the A.T.S. on a searchlight site".

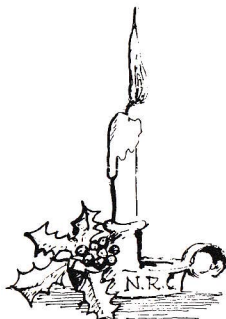
"I returned to Chatham Barracks on 27th December and awaiting me was a draft chit to Freetown, West Africa. Just six weeks after my return from Polyarnoe".

"On 28th December we started preparations to get married on Saturday 1st January, prior to going overseas".

NO, IT WASN'T A SHOT-GUN WEDDING!!

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A  
MERRY  
CHRISTMAS  
AND  
HAPPY  
NEW YEAR



FROM THE EDITOR

**MEMBER'S LETTERS**

A reply to a question posed in the 'Red Duster' edition:



Who was the youngest? was a very good question and I doubt if it will ever be fully answered. There were many youngsters among M.N. crews in all theatres of war. A 14 year old boy was taken P.O.W. in Crete. Another 14 year old who died on a merchant ship is buried in Casablanca. I believe a Field Marshall is buried in the next grave.

At the other end of the scale have we considered who was the oldest? After returning from the Arctic following the **INDUNA** sinking, I went up there again in 1944 and we had a Second Steward who was 71 years old.

But nearest to my heart is John Anderson, age 16, who is buried in Murmansk. He was in the same lifeboat as me and suffered hell for four days, only to suffer a terrible death after we were rescued. He was in a terrible state, blue all over with large patches of broken skin with large frozen scabs. But, he was very, very brave right from the moment that we abandoned ship.

Austin Byrne.

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Following a Memorial Service at Liverpool's Anglican Cathedral on Sunday 20th. August for **H.M.S. KITE**, we received the following letter. **KITE** was sunk on 21st. August 1944, **KEPPEL** was in company and picked up 15 survivors from the crew of 226. Of these 15 survivors, 9 died before reaching Greenock and were buried at sea.

I would be pleased if you could express our heartfelt appreciation for the attendance of so many N.R.C. members at the service. The ex-**KITE**'s present were deeply touched and will be eternally grateful. To me it was a poignant experience to talk to sons, sisters and widows of chaps I knew so well, and to see the pleasure expressed on their faces at my recognition of their loved ones photographs. As one sister said to me, "I now know John is dead and I've just been to his funeral". Strange that the only communication they ever had from the Admiralty was a telegram to say that their father, son or husband was missing believed killed and had no idea where **KITE** went down or what happened until we told them in letters a little time ago.

Fair winds and following seas to you all.  
Very Kindest Regards.  
Tom Jarvis.

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Another follow up to the 'Red Duster' edition, this time from Maurice Cross.

September's article on Liberty ships brings to mind the day in 1944, our sweeper **SEAGULL** sailed up the Orwell to Ipswich to have new anti-radar gear fitted before the D Day caper. We went alongside with all the R.N. bullshine. Matelots everywhere. POs shouting at the matelots, the Jimmy shouting at the POs. The captain shouting at the Quartermaster Telegraphs ringing and dinging. Cables and lines chucked this way and that. All to get a 980 ton Minesweeper alongside. As we finished tying up a ruddy great Liberty ship came up to berth ahead of us. There was just 'Arry in the bows, wearing a battered old trilby and dirty mac. There was George, fag on, in filthy overalls, somewhere aft. The skipper was leaning over the side in his braces, nonchalantly

MEMBER'S LETTERS (Continued)

making casual gestures to his helmsman, as the ship neared the wall. I think that the only words spoken were the skipper's "Alright 'Arry, alright George" as they made the cables secure.  
I suppose that's the difference between R.N. style and M.N. style.

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And another follow up to 'Red Duster' from Frank Brown, ex-Bombadier 1st Maritime Regt. R.A.

I think that this is a very good story from very early in the war. In 1943 I was a gunner aboard **EMPIRE ADDISON** and spent eighteen months in the Mediterranean, Sicily, Italy and the Persian Gulf. One night whilst on watch our Chief Officer, who always sailed on Harrison Line, told me about the episode when the **ADMIRAL GRAF SPEE** sank his ship, **HUNTSMAN**. He said that **GRAF SPEE** took all the crew off **HUNTSMAN** and then plundered her. Mr Tate asked the Admiral if he could bring a Persian carpet aboard **GRAF SPEE** which he had bought for his wife in the Persian Gulf. He was given permission and kept it with him, even taking it when he was transferred to the prison ship **ALIMARK**, but unfortunately he lost it when the prisoners were released by the destroyer **COSSACK** on 16th February 1940.  
Knowing Mr Tate, I bet he even put up a fight for his carpet even then. Also, he always made a point of saying that the Admiral was a gentleman. **HUNTSMAN** was sunk on the 10th October 1939.

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It is interesting to note that the catalyst used to enable Spitfires and Hurricanes to fly, using Russian petrol during the Arctic campaign, is now being used in the adaption to un-leaded petrol for today's cars.

Ted Balaam.

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I have a part time job in Blackpool as a doorman. I was wearing my North Russia Club tie and a man told his son to show respect because of the tie I was wearing.

Percy Fisher.

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In October 1944 the Soviet Army finally defeated the Nazi army outside Murmansk and on the Kola Peninsula. We received this message of greeting on the 45th Anniversary.

20 October 1989

TELEMESSAGE LXP  
RICHARD D SQUIRES  
NORTH RUSSIA CLUB  
28 WESTBROOK ROAD  
GATEACRE  
LIVERPOOL L25 2RH

 Telemesssage

ON BEHALF OF MURMANSK CITY COUNCIL AND ME PERSONALLY ON THE OCCASION OF 45 ANNIVERSARY OF VICTORY OVER THE THE FASCISTS ON KOLA LAND BEST WISHES TO OUR ALLIES IN ANTIHITLER COALITION STOP WE WISH YOU ALL MUCH HAPPINESS AND LONG LIFE  
SINCERELY YOURS,

LEONID GUDZ, VICE CHAIRMAN, CITY COUNCIL MURMANSK USSR

This is an International Telegram forwarded to you via the TELEMESSAGE network.  
Reference number:- CBM303 SRL419 MURMANSK 67/66 20 1600

MORE FROM YOUR LETTERS

From John Annand our member in Hollywood, California, U.S.A.:

I was happy to receive the report on "Carriers". I was on **AUDACITY** when a U-Boat caught up with us.....the **AUDACITY** had no hangar, our planes just sat on deck and were man-handled to and fro. However, we and our 802 Squadron went to the aid of **PQ17**.....never a dull moment.

When **AUDACITY** went down I was picked up out of the drink by the corvette **MARIGOLD**.

Yours truly,  
John Annand.

Now, a follow up to Reg Waller's letter in the previous edition:

.....I enjoyed the article by my old shipmate Reg Waller and it brought back some memories.

I came home on **MARNE** and we were in company with **ONSLAUGHT** and **MATCHLESS** (wasn't it the **MARTIN?** Editor!!) and escorting the cruiser **TUSCALOOSA** who was carrying badly wounded survivors of a previous convoy, I think most of them were suffering from severe frost bite.

Do any of our members know that any one suffering from frost bite was entitled to a wound stripe? I got one and thinking back on it I didn't even have frost bite, only what was known as exposure foot. This was bad enough at the time but doesn't seem to have any long term effect.

I think it was the first day at sea when we had a signal ordering us to go after a German ship, we turned hard to port, the stern went down and we were on our way.

The ship was the **ULM**, which we sunk, but in the action a shell from the **ULM** exploded over our quarterdeck, killing six men who had been replenishing the charges and were called on deck to clear empty cartridges away from the rear turret.

My point in writing this letter is to send you a copy of the signal sent by **ONSLAUGHT**, which, if you have space to print it will be of interest to our **MARNE** and **ONSLAUGHT** members.  
Yours sincerely,  
FRANK BROWN.

SECRET	MESSAGE	0448A/26th August.
From H.M.S. <b>ONSLAUGHT</b> .		3
		Date 26.8.42.
		Time 1250.
NAVAL CYPHER A.1. by W/T & T/P		
Addressed C. in C. Home Fleet.		
IMMEDIATE.		
SHAD. My position course and speed 074 degs. 49' North 019 degs. 20' East 271 degs. 20 knots. German ship <b>ULM</b> sunk at 2234A/25th. Captain 3 officers 57 ratings picked up. H.M.S. <b>MARNE</b> hit slight damage aft 4 ratings killed 8 wounded. No engine failure damage or casualties.		
Weather report 4782 0466.		
0448A/26		
Advance copies sent 1st Lord., N.A., 1st S.L., Ops.O.D. O.I.C		

<u>H.M.S. MARNE.</u>
<u>RATINGS.</u>
<u>KILLED.</u>
HAWKINS, F. Sto.1. DXX.112423.
HUTCHINSON, J.S. ERA4. P/224ED.
KIRKBY, R. L/Sto. P/KX 90785.
WARREN, J. Ord Art 4.D/MX 55361.
WILSON, R. S.P.O. P/KX 78719.
<u>DIED OF WOUNDS.</u>
YOUNG, J.R.J. A.B. P/JX 235855.
<u>R. I. P.</u>

POET ' S CORNER  
"THAT CARD YOU DIDN'T RECEIVE"

Christmas time is here again,  
When we think of good will and good cheer,  
And we send out lots of Christmas Cards,  
We do it every year.

We make out a list, so no one is missed,  
As we sit with a noggin or two,  
Then, just when we think the damn things complete,  
We remember, we've missed, you know who!

So we rummage around in the sideboard,  
Here's an envelope the Gas Board has sent,  
And, here's a card we didn't send last year,  
Oh damn it, the bloody things bent.

In the end when we've finished the writing,  
And we are trying to get rid of the cramp,  
We smile as we nip out to post it,  
Then remember, there's no blasted stamp.

So, in case I fall into this trap,  
Dont worry and dont feel blue,  
If you didn't receive a card from me,  
Well, here's a verse especially for you.

I think of the heaven without any stars,  
And gardens that have no flowers,  
The sea without the splash of the waves,  
Or, the Spring without it's showers.

Then, I think of trees that have no leaves,  
Or a sky that would never be blue,  
Then I wonder, what would life be like,  
Without the friendship I get from you.

I HOPE YOU HAVE A LOVELY CHRISTMAS,  
ALL THE BEST FOR THE FUTURE.

George Luck.

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LAUGH OF THE MONTH

We have selected our 'laugh' from the newsletter of the North Russian Convoy Club in New Zealand as it is applicable for the North Cape Edition.  
A story from 'Bagpipes' Stevenson.

The place, Walker on Tyne, one County Class Cruiser, **NORFOLK**, preparing to re-enter the fray after an enforced refit, compliments of **SCHARNHORST**.

Commander appears at Q.M.'s Lobby which is occupied by a solitary Sideboy.

"Where is the Quartermaster?" asks Commander. "Gone to the Heads, Sir" replies Sideboy.

"Where is the Bosun's Mate?" "Forward Brow, Sir"

"Can you use the ship's broadcast?" asks Commander.

"Yes Sir"

"Very well, pipe lower deck will be cleared shortly" was the command. Sideboy, full of P and I, blows Bosun's Call and in full, fractured English pipes, "The Commander says lower deck will be cleared in a Wee While" The Commander is next seen banging his head against "Y" turret, muttering about 'Uncouth Caledonian Clowns'.



And shipmates. this is a true story. You see, I was that Sideboy.!!