



Battle of the Atlantic 70th Anniversary Newsletter

ISSUE 4 - MAY 2013



Welcome to the 4th and final issue of the Battle of the Atlantic 70th Anniversary (BoA70) Newsletter. The purpose of this Newsletter is to provide additional background information on the campaign and an update on plans by the Royal Navy and Merchant Navy to mark this historic event.

Planning is now at an advanced stage with an extensive programme of activity around the UK but particularly in Liverpool, where events will culminate with national commemorations on Sunday 26th May 2013. Full details of the programme of events are given below - in chronological order - indicating where it is still possible to participate.

“The Battle of the Atlantic was the longest, continuous military campaign of WWII and the sacrifices on both sides were enormous. 70 years on, the lessons endure; as an island nation our prosperity and security are greatly dependent on our free use of the sea.”

Admiral Sir George Zambellas KCB DSC ADC - First Sea Lord and Chief of the Naval Staff

LONDON EVENTS

1st May

- RUSI discussion panel, ‘*The Battle of the Atlantic: The Battle Which Had to be Won*’, at RUSI, Whitehall. See below.

7th -13th May

- 3 Royal Navy warships visit London.

8th May

- BoA70 Evensong service at St Paul’s Cathedral, all welcome, see below.

9th May

- Royal Navy flypast, Greenwich, 1905.

11th May

- Merchant Navy memorial service at Trinity Gardens, Tower Hill, 1300 – 1400, all welcome.

11th-12th May

- Selected Royal Navy warships are open to the general public.



How to Attend Events in London

Follow Link - [Evensong Memorial Service at St Paul's](#)

Follow Link - <http://www.rusi.org/events/ref:E51347DDF8A6CE/>

10th -12th May

- Royal Navy warship visits Derry/Londonderry.

11th May

- Dedication of statue to the 'The International Sailor'; to those who lost their lives in the Battle of the Atlantic. It mirrors one that exists in Halifax, Nova Scotia.
- A civil society/RNA event in Peace Square, to include Canadian veterans. Free public access.

12th May

- Parade and wreath laying on The Foyle from a warship. Free public access.



Further information will be available on the Derry/Londonderry City websites.

23rd -28th May

- Royal Navy and International Ships visit Liverpool. Selected warships open to the general public.

24th May

- A Charity Reception onboard a warship (Fly Navy Heritage Trust).

25th May

- Royal Marines Band Charity Concert at the Philharmonic Hall (Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity).
- Pierhead/Public Realm area open to visitors.
- Veterans Welcome Centre Old Port of Liverpool Buildings opens, operated by City of Liverpool Sea Cadet Unit.
- Royal Navy Patrol Boat Squadron display on the River Mersey, involving P2000 patrol boats, Royal Marines and Merchant Navy.

25th – 27th May

- Selected warships open to the general public.

26th May

- National Service of Commemoration at the Liverpool Anglican Cathedral.
- Parade led by veterans but also including Merchant Navy, Royal Fleet Auxiliary, RN & RNR personnel and cadets from the Armed Forces. Flypast by historic aircraft.

27th May

- BoA70 '40s themed party at St George's Hall.
- Raft Race, Albert Dock.

28th May

- Co-ordinated departure of visiting ship led by the flagship vessel of Trinity House, THV Patricia.

**How to Attend Events in Liverpool**

For more details on the national commemoration in Liverpool follow link - www.itsliverpool.com/culture

Follow Link - [FNHT Charity Reception](#)

Follow Link - [RMB Charity Concert - Liverpool Philharmonic Hall](#)

Service of Commemoration - Contact HQ Naval Regional Commander Northern England on **0151 707 3321**

Follow Link - [BOA70 '40s Themed Party at St George's Hall](#)

From 8th May

- HQS Wellington, home of the Honourable Company of Master Mariners, is holding a variety of evening lectures and films on board, commencing with an exhibition opening in May. For further details contact www.thewellingtontrust.com

25th May

- A short service of Remembrance at the HMS Ringtail Monument, Burscough (near Ormskirk) from 11am. For more details contact – Cdr Duffield RNR 07894 048363

30th May

- BoA70 Dinner onboard HMS VICTORY - Contact Rosie Munns - **02392 72 7593**
Email: rosie.munns@nmrn.org.uk

ENIGMA CIPHER

The sinking of SS Athenia on 3rd September 1939 by the U-boat U30, commanded by Oberleutnant Fritz-Julius Lemp, was the starting point of the Battle of the Atlantic. 117 passengers and crew members were lost in the tragedy. Lemp claimed that the ship's movement and distance from recognisable shipping routes led him to believe that the ship was either a troop-ship or an armed merchant cruiser.

The sinking of the SS Athenia was not Lemp's only contribution to the Battle of the Atlantic. In April 1941, he was commanding U-110 when it launched an attack on a convoy. During the encounter his U-boat was pursued by HMS Aubretia and HMS Broadway, who dropped depth charges, causing significant damage to U-110. Lemp ordered that the crew should abandon ship and leave the submarine to sink. However, the U-boat remained on the surface and a party from HMS Bulldog boarded her. Within the effects that were recovered were code books and an Enigma Machine. Later known as Operation Primrose, this discovery gave code-breakers at Bletchley Park a huge advantage as it proved an opportunity to identify where the U-boat Wolf Packs would be operating.



© IWM HU51009 – Watching the sinking of the Athenia

BLACK MAY



© IWM C2644 - The Convoy at Sea

May 1943 was a critical month in the battle for supremacy in the Atlantic with German losses heavy throughout. By the 24th Admiral Dönitz, Admiral Commanding U-boats, had lost 31 U-boats including U-954 in which his son had perished; an average of 13 U-boats had been lost during each of the preceding months. The morale of the U-boat fleet was crumbling and each boat was now sinking only a tenth of the merchant ship tonnage that had been achieved previously. Given these factors Dönitz realised that the U-boat campaign on the vital North Atlantic routes could not be sustained and on 24th May 1943 ordered his U-boats to withdraw.

The Admiralty were well aware of the declining morale amongst U-boat crews from German signals decrypted by the code-breakers at Bletchley Park. They attributed it to the growing weight of the British and Canadian offensive anti-submarine measures, by attack from RAF Coast Command long range aircraft, additional fast escort vessels and Fleet Air Arm aircraft flying from escort carriers in free-ranging support groups.

The Germans tried to resurrect their campaign on the North Atlantic routes in the autumn of 1943, but suffered further heavy defeats at the hands of powerful Allied sea and air forces. Having failed to interrupt the Allied invasion in Normandy in June 1944, the U-boats, now fitted with the schnorkel allowing them to operate continuously submerged, resorted to a guerrilla submarine campaign in British coastal waters. They remained a nuisance but were never again able to seriously threaten the Allied war effort. (With contributions from Dr Llewlyn Jones)



© IWM C3763 - A surfaced U-boat is straddled by the depth charges from a Coastal Command

At the outbreak of the Second World War, HMS Wellington was recalled to the UK from service patrolling in the Pacific, the task for which she had been built in 1934. For the entire war in European waters, the ship carried out convoy escort duties across the North Atlantic and off the coast of West Africa. She was based first in Devonport, then in Liverpool, Londonderry and eventually in Freetown, Sierra Leone, and is one of only ten Royal Navy vessels to gain the Battle Honour, "Battle of the Atlantic 1939 – 1945".



HMS Wellington in 1942 (Source: www.hfl.org.uk)



HMS Wellington (L65) – Grimsby Class Sloop
(Source: www.naval-history.net)

During her war service, Wellington steamed more than 240,000 miles and provided escort either alone or in part to 103 convoys. She rescued more than 450 Merchant Navy seamen who had survived the sinking of their ships and also shared in the destruction of a German U-boat. Wellington is the only surviving Second World War convoy escort in Europe still afloat. Since 1948 has been moored at Temple Stairs on the Thames and is now both a Heritage ship and since 1946, the headquarters of the Honourable Company of Master Mariners. (Courtesy of The Wellington Trust)

CAPTAIN JOHNNIE 'WHISKY' WALKER

The Battle of the Atlantic is full of stories of heroism from all quarters, across the Royal Navy, Merchant Navy and Coastal Command. One man in particular helped turn the tide of the Battle in a successful U-boat offensive spanning the war years. Captain Johnnie 'Whisky' Walker can claim the title of 'ace U-boat killer', a title that he himself loathed, modestly attributing his successes to "a thousand British Jack Tars".

A specialist in anti-submarine warfare, the Admiralty Board recognised his talents in 1941 when they began to put his extensive knowledge to the test. Proving his value almost immediately, escorting the convoy HG76 from Gibraltar to the UK, his tactics resulted in 4 U-boats being sunk. Over the war years, he destroyed around 20 U-boats and notably protected the Normandy landing in June 1944. However, overworked and stressed he passed away from a stroke in July 1944 and was mentioned in Dispatches later that summer.



Contact Us

Your comments and details of interested parties and organisations can be emailed to the BOA70 Programme Office at:
NRCEE-BOA70@mod.uk

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A nation *still* dependent on the Sea...

Useful Links

[BOA70 Liverpool Events Royal Navy Website](#)
[BOA70 London Events Royal Navy Website](#)
[RNA Londonderry Branch](#)
[BOA70 Derry Events Royal Navy Website](#)
[Travel directions to St Paul's Cathedral](#)
[Disabled access to St Paul's Cathedral](#)

Liverpool City Council & City of London websites will be updated as information becomes available.

Further BOA70 information can be found on the website:

www.royalnavy.mod.uk/Battle-of-the-Atlantic