

ORCADIAN CASUALTIES IN THE ARCTIC CONVOYS, 1941–1945

Details of the five Orcadians who died in the Arctic Convoys, 1941–1945, local war memorials shown.

2nd Officer WILLIAM S. ROSIE MN, SS *Waziristan*, 2nd January 1942, age 21, South Ronaldsay.
Panel 117, Tower Hill Memorial, London

SS Waziristan, convoy PQ-7A “straggler” (had become separated from other ship of the half-convoy, *SS Cold Harbour*), was sunk on 2nd January 1942 near Bear Island by a G7e torpedo fired by U-134. The master, Reynold Tate, 36 crew members and 10 gunners were all lost. *SS Waziristan* was the first British ship to load military supplies (including 1,000 tons of copper and 410 Ford trucks) in the USA for Russia and had made the North Atlantic passage in convoy SC-60.

William was born in St. Margaret’s Hope on 28th November 1920, son of William Rosie and Maggie Jean Rosie (née Sinclair).

William Rosie’s sister died in March 2008 and he has no close surviving relatives.

Radio Officer JOHN A.P. CAMPBELL MN, SS *Cape Corso*, 2nd May 1942, age 22, Kirkwall.
Panel 23, Tower Hill Memorial, London

SS Cape Corso sailed from Hull and arrived at Reykjavik on 8th April 1942 in convoy UR-18. *SS Cape Corso* did not sail as intended with convoy PQ-14, but left Reykjavik with PQ-15 on 26th April. Late on 2nd May the convoy suffered the first attack by torpedoes from Heinkel He-111 bombers, which sank three ships in minutes. *SS Cape Corso* blew up with the loss of 56 of her crew, including the master Captain Walter Montgomery and John Campbell, there were only six survivors.

John’s father was a chemist in Kirkwall who died during the war. **John has no close family left alive.**

Bosun HUGH HUGHSON, B.E.M. MN, SS *Cape Corso*, 2nd May 1942, age 23, Eday.
Panel 23, Tower Hill Memorial, London

See above for details of the loss of *SS Cape Corso* by torpedo from a Heinkel He-111 bomber, when Hugh was also killed.

Hugh Hughson was born in Toft, Shetland on 11th January 1919, eldest child of Magnus Hughson, a shepherd, and Georgina Hughson (née Barclay). Hugh was awarded the British Empire Medal in December 1941, for trying to save a sinking ship. His family was living on Eday when Hugh was killed, moved to Kingsdale, Firth soon after. Hugh’s sister, Mary, married a Hatston based Fleet Air Arm pilot, but died of TB in June 1945, while their mother died of cervical cancer six months later.

Hugh’s youngest sister Margaret (Greta) returned to Shetland and still lives there.

Engine Room Artificer FRANCIS D. P. JOHNSTON RN, HMS *Trinidad*, 14th May 1942, age 25, Harray.
Panel 68, Plymouth Naval Memorial, Devon

HMS Trinidad (Captain Leslie Saunders RN) was hit by one of her own torpedoes on 29th March 1942, while as escort to PQ-13 in battle with the German destroyers Z 24, Z 25 and Z 26, sinking the latter. After temporary repairs in Murmansk, *HMS Trinidad* took on most of the survivors of *HMS Edinburgh* (sunk while escort to QP-11 by U-456) and sailed with four destroyers on 13th May. Heavily attacked from the air next day, hit by 4 bombs dropped by a Junkers-88 bomber and 63 men killed (20 *Edinburgh* survivors, including Francis). *HMS Trinidad* was scuttled on the 15th, north of North Cape.

Francis Johnston was born at Breckan, Harray on 23rd February 1917, son of James and Helen Johnston. Frankie trained as a blacksmith, had a smithy in Rendall. He married Emily Murray of Harray. They had two children, Francis and Yvonne.

Emily married again, as Emily Flett had three other children. Frankie’s daughter Yvonne married, as Yvonne Hutchison had three children. Son Frank had two children, worked as a builder until he retired twelve years ago.

Seaman ROBERT R. HARCUS RN, HMS *Mahratta*, 25th February 1944, age 19, Kirkwall.
Panel 88, Plymouth Naval Memorial, Devon

HMS Mahratta (Lieut-Cdr. E.A.F. Drought) was escorting the rear section of convoy JW-57, when its stern was hit by a T-5 acoustic torpedo (called a Gnat by the Allies) fired by U-990 in the evening of 25th February 1944. While stopped *Mahratta* was hit by a second torpedo amidships and sank within minutes. Only 16 of her crew were saved by the destroyers *HMS Impulsive* and *HMS Wanderer* that were quickly on the scene, so 11 officers and 209 ratings (including Robert) lost their lives.

Robert Harcus was the youngest of a large family that had moved to Kirkwall from Sanday (came originally from Westray). His elder brother, Jim, sailed as a merchant seaman on at least two Arctic Convoys, PQ-18 and JW-52.

Robert’s family members left in Orkney include nephews John Sim of Kirkwall and Eric Sutherland of Stromness.