



THE PIONEERS' CHARITABLE RESPONSE TO THE LOSS OF THE NÝGGJABERG

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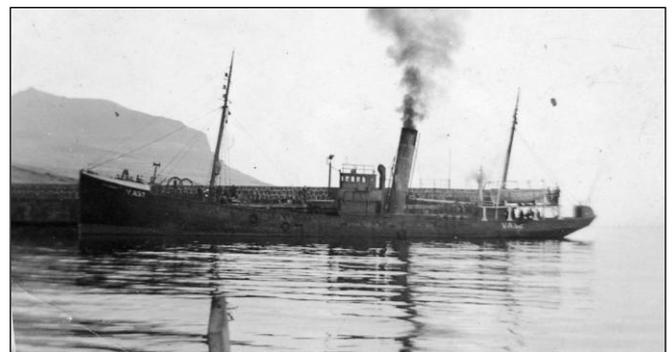
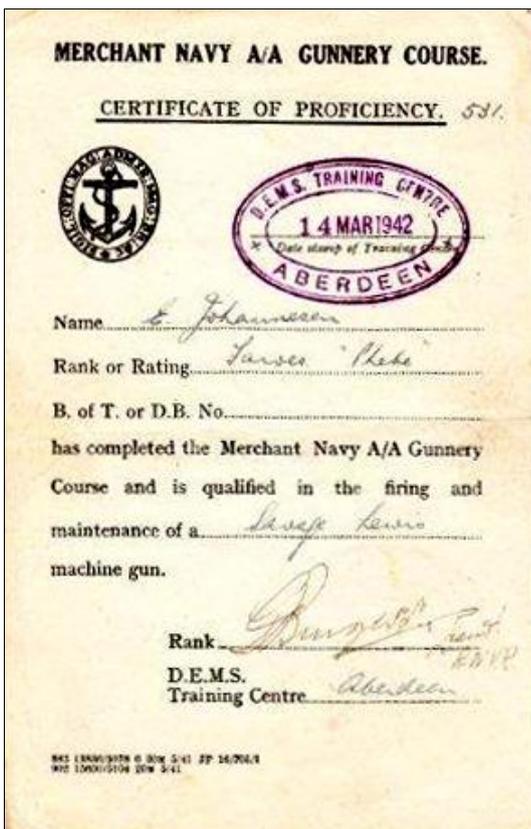
Many Study Circle members will doubtlessly be aware that the Faroese fishing fleet made a significant contribution to feeding the United Kingdom during World War 2. Over 20% of the fish landed at British ports during the war came off Faroese vessels, and it can be claimed that this was a major factor in the fact that a British culinary staple, "fish & chips", were never rationed. There were far more fish & chips shops during the 1940s than today and they played a significant part in feeding the nation. Their contribution to the nation's morale, as well as nourishment, was recognised by Churchill who described fish and chips as "good companions".

How was it, though, that a small nation, the Faroese, made such a large contribution to the fish landed here? Well, to put it simply, they not only landed the fish they had caught themselves but also took care of the logistics of delivering the catches of others. The Icelandic fishing fleet continued to operate in its own offshore waters but refused to contemplate delivering any of the resulting catch to Britain without either an air or naval escort. This was clearly impractical and many of the Faroese vessels stepped into the breach, operating a shuttle service picking up the Icelanders' catches and delivering them to British ports.

Whilst a very profitable trade in financial terms, it came with a terrible cost in human terms. Over 200 Faroese seamen lost their lives during the war. Several Faroese vessels were lost to either drifting mines or sunk by enemy action. Almost the only protection the vessels had came from the installation of light machine-guns, provided by the British military but for operation by the crew. On the left is the certificate awarded to Álvur's grandfather after he had undergone training in how to operate a Lewis gun. Edvard Johannesen of Oyrarbakki was serving at the time on the *Phebe*, registered in Toftir.

Machine-gun fire might have a deterrent effect during an air-attack and, indeed, one Faroese seaman received a medal for having downed an aircraft. However, this level of armament held little threat for a U-Boat and the largest loss of life occurred when a Faroese trawler was torpedoed south of Iceland.

On 7 March 1942, the trawler *Nýggjaberg* (VA82) was sunk with the loss of all 21 members of her crew when she was hit by a single torpedo fired from U-701 and sank within two minutes. (A crew of this size means that the vessel would have been fishing in her own right rather than undertaking a collect-and-deliver voyage).

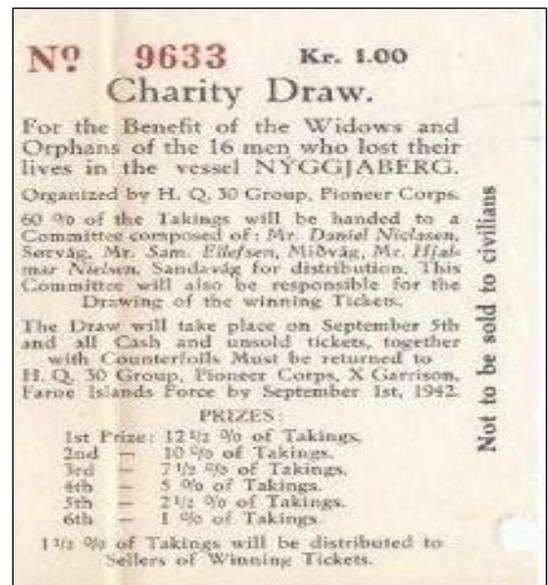


THE TRAWLER NÝGGJABERG AT THE QUAYSIDE IN HER HOME PORT OF MIÐVÁGUR



TRI-LINGUAL TICKET (No.9633) FOR THE LOTTERY TO RAISE FUNDS "FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE WIDOWS AND ORPHANS OF THE 16 MEN WHO LOST THEIR LIVES IN THE VESSEL NYGGJABERG"
(illustration reduced by 15%)

Most of the crew from the vessel had been from Miðvágur on the island of Vágur where, at this time, the Pioneer Corps were to be based as part of Operation Burglar, constructing the airfield and its ancillary works. An advance party of these British troops arrived on Vágur on 10 April 1942, just a month after the sinking. Numbers of Pioneers then built up rapidly until 30 Group Pioneer Corps comprised seven companies. Despite there being a large number of military personnel on an island with a small population of civilians, good relations seem to have been established from the outset. The CO of 30 Group, Lt. Col. J.E. Adamson, certainly deserves much credit for ensuring this policy was realised. It is not clear whose idea it was but somebody proposed holding a charity lottery for the benefit of the families of the 16 men from the village who had been lost on the *Nýggjabergr*.



DETAIL FROM THE LOTTERY TICKET SHOWN ABOVE
(actual size)

Ten thousand (10,000) numbered tickets were printed each consisting of four parts: a counterfoil and a tri-lingual (Faroese, Danish, English) explanation of the aims and rules of the draw. An example is shown above and an enlarged version of the English text is shown to the right. One question is immediately prompted: the ticket instructs "Not to be sold to civilians". If this was the case what purpose was served by the texts in Faroese and Danish?

As yet we do not know how successful the lottery was and how much was distributed for the benefit of the widows and orphans. We do know from an order placed with H.N. Jacobsens that the printers charged 397.50KR for producing the 10,000 tickets, and the person placing that order was a Major Bond. Was he perhaps also the originator of this charitable initiative?

○ Editor's Note: If any reader can provide any further information, Álur would like to hear from you as a friend of his is researching a book on the *Nýggjabergr*. Álur can be contacted on alvur@kallnet.fo

