

**AWM78**

**Reports of Proceedings, HMA Ships and  
Establishments**

**AWM78 Class 278 - HMAS NORMAN (I)**

**File number:** AWM78/278/3

**Title:** AWM78 278/3 - October-November  
1941



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CONFIDENTIAL

NORMAN

DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY

Subject:

"Norman" - Letter of proceedings

OCT - NOV 41

22

Declassification Authority—Defence Records

This record has been reviewed and has been  
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Reviewer: LCDR R. L. Smith (RANEM)

Signature: R. Smith

Date: 8 Oct 90

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REGISTRY

Naval Liaison Officer

114 NOV 1941

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FROM..... The Commanding Officer, H.M.A.S. "NORMAN".

TO..... Rear Admiral Destroyers, Home Fleet.

Copies to :-

Naval Liaison Officer, Australia House, London.  
for information of Commonwealth Naval Board.

DATE..... 4th. November, 1941.

REF. NO.....0/25.

SUBJECT.....LETTER OF PROCEEDINGS - H.M.A.S. "NORMAN".

The following proceedings of H.M.A. Ship under my command are submitted :-

Monday, 6th. October.- P.M.

Sub Calibre Day and Night Firing cancelled owing to poor visibility.

Completed with oil fuel from Duty Oiler.

Closed H.M.S. Tyne and received sailing orders from Rear Admiral (D).

Left Scapa for Seidis Fiord to embark Trade Union Delegates for passage to Archangel.

Tuesday, 7th. October.

Arrived Seidis Fiord 2000 (-1) after passage averaging 31 knots and completed with fuel.

Embarked Delegates (from H.M.S. "Antelope").

Sir Walter Citrine (Secretary Trade Union Council)

Mr. F. Wolstencroft. (President).

Mr. A. Conel.

Mr. A.N. Harrison.

Mr. W.P. Allen.

Mr. E.A. Bell. (Secretary).

Wednesday, 8th. October.

0800 (-1). Cast off and proceeded to Archangel.

Friday, 10th. October.

In Latitude 75° 30' North, 19° 00' East in Arctic conditions.

Sunday, 12th. October.

Entered White Sea in heavy snow storms after passage averaging 18½ knots.

1500 (-3) embarked Pilot at North Dvina Light Vessel.

Arrived Archangel.

1800 (-3) Russian Representatives welcomed Trade Union Council Delegates on board.

Subsequently party disembarked in Admiral's yacht.

Monday, 13th. October.

Tuesday, 14th. October.

At Archangel. Completed with fuel.

Privilege leave to visit City (Ferry provided).

Canteen arranged by Senior British Naval Officer for ships alongside.

Wednesday, 15th. October.

0600 (-3) H.M.A.S. Norman, H.M.S's. Impulsive,

Escapade proceeded down stream and secured alongside

H.M.S. Suffolk (see my Secret letter O/19 of 21st.

October to Rear Admiral (D) only.

Enc.....

1100 (-3)/



Wednesday, 15th. October. (cont'd).

1100 (-3) Cast off and carried out A/S Patrol off North Dvina Light Vessel.

Thursday, 16th. October.

0330 (-3) Detached by H.M.S. Suffolk and ordered to proceed to Seidis Fiord and Scapa Flow.

Saturday, 18th. October.

In vicinity of Bear Island ordered by H.M.S. Suffolk to return to Archangel.

Sunday, 19th. October.

1500 (-3) Arrived North Dvina Light Vessel and with Pilot proceeded to Archangel.

Wednesday, 20th. October.

Called on Senior British Naval Officer, Archangel, and visited Russian Chief of Staff. In view of lack of knowledge of arrival of Delegates, proposed H.M.A.S. Norman carry out Anti Submarine Search for Submarines known to be in approaches to White Sea. It was considered that best value would be obtained by night searches in vicinity of Gorodetzki Light using Range Direction Finder.

Senior British Naval Officer also required a report on suitability of Iokanka as Winter Convoy Anchorage.

Tuesday, 21st. October. Accordingly after delay due to choked condensor inlets (ice, fish and wood pulp) H.M.A.S. Norman proceeded and during night 20th/21st. October carried out Anti Submarine Patrol off Gorodetzki without result.

Enc.....

(A report to Senior British Naval Officer, Archangel, on blocking of condensers by ice is attached).

Wednesday, 22nd. October.

1740 (-3) Secured alongside at Archangel and completed with fuel.

Sunday, 26th. October, P.M.

Delegates arrived by plane.

Monday, 27th. October.

Delegates embarked.

0700 (-3) With Delegates embarked left Archangel. Passage down river prolonged by low visibility (due to snow storms) and heavy ice.

I had been ordered to make the passage through the narrows in daylight. Previous delays prevented passage till following day, consequently anchored off North Dvina Light Vessel until 2100 (-3).

Friday, 31st. October.

Arrived Seidis Fiord and completed with fuel. Obtained bread and mutton from Army.

Saturday, 1st. November.

0645 (-1) Cast off and proceeded.

Sunday, 2nd. November.

0900 (-1) Anchored in Scrabster Roads and disembarked delegates.

0945 (-1)/...



Sunday, 2nd. November. (Cont'd).

0945 (-1) Weighed and proceeded.

1050 (-1) Arrived Scapa.

2. Some notes on Archangel and the White Sea are attached as Appendix 1.

3. Outward bound, the Canteen Manager suffering from pleuresy was transferred to H.M.S. Impulsive for passage to Scapa.

4. Fleece lined 'Duffel Coats' and gloves issued on loan were much appreciated and, to exposed personnel, were essential.

5. A full calibre High Angle and a Night Firing (at Smoke Float) were carried out on passage.

6. Throughout the passage, the health and conduct of the Ship's Company were most satisfactory.

Sgd. H. M. BURRELL  
Commander, R.A.N.



SECRET.

Appendix 1 to H.M.A.S. Norman's letter 0/25 of 4th. November, 1941.

Notes on Archangel.

1. On first arrival ships are met at North Dvina Light Vessel by a Pilot and Russian Naval Officer (Interpreter). On subsequent occasions a Pilot only is embarked. His vocabulary is limited to "Port or Starboard a little", "Slow" and "By-by" (meaning "in a few seconds" or "within the next half hour").
2. Water in channels allows a County Class Cruiser to cross the bar at high water and come to off southern point of Modyugski Island. 20 feet is approximate draught for passage up river to Archangel.
3. The Chart (No. 2280) is insufficient guide for ships drawing over 10 feet.
4. Fleet Minesweepers and Destroyers secured alongside internment camp at Brevennik Island (Latitude 64° 37' 20" North, Longitude 40° 26' 52" East).
5. Jetties consist of 10 feet of wood overlaid on sand flats.
6. Ice started forming on the river on Sunday, 19th. October.
7. River is strewn with waterlogged timber making boat work hazardous. Bows of local craft are strengthened.
8. In winter the Dvina is frozen to a depth of 6 feet. The Railway station is on opposite bank to the town proper. This disadvantage is overcome by the laying of railway tracks across the ice. The ice will bear a heavy goods train.
9. Since September, 1939, the local overseas trade in wood ceased. Factories work part time to fill local needs.
10. Since Russia entered the war, the single line railway to the south has only been used for war stores and is a limiting factor. The minor wood industry is now carried on mainly by women, all available men being in the army.
11. The official rate of exchange is out of all proportion to the purchasing value of a rouble. Senior British Naval Officer can obtain limited sterling exchange at a more favourable but still an exorbitant rate. Owing to rationing system, foodstuff cannot be bought ashore.
12. Potatoes and meat (pork and mutton) for Ship's use are obtained through Russian Liaison Officer to Senior British Naval Officer.
13. Oil fuel is available and is of excellent quality (cleaning of burners is unnecessary). Oil comes by rail from the interior.
14. The present Russian Admiral only assumed duty in the last few weeks; his predecessor was removed. It is suspected that he was liquidated, being too senior for employment in the salt mines. Apparently the Admiral has to refer minor decisions to his local Commissars.
15. The Russian Naval Officers are affable and have reasonable theoretical but limited practical knowledge.
16. The Russians are....



16. The Russians are confident of victory, but their confidence does not seem to be based on any knowledge of the situation.

17. I believe the Russian intention is to keep the approaches to this port clear of ice to allow ships to berth off Modyugski Island and to lay a railway to the ice berths. Ice conditions will only allow one or two ships to follow an ice-breaker through the White Sea and will mean the use of a safe convoy anchorage near the entrance. Senior British Naval Officer is informing Admiralty of exact situation, but it would appear that volume of war stores entering during winter months cannot be on a large scale.

18. Tidal Streams in the White Sea are erratic and strong (3 knots). Positions plotted from the North West shore varied greatly from those from the South West shore.

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COPY.

FROM..... The Commanding Officer, H.M.A.S. NORMAN.

TO..... The Senior British Naval Officer, Archangel.  
Copy to : The Commanding Officer, H.M.S. LEDA.

DATE..... 24th. October, 1941. REF. NO.....2/15.

SUBJECT.. CHOKING OF MAIN INLETS IN ARCTIC WATERS.

The following report is submitted in accordance with your message 2220C/22 :

1. The danger of choking at Main Inlets due to ice is existent during the first two weeks of the freeze, when the ice is in small floes which tend to float at varying depths.

The tendency to choke occurs at the Weed Trap baffle.

The method of counteracting icing up in Russian ships is threefold :

1. Actual Inlets are very large at the hull openings.
2. No Weed Trap baffles are fitted.
3. Oil injection at the Main Inlet Valve is introduced.

2. The following are recommendations for Minesweepers and certain destroyers :

Gossamer Class.

Water injection at Weed Traps should be used. This is effective and quickly counteracts any tendency for ice to lie on the Weed Trap baffles.

3. In the case of H.M.A.S. NORMAN, where no Weed Trap clearing device is fitted, the following recommendations were made by the Russian Engineer Officers :

(a) Take<sup>off</sup> Weed Trap baffle plates.

(b) Drill Main inlets in way of Weed Traps and fit either a steam or rod clearing device.

( Ship's Officers consider that :

(a) Grave danger of damage to Main Circulators would be incurred if baffles were removed, because of free passage thus allowed to comparatively heavy solid masses of ice.

(b) The fitting of an ice clearing arrangement by Ship's Staff with the Ship at short notice is impractical.

4. As the tendency to choking is greatest at the higher speeds it is recommended that very slow speed only be used in broken ice. It has been found also that when choking does occur, if the engines are moved astern sufficiently for the ship to gather stern way, while the main circulators are run as slowly as possible, an almost immediate clearance is effected.

(Sgd ) H.M.Burrell.

Commander, R.A.N.



From

To — RAD copies to N.L.O for info of C.N.B

SECRET

Date —

Subject — Letter of Proceedings — HARRIS NORMAN

The following proceedings of H.M. Aship under my command are submitted:—

Monday 6<sup>th</sup> Oct —

pm. Sub Calibre Day+Night Firing cancelled owing to poor visibility

Completed with oil fuel from Subyden

Closed "Tyne" and received sailing orders from R.A.(S).

Left Scapa for Seydisfjord to embark

Trade Union Council Delegates for passage to Archangel.

Tues. 7<sup>th</sup> Oct — ~~at daylight~~ 2000 (G.M.T.) arrived Seydisfjord after passage averaging 31 knots and completed with fuel.

embarked Delegates (from "Antelope")

Mr. F. Walstancroft (President)

Sir Walter Atkine (Secy T.U.C.)

Mr. A. Conel

Mr. A.N. Harrison

Mr. W.P. Allen

Mr. E.A. Bell (Secretary)

Wed. 8<sup>th</sup> Oct. 0800 (G.M.T.) Cast off & proceeded to Archangel

Friday 10<sup>th</sup> Oct In Lat 75° 30' N in Arctic conditions — ~~ship frozen over~~ 18 1/2 knots?   
 19° 00' E

Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> Oct Entered White Sea in heavy snow storms after passage averaging 18 1/2 knots?   
 1500 (G) embarked Pilot at N. Ovinia Light Vessel

~~1400~~ arrived Archangel.

1800 (-3) Russian representatives welcomed T.U.C. Delegates on board.

Subsequently party disembarked in Admiralty yacht.

Monday 13<sup>th</sup> Oct. } At Archangel — completed with oil fuel.

Tues 14<sup>th</sup> Oct } bridge leave to visit city (being provided)   
 Canteen leave arranged & arranged by SBND for ships alongside.

Wed 15<sup>th</sup> Oct 0600 (-3) Russian Impulsive Escapade proceeded down stream and secured alongside Suffolk (see my secret letter 0/19 of 21<sup>st</sup> Oct — to RAD only)

1100 (-3) Cast off and carried out ATB patrol of N. Ovinia Light Vessel

Thurs 16<sup>th</sup> Oct 0330 (-3) ~~proceeded independently~~ detached by Suffolk and ordered to proceed to Seydisfjord and Scapa Flow

Satur 18<sup>th</sup> Oct In vicinity of Bear Island, ordered by Suffolk to return to Archangel

Sun 19<sup>th</sup> Oct 1500 Arrived N. Ovinia Light Vessel with pilot proceeded to Archangel

P.T.O.



Mon 20<sup>th</sup> Oct. Called on SBNO Archangel & visited Russian Chief of Staff  
 In view of lack of knowledge of armament of delegates Proposed Norman carry out A/S Search for Submarines known to be in approaches to White Sea. It was considered that best value would be obtained by night searches in vicinity of ~~GORODETZKI~~ LIGHT using R.D.F. - Anglo 285  
 SBNO also required a report on suitability of ~~Sydney~~ Iokanka as Winter Lowrey Anchorage.

~~Later~~ Later Russian Admiral apparently resented inspection of Iokanka. Accordingly

Tues 21<sup>st</sup> Oct after delay due to choked condenser inlets (ice, fish and wood pulp) Norman proceeded and during night 20/21<sup>st</sup> Oct carried out A/S patrol off ~~Kanadetski~~ GORODETZKI without result. (A report to SBNO Archangel on blocking of condensers by ice is attached)

Wed 22<sup>nd</sup> Oct 1740(-3) Reamed alongside at Archangel and completed with fuel.

Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> Oct<sup>PM</sup> Delegates arrived by plane.

Monday 27<sup>th</sup> Oct Delegates embarked.

0700<sup>(-3)</sup> after delay in departure due to ~~with~~ Delegates embarked left Archangel.

Passage down river prolonged by low visibility (due to snow storms) and heavy ice.

I had been ordered to ~~pass~~ make the passage through the narrows in daylight. Previous delays prevented passage till following day, consequently anchored off N. Loma Light Vessel until 2100 (-3)

Friday 31<sup>st</sup> Oct arrived Lidesford and completed with fuel. Obtained bread and mutton from Army.

Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> Nov 0645(-1) Cast off and proceeded

Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> Nov 0900(-1) anchored in Grabster Roads and disembarked delegates.

0945(-1) weighed and proceeded

1050(-1) arrived Scapa.

2. Some notes on Archangel and the White Sea are attached as appendix I.

6. Throughout the passage, the conduct and health of the ship's company have been most satisfactory

3. Outward bound, I was found near the Canteen manager suffering from pleurisy was transferred to "Impulsiv" for passage to Scapa.

4. Fleece lined "Duffel Coats" and gloves issued on loan were much appreciated and, to exposed personnel, were essential.

5. A Full Calibre ~~Very~~ H.A. and Night Firing (at Smoke Float) were carried out on passage.

FTJ Comdr



SECRET

Appendix I to HMAS NORMAN'S

Letter of

of

Notes on Archangel

1. ~~Ships~~  
On first arrival ships are met at N. Borna Light vessel by a pilot and Russian Naval Officer (Interpreters).  
On subsequent occasions a pilot only is embarked. ~~His~~ vocabulary is limited to "Port or Starb. a little", "Slow" and 'By-by' (meaning "in a few seconds" or "within the next half hour").
2. Water in channel allows a <sup>Cornwallis</sup> class cruiser to cross the bar at high water and come to ~~off~~ <sup>southern point of</sup> ~~MODYUGSKI~~ Island.  
~~Passage~~ 20 ft is maximum draught for passage up river to Archangel.
3. ~~Fleet~~  
The chart (No 2280) is insufficient guide for ships drawing over 10 feet.
4. Fleet minesweepers and destroyers secured alongside <sup>unmanned</sup> camp at ~~Berezniki~~ Island. (Lat  $64^{\circ} 37' 20''$  N Long  $40^{\circ} 26' 52''$  E)
5. Jetty consists of 10 feet of wood overlaid on mud flats.
6. Ice started forming on the river on Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> Oct
7. River is ~~like~~ <sup>shown</sup> with waterlogged timber making boat work hazardous. <sup>Boats of</sup> local craft ~~are~~ strengthened ~~to~~
8. In winter the Borna is frozen to a depth of 6 feet.  
The Railway Station is on opposite bank to the town proper.  
This disadvantage is overcome ~~by~~ <sup>by</sup> the laying of railway track across the ice. ~~The ice~~ will bear a heavy goods train.  
Tram lines are laid down to estuaries.
9. Since Sept 1939 the ~~only~~ local overseas trade in wood ceased. Factories work part time to fulfil local needs.
10. Since Russia entered the war, the single line railway to the south has only been used for ~~trans~~ war stores and in a limited factor. The minor wood industry is now carried on ~~mainly~~ <sup>mainly</sup> by women, all available men being in the army.
11. The official rate of exchange is out of all proportion to the purchasing value of a rouble. S.B.N.O. ~~is available to exchange~~ <sup>can obtain limited exchange</sup> sterling at a more favourable but <sup>still an</sup> exorbitant rate. <sup>for ships use</sup> ~~Due to rationing system, goods~~ <sup>cannot be bought ashore.</sup>
12. Potatoes & meat (pork and mutton) are obtained through Russian Liaison Officer to S.B.N.O.

P.T.O.



13. Oil fuel is available and is of excellent quality. (cleaning of burners is unnecessary). Oil comes by rail (~~in barrels~~) from the interior.

14. The present Russian Admiral only assumed duty in the last four weeks; his predecessor was removed. It is suspected that he was liquidated, being too senior for employment in the past times. Apparently the Admiral has to refer minor decisions to his local commissars.

15. The Russian Naval Officers are affable and have reasonable theoretical ~~knowledge~~ <sup>limited</sup> but ~~no~~ practical knowledge.

16. The Russians are confident of victory but their confidence does not seem to be based on any knowledge of the situation.

#### Convoys.

17. I believe the Russian intention is to keep the approach to this part clear of ice to allow ships to berth off MOODYGSKI Island and to lay a railway to the ice berths. Ice conditions will only allow <sup>one or</sup> ~~two~~ ships to follow an icebreaker through the White Sea & will mean the use of a safe convey anchorage near the entrance. SBND is performing admirably of exact situation but it would appear that transport volume of war stores entering during winter months cannot be on a large scale.

18. Tidal streams in the White Sea are erratic and strong (3 knots). Currents plotted from the North <sup>West</sup> shore varied greatly from those from the South West shore.



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