# Historic Norwegian vessels retrace clandestine wartime voyage in Liberation Convoy



## Historic Vessels Commemorate War Heroes in the Liberation Convoy’s Journey

A flotilla of historic vessels has embarked on a poignant journey across the North Sea, marking the 80th anniversary of peace in Europe with a heartfelt tribute to those who made sacrifices during World War II. Set in motion by an enthusiastic group of volunteers and maritime historians, the Liberation Convoy features six restored Norwegian vessels, including the merchant cargo ship S/S Hestmanden and several wartime fishing boats that actively participated in the clandestine 'Shetland Bus' operations.

The 'Shetland Bus' operation, which commenced in 1941, was instrumental in supporting Norwegian resistance against the Nazi occupation. Utilising fishing boats and later American sub-chasers, this covert initiative successfully transported more than 400 tons of weaponry and supplies while ferrying refugees and agents between Shetland and Norway. Over its lifespan, the operation carried out more than 200 missions, honouring the 44 crew members who lost their lives through the establishment of dedicated memorials, such as the Shetland Bus Memorial in Scalloway.

As the convoy departed from Bergen earlier this week, participants faced a 'choppy' crossing, but spirits remained buoyant. The journey reached its peak on Tuesday evening as attendees celebrated with champagne and live music upon the flotilla's arrival. Organisers have planned a variety of events for the public, including guided tours, educational talks, and memorial services held aboard the vessels. These activities will not only honour the heroic efforts of the wartime sailors but also reinforce the enduring relationship between Norway and the United Kingdom.

The S/S Hestmanden, originally launched in 1911, serves as the largest vessel in the convoy and is now fully restored, functioning as the Norwegian War Sailor Museum. This museum pays homage to the estimated 4,500 Norwegian sailors who perished during the conflict. The convoy also includes M/K Andholmen, M/K Heland, M/K Erkna, and M/K Arnefjord, all vessels that played significant roles in the dire wartime missions to support Norway's resistance.

With plans to traverse multiple ports, including a stop in Edinburgh later this month, the Liberation Convoy illustrates a powerful narrative of collaboration and remembrance. The Norwegian Ministry of Defence, alongside several charitable foundations and the Norwegian-British Chamber of Commerce, actively supports this initiative, further highlighting the importance of preserving historical legacies and honouring the sacrifices of those who fought for freedom.

Engaging the public in remembrance and education, this reconnection with history not only serves as a tribute to the past but aims to inspire future generations to appreciate the geopolitical narratives that have shaped contemporary Norway and the UK.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/25142922.viking-longboat-greets-liberation-convoy-arrives-shetland/?ref=rss), [[4]](https://www.shetnews.co.uk/2025/02/19/historic-norwegian-vessels-head-lerwick/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[4]](https://www.shetnews.co.uk/2025/02/19/historic-norwegian-vessels-head-lerwick/), [[5]](https://www.scallowaymuseum.org/the-shetland-bus.html)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/25142922.viking-longboat-greets-liberation-convoy-arrives-shetland/?ref=rss), [[2]](https://www.liberationconvoy.com/index.html)
* Paragraph 4 – [[3]](https://www.shetland.gov.uk/news/article/2756/historic-norwegian-vessels-to-visit-for-ww2-80th-commemorations-), [[4]](https://www.shetnews.co.uk/2025/02/19/historic-norwegian-vessels-head-lerwick/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[2]](https://www.liberationconvoy.com/index.html), [[3]](https://www.shetland.gov.uk/news/article/2756/historic-norwegian-vessels-to-visit-for-ww2-80th-commemorations-)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/25142922.viking-longboat-greets-liberation-convoy-arrives-shetland/?ref=rss> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
* <https://www.liberationconvoy.com/index.html> - The Liberation Convoy 2025 is a commemoration marking the 80th anniversary of peace in Europe, featuring six historic Norwegian vessels. These include the D/S Hestmanden, KNM Hitra, M/K Heland, M/K Andholmen, M/K Erkna, and M/B Arnefjord. The convoy will sail from Bergen to various UK ports, honoring Norwegian war sailors and celebrating the close relationship between Norway and the UK. The journey includes public events, guided tours, educational programs, and exhibitions aboard the vessels.
* <https://www.shetland.gov.uk/news/article/2756/historic-norwegian-vessels-to-visit-for-ww2-80th-commemorations-> - A flotilla of six restored World War II vessels, known as the 'Liberation Convoy 2025', will cross the North Sea to Lerwick for the 80th Anniversary of Victory in Europe (VE) Day on 8th May 2025. The convoy includes the Royal Norwegian Navy submarine chaser HNoMS Hitra and fishing vessels M/K Andholmen, M/K Arnefjord, M/K Erkna, and M/K Heland, all of which operated from Shetland during the 'Shetland Bus' operations. The largest ship, S/S Hestmanden, now serves as the Norwegian War Sailor Museum, honoring the estimated 4,500 sailors who died in the Second World War.
* <https://www.shetnews.co.uk/2025/02/19/historic-norwegian-vessels-head-lerwick/> - A flotilla of six restored World War II vessels, known as the 'Liberation Convoy 2025', will cross the North Sea to Lerwick for the 80th Anniversary of Victory in Europe (VE) Day on 8 May. The convoy includes the Royal Norwegian Navy submarine chaser HNoMS Hitra, launched in 1943, alongside fishing vessels M/K Andholmen, M/K Arnefjord, M/K Erkna, and M/K Heland. All five vessels operated from Shetland across the North Sea as part of the covert activity to support the Norwegian resistance known as the 'Shetland Bus' operation. The largest ship in the convoy will be the 60-metre merchant cargo ship S/S Hestmanden – originally built in 1911 and which sailed in both the First and Second World Wars. The vessel is now fully restored and officially entitled as Norsk krigsseilermuseum – the Norwegian War Sailor Museum, honouring the estimated 4,500 sailors who died in the Second World War.
* <https://www.scallowaymuseum.org/the-shetland-bus.html> - The Shetland Bus was a clandestine operation during World War II, involving Norwegian fishing boats and later American submarine-chasers, which transported resistance fighters, agents, and refugees between Shetland and Norway. The operation began in 1941 and continued until the end of the war, completing over 200 missions and delivering more than 400 tons of weaponry and supplies. The Scalloway Museum in Shetland houses a permanent exhibition dedicated to the Shetland Bus, and the Shetland Bus Memorial in Scalloway honors the 44 crewmen who lost their lives during the operation.
* <https://www.shetnews.co.uk/2023/04/25/wreaths-laid-in-lerwick-to-honour-shetland-bus-operation/> - Wreaths were laid at the war memorial in Lerwick to commemorate the 80th anniversary of a key turning point in the Shetland Bus operation. Members of the Norwegian and UK navy, as well as local representatives, attended the ceremony. The Shetland Bus operation, which began in 1941, was a clandestine effort involving Norwegian fishing boats and later American submarine-chasers, transporting resistance fighters, agents, and refugees between Shetland and Norway during World War II. The introduction of sub-chasers in 1943 marked a significant improvement in the safety of the operation, leading to no further fatalities.
* <https://www.defensemedianetwork.com/stories/the-shetland-bus/> - The Shetland Bus was a clandestine special operations group that established a permanent link between Shetland, Scotland, and German-occupied Norway during World War II. From mid-1941 until the end of the war, it operated a number of vessels, mostly Norwegian fishing boats, to transport resistance fighters, agents, and refugees. The operation was a joint effort of the Special Operations Executive, the British Admiralty’s Naval Intelligence, and the Military Intelligence Service of Norway’s government in exile. The Shetland Bus played a crucial role in supporting the Norwegian resistance and is commemorated by the Shetland Bus Memorial in Scalloway.