

Five things you need to know today



Alex of the Arctic

Edinburgh Ceilidhs

Outlander in Edinburgh

Gordon Aikman at the Edinburgh International Science Festival

Edinburgh East fundraiser



Surprised tenants at an Edinburgh retirement housing development have been paid a visit by Vladimir Putin's top diplomat in Scotland, armed with a prestigious war medal and a large bottle of Russian vodka – to award a long standing tenant.

Alex Ramsay, 88, was part of the 1944 Arctic Convoy – a treacherous mission in freezing conditions, to deliver vital supplies to the Soviet Union as they battled the axis powers at the western front.

The veteran of the Merchant Navy was recently awarded the 'Ushakov Medal' by Andrey Pritsepov, the Russian Consul General who visited Milton Court Retirement Home in Portobello.

Alex said: "I am thrilled to receive another medal for my involvement in the war effort – it gives me a reason to reflect on the time I spent in the merchant navy.

“My main memory of the convoy was the camaraderie and the great team-spirit on the boat – whilst we battled the enduring and bitterly cold weather.

“The team at Milton Court threw a great party – and we all had a shot of Russian vodka something which the Ambassador said was ‘to celebrate the efforts of brave men’ like me.”

Recognised as an integral part of the war effort which helped mount pressure on the enemy from all fronts – the arctic convoys suffered heavy losses, with 85 merchant vessels and 16 Royal Navy warships tragically lost during the missions.

Linda Mason, Retirement Manager at Milton Court said: “We are all so very proud of Alex’s achievements – he is an unassuming and modest man but his story is truly inspiring.

“His three older brothers enrolled in the army, and at just 16 Alex was technically too young – but was determined to play his part – against his mother’s will and contribute to the war effort.”

Alex met his wife-to-be in the Merchant Navy – and was quickly offered an ultimatum – get married or stay in the Merchant Navy.

Alex became a bus conductor in 1950 before eventually going on to drive buses in and around Edinburgh. He has been a resident at Milton Court since July 2006 and has two children, Christine and Stuart, four grandchildren and four great grandchildren.



Tonight there will be a Ceilidh Club at the Assembly Roxy with the Occassionals. Tickets are £7 on the door or in advance from www.edinburghceilidhclub.com/tickets the ceilidh starts at 8pm.

Then on Friday they are back for their second ceilidh of the week at the Assembly Roxy with Teannaich. Doors open at 7:20pm with dancing kicking off from 7:30pm you can get your tickets online from www.edinburghceilidhs.com or in person from the Tickets Scotland box office on Rose Street, or at ceilidh club ticket desk on Tuesday. Tickets are selling fast for Fridays ceilidh so get yours soon before they sell out!!

Outlander is coming to Edinburgh. The popular books have spawned a TV series and now there is an Edinburgh tour courtesy of Mercat Tours. This is a walking tour that takes in locations featured in the bestselling books by Diana Gabaldon.

[Read more here.](#)

Dying Motor Neurone Disease campaigner Gordon Aikman will today outline a plan to find a cure for disease that is killing him.

In a speech at the Edinburgh International Science Festival he will launch a plan that he believes will ensure a cure for MND will be found here in Scotland.

He will make a "direct and personal plea" to party leaders to promise to double MND research funding, pointing out this is likely to be his last General Election.

Gordon has already raised over a quarter of a million pounds for MND research through his Just Giving page.

Gordon Aikman is expected to say: "Half of people with MND die within 14 months of diagnosis. The odds are stacked against me. This is likely to be the last General Election I will see.

So with just weeks until we go to the polls I am making a direct and personal plea to all the party leaders.

My plea is simple and is this: double MND research funding.

The more we invest the quicker we will find that cure.

You can read the full text of Gordon's speech [here](#).

Elaine C Smith and Hardeep Singh Kohli to host election fundraiser

Comedians Elaine C Smith and Hardeep Singh Kohli will be joining Edinburgh East SNP later this month to raise funds for Tommy Sheppard's Westminster electoral campaign.

[Read more here](#).

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