

SEARCH BEGINS FOR WARTIME RELIC

A search has begun in Oban for a wartime relic after its Dutch owner's daughter visited the area recently. The sextant, a naval navigational instrument, was brought to these shores in 1940 when German bombers attacked merchant ships in the Lynn of Lorne. These included a Dutch ship, the S.S. Breda, which suffered severe damage and led to the crew landing at Benderloch on Christmas Eve.

Peter MacLeod, who was seven at the time, remembers three large men sitting down to breakfast when he got up that morning. His father was Lieutenant with the Benderloch platoon of the Home Guard and had brought the captain, first officer and chief engineer to the house.

'The first officer had with him a wooden box containing his sextant but for some reason asked my father if he could look after it until he could return to collect it.' When informed months later that the officer was missing in America, Mr MacLeod was told to hand in the device to Oban police. He refused.

'My father took the view that he had a personal obligation to take care of the sextant until its owner reappeared', he explained. Although he 'received a dire warning about the consequences of his action' he managed to retain the instrument until about 1962 when he gave it to Oban High School for use in their navigation class.

Tonny Klein-Janssen, the first officer's daughter, recently visited the area and is trying to trace the sextant. Unfortunately, this is where the story ends. 'I had made enquiries at

the school when I returned to live in Oban in 1976 but no-one knew anything about it.'

If anyone has any information about the whereabouts of the mysterious missing sextant, contact Peter MacLeod on 01631 563577 or by email at lorne.Macleod@ecosse.net.



First Officer Janssen with the missing sextant circa 1925. Photo courtesy of Peter Macleod www.sextantid.com