

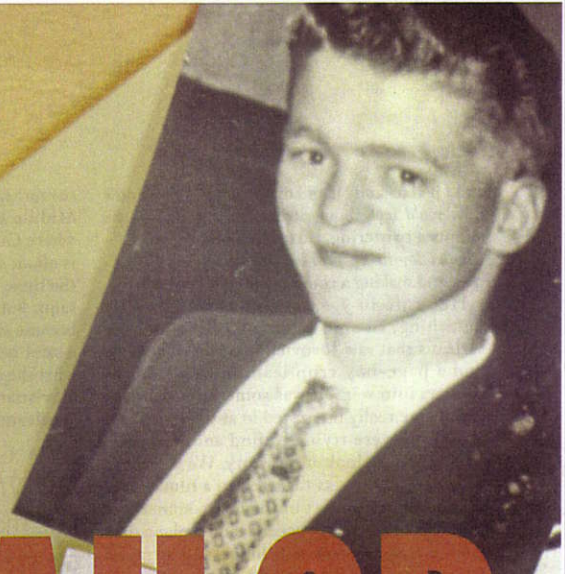
TINKER, TAILOR,

When a British trawler vanished off the Russian coast at the height of the Cold War the government denied it was on a spying mission. But if the *Gaul* was just another fishing tragedy, why were no bodies ever found? Nearly 30 years on, Eamonn O'Neill asks when the families of the missing men will be told the truth

MY BROTHER Jackie was a whaler for a while in the Antarctic. He started trawling for fish, firstly out of Aberdeen, before he finally ended up in Hull," says Joyce Strachan. Junior officer John "Jackie" Chisholm, disappeared, presumed drowned, along with 35 other crew members on the Hull-registered trawling vessel the *Gaul* somewhere north of Norway on 8 February 1974. "Jackie would have been 61 in November this year," she tells me.

Outside her home on the craggy Fraserburgh coast, a finger of sun strokes the lush green fields. Beyond the fields the North Sea is visible. It shifts from afternoon blue to pinkish red, before slipping into a deep, bruised copper. It looks peaceful. "It's nice in the summer," remarks Joyce ruefully. "Believe me, it's a different story in the winter."

"That's Jackie there," she says, pointing to a black-and-white photo taken at her wedding to Ian, also a fisherman. Jackie stands slightly apart from the group. He has thick wavy hair, young eyes and a slight grin. His body is muscular and his shoulders square from years of heavy manual work. He's been around. Already he's got 10



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knot of well-wishers
who had gathered at
the dockside in the
early hours of a
winter's morning to
wish the crew of the
trawler bon voyage
had joined their
friends on board. But
it was near high-
water, and the cap-
tain had blown for
tags to tow him from
the quayside and
through the lock
gates. It was time
for all visitors to
leave.
It might be three
months before the
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more because more innocent,
the vessel, to a check
each, straggled, occasionally
towards the rail on the level
deck, aft, and down the
yellow ganway to the
floatlight was one of the
biggest and safest trawlers
around, specially built for Arctic
waters. The distinctive blue
hull, the white superstructure
and the single mast were blue

SAILOR, SPY?



Wives break up probe into trawler disaster

'Russians have seized our men for spying'

By MARTYN SHARPE

RELATIVES of the 36 men who vanished with the trawler GAUL last February broke up the investigation, shouting: 'The Russians have seized our men for spying'



GENERAL REGISTER AND TACKLE OFFICE OF SHIPPING AND SEAMEN
LLANTRISANT ROAD
CARDIFF
CF5 2YS

Certified Extract from a List of Crew (Fishing Vessel)

Fishing Vessel F/V GAUL Port of Registry HULL Official Number 33400

Name	Date and Place of Birth
<u>John Thomas</u>	<u>4th May 1926</u> <u>North Shields</u>



I hereby certify that the above is a true Extract from the List of Crew of the Fishing Vessel GAUL registered in the Register of Seamen (Fishing Vessels) at Hull on the 8th February 1974.

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