

Hello Shipmates,

As a pimply adolescent I laboured to understand 'how many beans make five', but had no doubt who was busy laying rail track over vast areas of the globe, coloured pink on the map, half of Africa, half South America, the Antipodes et al. Britannia also ruled the waves, lost a few fights en route to 'nipping slavery in the bud'.

In Europe now that accolade belongs to 'La Belle France'. Also now pre-eminent 'laying rail track' over the aforementioned continents is China. World attention is presently focused on China's progress towards a 'blue water navy'. To think it will have three proper 'cat and trap' aircraft carriers before another eighteen months have elapsed is an eye opener. Construction of Chinese 'friendship' naval bases in Sri Lanka, Mogadishu, Venezuela, and now talk of Argentina are well under way. This, when Russia tightens its grip on its Syrian base at Tartus, with an aim to disrupt the traditional status quo.

A very recent cat and mouse game in the Med., conducted between 'our' latest 'A-class sub' and what N.A.T.O. code named '**Black Hole**', the latest Russian attack sub. whose 'silence under water' is rattling our cage has made an impact. It seems possible that the basis for that technology jump was via the infamous U.S. naval spy and brother, seduced, not by ideology, but cash; as ever, betrayal from within!

Late in 2017 a pair of Chinese cutting edge frigates visited London's docklands en route to exercises in N.A.T.O.'s back yard, the Baltic. One understands this was noticed by a few 'members at Westminster', when they glanced up while filling in their expense sheets, it caused a ripple of alarm!, but insufficient to cause a release of cash to decent ship builders so as 'we' could have a pair of decent frigates visit Canary Wharf. Those M.P.'s, ignorant of China's global reach in days gone past, saw it as a 'world first' ...

Despite those problems with 'the beans' I was aware Chinese ships had mapped Greenland with wonderful accuracy in 1410 -20 -30. The controversial '*Vinland*' map of Atlantic Europe outshine people like Columbus, who came by centuries later.

The first decent mapping of Southern Ocean, after Chinese cartography in early 1400's, was done by the famous son of Whitby, J. Cook, 350 years later. In 1420, a sight never yet seen in the world, a fleet set sail in command of Chinese Emperor Zhu Di's eunuch admiral, with orders to 'Proceed all the way to the end of the Earth'. They did that, their treasure map of the U.S. west coast is amazing.

Today, June 14th, is 'Falklands Day', which reminds me they mapped South Georgia and the Falklands in late 1430.

Where does he get all this balderdash? You may ask.

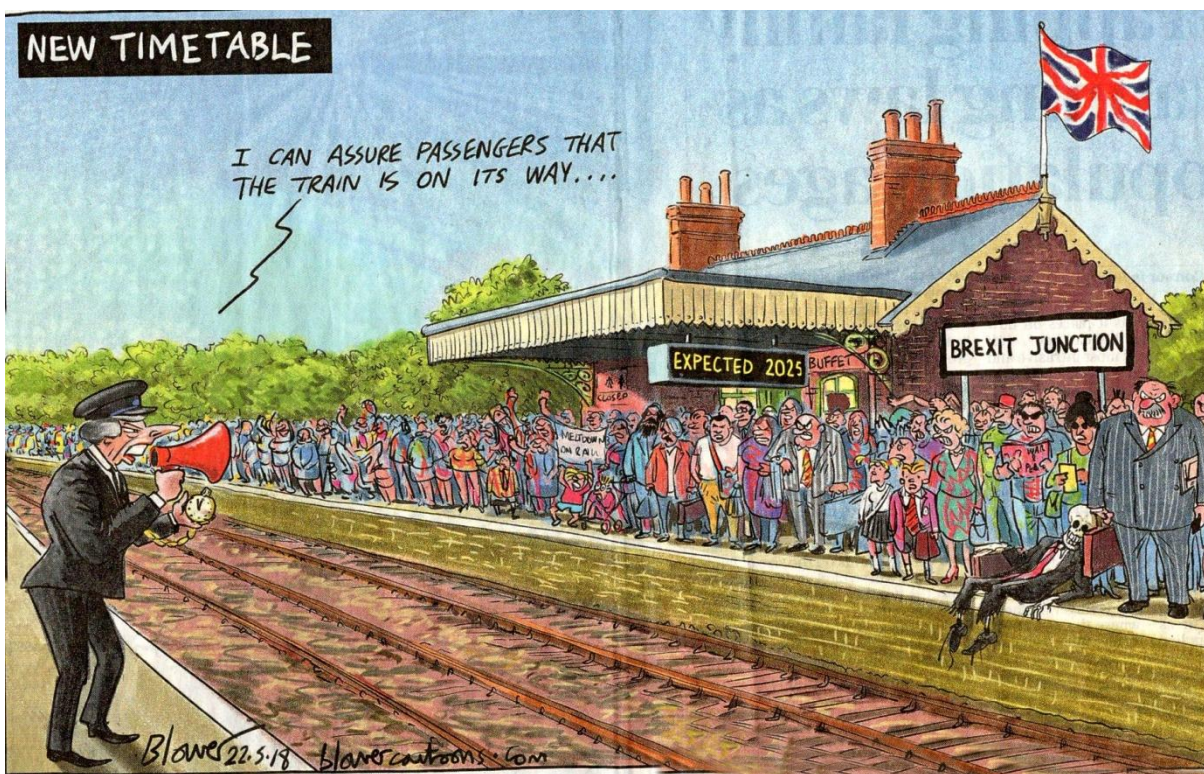
Allow me to recommend a book published in 2002, following 15 years of research, titled '**1421, when China discovered the world**'.

Initial interest/attraction for me, was the author Gavin Menzies, born in China 1937, a submariner Royal Navy from 59 to 70, did time back on China Station as captain of *H.M.S. Rorqual* (mine laying sub.) 68 to 70. This is no quick read; without the appendix it is a 600 pager. I guarantee you will be enthralled.

Before return to rail track, I see China has just conferred on President Putin their very top 'friendship decoration' whilst on a visit to agree their aim; to marginalize U.S. current dominance of the high seas. I take comfort from the fact a Donald is running things in the '48', not a Barak.

China's aim to trade with Europe 'by rail' is now up and running. The plan, announced in 2013, saw the 'first train' arrive at the old Corytown Refinery site on the Thames, just in from Southend, a couple of months ago. The site is cleared and a massive distribution depot has been erected. Reportedly a 'ribbon' was broken on the train's arrival. This was so low key, unannounced, it seemed a bit odd to me. The train set off from China's east coast town of Yiwu. It did the 7,500 miles in 18 days.

Corytown (Essex) was the 15th stop en route, cutting two weeks from the time taken by container ship: Shipping cost were halved; It crossed Kazakhstan, Russia, Belarus, Poland, Germany, Belgium, France and under the Channel Tunnel. The U.K. portion consisted of 34 containers, a creditable start, but Watch this Space. April 10th a return load for China left Stanford-le-Hope, Essex, for Zhu Jiang. Proper Planning does seem to prevent Piss Poor Performance.



Locally, commuters from Margate to London Bridge celebrate a red letter day if they make it into work on time!

The obvious upside to this tale is avoidance of last month's incident when

a massive container vessel lost 76 of its 'box load' in a storm. That was only one ship!

Fortunately boxes are now made to float up in a short time. I believe many a yacht had vanished without trace, hitting just negative buoyant containers.

Hope it's of interest.