

Those Navy Days

An account of some of my experiences whilst serving in the Royal Navy

January 1944 to April 1958



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INTRODUCTION

I had my 15th birthday in April 1943 and already had a very clear idea of what I wanted to do when I left school. I wanted to work in the electrical or radio field and was also keen to join the Royal Navy. I had spent time in earlier years making things with batteries and bulbs, and building my own Crystal Sets before the war. I still have a crystal in its original box from those times now. Like most boys I built model ships and in particular I remember a model of HMS Hood.

I became aware of Cadet Entry to the RN at Dartmouth College at age 13, but was too old by that time. I then became aware of Artificer Apprenticeships offered by the Royal Navy in Engine Room, Ordnance, Fleet Air Arm and Electrical Engineering. There was an entrance examination to select prospective apprentices twice per year and the next one was in August 1943. Those successful would join the RN in January 1944. There were vacancies for, I think, 365 candidates from the whole of the Country for the January 1944 entry. Mmmm.... could I make these things gel?

It is very easy to understand that my family were very much against this idea. Imagine, I was just 15 years old, there was a war on and I wanted to join the Navy! The general view, which I very much respect now, was 'no way'!

I was at the Judd School, Tonbridge, at that time and Mum decided to speak with the Headmaster, Mr. Lloyd-Morgan to get his advice. His recommendation was that I should be allowed to take the exam, which I had no chance of passing and would then settle down, get on with the School Certificate and all would be well. So it was; I could not object to that.

So in August 1943 I took the examination, I can't remember where now but probably at School. There was a minimum academic requirement, but above that it was competitive.

Much to everyone's surprise (and probably horror) I passed. As mentioned earlier, there were about 360 vacancies and I came 103rd in the 'pass list', sufficiently high to get my first choice of Electrical Artificer Apprentice.

So, late in the day of 18th January 1944 I travelled up to London, walked through the extensive bomb damage everywhere to Kings Cross Station, to catch the overnight train to Edinburgh. Several people came with me to see me off, I can't remember exactly who, but I do remember my Mum and Nan being there. Wartime trains. Low power blue lights only, blinds down, blackout outside so nothing can be seen, most passengers wearing the uniform of one of the Services, general bustle but at the same time a sense of an opportunity to relax. A young lad sat in the corner, a mixture of excitement and apprehension.

It is only now when I have children and a grandchild of my own that I realise the agony that my Mum and Nan must have gone through on their way home.

We arrived in Edinburgh about 7am. I stirred from an uncomfortable night and particularly remember being surprised at the Scottish accent of the station announcer over the Public Address System. It was a case of collecting my case, changing platforms to catch a local train, which crossed the Forth Bridge to Inverkeithing.

In the book HMS Caledonia, Leslie Leigh, who also arrived at Inverkeithing that same morning described his arrival as follows: "Reception at Inverkeithing station early on a cold snow swept morning by a cheerful Hook-Boy David (Jeep) Wheeler helped our passage into this strange new world." I remember being one of a number bundled into the back of a 3 ton RN lorry and

transported to Caledonia. Quoting Leslie Leigh again "The kindly father figure was Deverell, a long retired (or so it seemed to us) Chief Petty Officer recalled 'for the duration' as the expression went" We all got to know CPO Deverell very well.

HMS CALEDONIA Apprentices Training Establishment, Rosyth
19 Jan 1944 to 1 Jan 1948

I am not going to attempt to fully write up my experiences of Caledonia. The experiences of apprentices in general are well covered in the book '**HMS Caledonia – The Apprentices Story**' by **Gil Harding**, in a far more detailed and better manner than I could ever achieve. I will however mention a few incidents –

Our pay on joining was 11 shillings (60p) per fortnight. This went up to 14 shillings a fortnight at the end of the first year. There was a major review of Forces pay in 1946 and our pay was increased to £1.00 per week. Wonderful I had never been so well off!

In my later years at Caledonia I bought a motor cycle – a 1928 Rudge which cost me £5. It was a bit of a wreck and I spent much time working on the engine. One particular trip I remember was down to Berwick-on-Tweed. At something like 75 miles each way this was quite a long way on an old bone shaker. This entailed crossing the Firth of Forth via Queensferry – no road bridge in those days. We made it with some trepidation but no real problems. I sold it to another apprentice before I left Caledonia.

Also in my later years there I had a long weekend leave and hitch-hiked home. Hitch hiking in uniform in those early post war years was easy. Once in Edinburgh it was easy to get a lift down to Newcastle. I remember walking across the well known Tyne Bridge very late in the evening and being picked up by a farmer who was going to a village close to Northallerton. It was probably by now about 1am or so and he offered us a bed for rest of the night. When we woke in the morning and went into the farmhouse kitchen there was an old lady there who did not know we were in the house. Since we were in uniform, she initially thought we had come to take their prisoners (of war) away. She was quickly reassured, gave us some breakfast and we were on our way again. I don't remember much more about that journey but I know it was successful and we arrived in London late that evening. Too late to catch the last train home. I remember sleeping in the Union Jack Club and that it was very cold. I caught a train home early next day. I am not sure now whether I hitch hiked back or went by train. I think hitch hiked – the train would have been too expensive.

Most trips south on leave, three times each year, were covered by RN Travel Warrants. One became adept at getting into a carriage first and getting a corner seat or better still stretching out on the luggage rack. They were pretty uncomfortable but at least one could stretch out. Typically the train trip from Inverkeithing to London would take about 9 or 10 hours but I remember one horrendous journey that took 17 hours.

The apprenticeship essentially consisted of two years 'fitting' - bench work; and two years 'turning' - lathe work. It also included time on other machines such as mechanical saws, milling machines, drilling machines, boring machines, etc. Time was also spent in the forge, in the coppersmithing shop, welding etc. During the first two years there was evening classes two nights per week and in the final two years three nights per week. This included such things as mechanical drawing, electrical engineering theory etc.

The grand finale for all apprentices was the

Admiralty Passing Out Test Job

The following is extracted from the Book "HMS Caledonia – The Apprentices' Story". Details of all four test jobs may be seen on pages 258 to 260. I can't remember which one I did but it had to be one of those four.

"Our story now deals with the four test jobs for the Electrical Artificer Apprentices the general rules for which lay down that only a lathe and a drilling machine may be used but chasers are permitted, slotting and shaping operations can also be done in the lathe. Turned surfaces which have been finished with a file or emery cloth are penalised.

The Dashpot Mechanism is the first to be illustrated (Fig. 58), the material used being brass, mild steel, cast iron and spring steel. The principal fits required, are as follows (see drawing Fig. 57) Spindle (1)-to be a lap fit in bush (2) clearance allowed .0002", 8 marks deducted for each additional .0001".

- to be a sliding fit in handwheel (3)
- to be a taper fit in the guide block (4)
- up to 5 marks deducted for badly fitting taper.

Guide Block (4)-to be a sliding fit in the female body (5) and reversible.

Bush (2)-to be a push fit in the male body (6).

Plunger and Nut (7)-to be a sliding fit in the female body (5).

In marking the job, great importance is attached to the fits as detailed above, all dimensions given to four places of decimals (totalling 31), the finish of threads, the sharpness of all square corners, and the finish of lapped surfaces.

The small spring (8) by the way, which is made in the lathe, has 12 coils, is .0937" diameter and 5/16" long, a .030" error in length being allowed and .005" on diameter.

The standard time for the job is 120 hours."

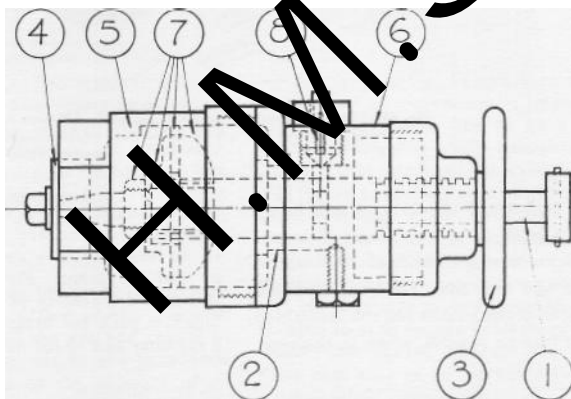


Fig. 57-A detailed drawing of the Dashpot Mechanism.

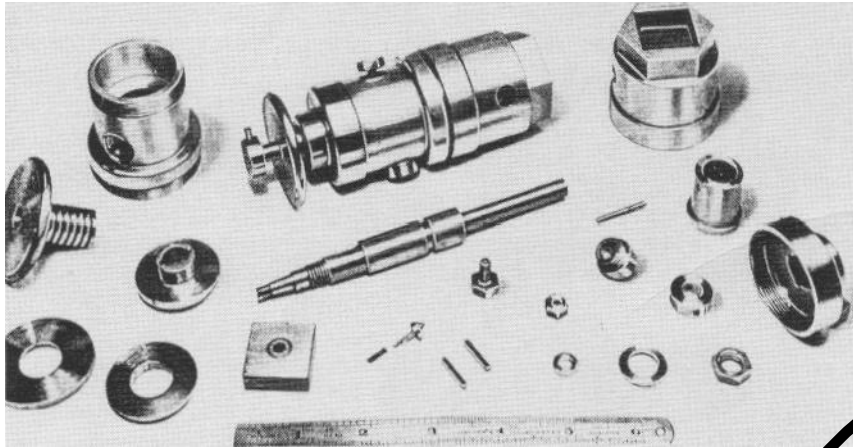


Fig. 58-This dashpot mechanism is one of the four Admiralty passing out test jobs for Electrician Artificers. For all these jobs chasers are permitted, but only a lathe or drilling machine may be used although shaping and slotting can be done in the lathe.

Note that dimensions are given to four decimal places, i.e. an EA was required to be able to work to one tenth of a thousandth of an inch. A human hair is approximately 30 ten thousandths of an inch thick.

Engine Room Artificers (ERA'S) worked to one thousandth of an inch.

(We used to say that Ordnance Artificers worked to the nearest 10 thousandth and Shipwrights to the nearest ship)

I was awarded several Admiralty prizes at various times during my apprenticeship. As far as I remember they were always technical books and they are still about the house now.

Somehow I passed and qualified as Electrical Artificer 5th Class (REA5), went on leave and then to HMS Collingwood.

**HMS COLLINGWOOD Electrical Training Establishment, Fareham, Hampshire
EA to REA Conversion Course**

2 Jan 1948 to 2 Sept 1949

In 1948 the Electrical Branch had been formed and a new rate of Radio Electrical Artificer introduced. This was to bring the same level of technical support to radio and radar as already existed for electrical equipment. Conversion courses were set up, the odd number courses being for ex-EA's and the even numbers for others transferred from other posts e.g. Mechanics. I chose and was selected to transfer to REA and joined REA7 class, the fourth EA to REA conversion course. There is little to say about that course other than it was intensive and covered all RN radio and radar equipment of the time.

On the 1 January 1949 I became an Acting EA4 which qualified for Petty Officer rating. It was standard practice in the RN to be promoted to an Acting Rate which would be confirmed after one year if performance was satisfactory. My service record shows that my seniority was back dated to 20 Nov 1948 on completion of course – I suppose I must have done something spectacular to be granted 6 weeks accelerated advancement!

During this time I joined the Collingwood 'Bluejackets band' as a Bass player (Bluejackets, to differentiate them from the Royal Marines). Being a member of the band had privileges like a long weekend every other weekend. It also had responsibilities such as band practice during evenings in the week and parades every morning.

The band also played at local village events such as fetes etc. I remember on one occasion sitting a small child (maybe three years old) in the bowl of the brightly polished Bass (yes, we had to polish our instruments, best not to be a Bass player at polishing time!) much to his and many others amusement!

I can be seen in the centre of the picture below holding that big brass thing. I don't know what event was photographed but those fixed bayonets do not suggest a local village fete.



Exercises

There are a number of mentions of exercises in the following pages. You may wonder what these are. They can take many forms, such as:

- Firing main and secondary armament, including live ammunition, at stationary and towed targets both surface and air. Day and night encounters, with ships darkened. Shore bombardments.
- Firing and recovery of (unarmed) torpedoes.
- Using depth charges.
- Replenishment at sea, transfer of people, stores and mail etc between ships whilst under way.
- Rescue of simulated 'man overboard'
- Towing an apparently disabled ship
- and many others

HMS GABBARD **Battle Class Destroyer, Home Fleet**
3 Sept 1949 to 2 May 1950



Built by Swan Hunter and launched 16 March 1945. Pennant Number D47.

2,315 tons. 355 X 40 X 12.75feet. Main armament 4 X 4.5in, 1 X 4in, 12 x 40mm, 2 STAAG (Stabilised Tachometric Anti-Aircraft Gun) Bofors with 262 rounds, a single Squid (anti Submarine mortar thrower) and 8 Torpedo Tubes. Mk IV director with 275 and 293 Radar.

50.000hp = 33.75 (30.25) knots = 320RPM. Complement 280/300

Engines: Parsons IR single reduction turbines. Two Admiralty B drum boilers 400lb/sq in, 700deg F. Oil 766tons. Endurance 4400NM at 20knots.

It is interesting to note that the design allowed 21 inches hammock space and 24 inches seating per man. Standard at that time.

Sold to Pakistan 3 January 1957 and renamed BADR.

C.O. Lt. Cdr. E F Baines(1913-1993)

*Awarded: DSO whilst CO of the Destroyer Braham in 1942 – Operation Pedestal – Relief of Malta
MID whilst CO of the Destroyer Talybont in 1944 - Normandy*

The autumn cruise consisted mainly of 'chasing Carriers' in the Channel. When Aircraft Carriers were flying aircraft they always had a destroyer following astern, as a safety boat, to pick up any ditched aircrew. No helicopters for that task in those days. We went up to Invergorden for exercises with other ships of the Home Fleet and then round the north of Scotland. Sailing down the west coast we went through the Minches (between the Outer Hebrides and the mainland), known for rough seas. They fully lived up to their reputation. We had a dingy lashed down on the upper deck which was smashed by incoming seas. It was just too dangerous to go onto the upper deck even with life lines rigged. Then it was back to Chatham, probably for a boiler clean and Christmas leave.

The spring cruise was down to the Mediterranean and working out of Gibraltar in company with other ships of the flotilla and others of the Home Fleet. After dropping depth charges, we would launch a sea boat to pick up dead and stunned fish. If there was enough to go round it meant fresh fish for supper. A pleasant treat since we didn't get much fresh food. Exercises...

It was not unusual for one of the destroyers to take liberty men over to Tangiers at the weekend and it was our turn one weekend. An interesting run ashore. We also anchored off St Tropez for maybe five days. I took the opportunity to hitchhike along the Cote d'Azur through Cannes and Nice to

Monaco. I really wanted to see the Casino and this I did. We also went to Oran where we felt unwanted – a real or imagined reaction to the destruction of the French Fleet in 1940.

It was then back to Chatham for some leave at Easter and a draft to the Superb.

HMS SUPERB **Cruiser, Home Fleet and America and West Indies Station**
3 May 1950 to 23 July 1952



H.M.S. SUPERB

A Cruiser of the Swiftsure, also known as the Minto class built by Swan Hunter and launched 31 August 1943. Pennant Number 25.

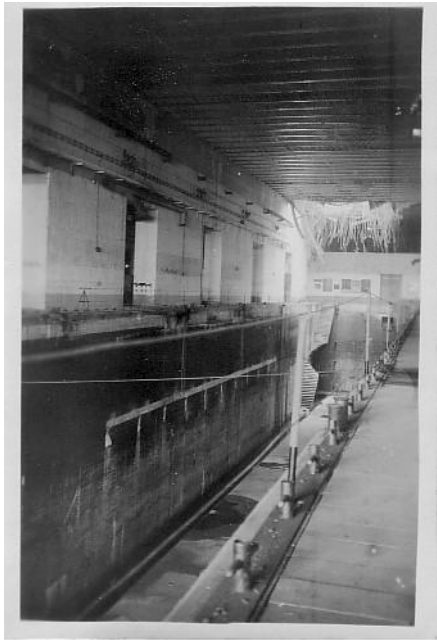
8,800tons, 538 X 64feet. Main armament 9 x 6inch, 10 x 4inch, 16 X 20mm in twin mountings, 6 X 20mm in single mountings, 8 X 40mm in single mountings, 16 X 2pdr in 4 quad mountings, 2 X 2pdr in single mountings and 8 Torpedo Tubes. The numbers of the smaller guns varied during its life.

Parsons geared turbines driving four shafts gave 80,000shp = 32.25 knots. Oil fuel capacity 1,700tons. Complement 706 peacetime, 1000 wartime.

Arrived 8 August 1960 at Arnott Young, Dalmeir to be broken-up

The summer cruise became known as the Scandinavian Cruise for obvious reasons. Details are:

	Arrive	Depart
Portland		21 May.
Brest	27 May	30 May
Guernsey	2 June	6 June
Gothenborg	7June	12 June
Stockholm	19June	21 June
Invergorden	29 June	6 July
Dundee	9 July	14 July
South Shields	15 July	21 July
Southend	22 July	26 July
Chatham	26 July	



I particularly remember walking round the submarine pens at Brest which had been heavily bombed by the Allies during the war. The damaged caused by those concrete penetrating bombs and their apparent accuracy were remarkable.



(It was two or three weeks after my return from this cruise that I met this girl.....)

She was to have a profound impact on the rest of my life.....

It was only eleven or twelve weeks after that meeting that I left the UK on a General Service Commission to the America and West Indies Station. That time was enough for us to bond and we wrote to each other while I was away. There were not even transatlantic telephone calls at that time, the first transatlantic cable being laid in 1956). However I digress.

I mentioned that this was a General Service Commission. Previous to this time all commissions beyond the Home Fleet were considered Foreign Service Commissions and were for 2 ½ years. This General Service Commission was the first for one year and on a trial basis.

America and West Indies Station 1950 – 1951

HMS Superb was the Flagship of Vice-Admiral Sir Richard Symonds-Tayler, K.B.E., C.B., D.S.C., Commander-in-Chief, America and West Indies Station, and initially commanded by Captain Yendell, who was also Chief of Staff.

Although HMS Superb was prepared at all times for any emergency, this commission was essentially a series of goodwill visits - an opportunity to 'show the flag'.

These courtesy visits coincided with the inauguration of the Presidents of Brazil and Uruguay, at which ceremonies the Flag Officer and Ship's Captain attended as the official representatives of the British Government. The Presidents of Uruguay, Chile, Peru and Panama were received on board. President Peron of the Argentine did not go aboard the ship, but the Vice-Admiral was received at the President's official residence.

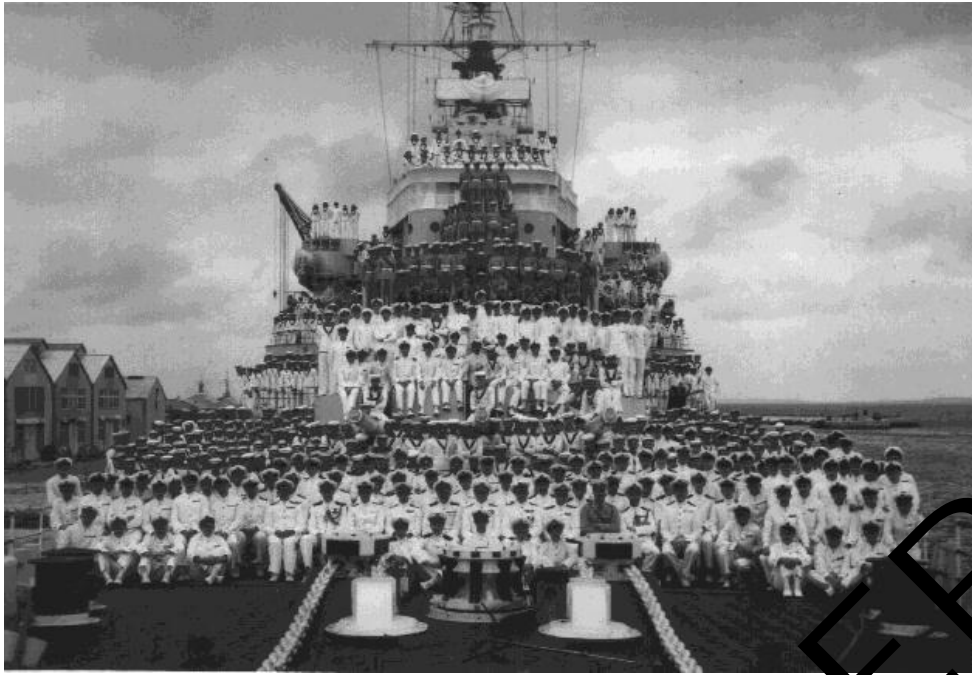
During this time, the Royal Marine Band and Guard, along with the Seaman's Guard, paraded ashore 66 times, and 'Beat Retreat' on 24 occasions. In addition to the ceremonies mentioned above, they took part in many other official ceremonies and parades, including laying wreaths on the tombs of national heroes. In Valparaiso, they took part in the inauguration ceremony of a new memorial for British sailors buried there.

In nearly all of these ports there were invitations to functions ashore from local inhabitants. Visits to places of interest, invitations to homes, dances, parties and similar events. All enjoyable and very much appreciated.

Just as importantly, the Ship's Company held parties for children on board at most ports of call. Sailors in costume, usually home made, villainous 'plates' everywhere - some walking the plank, rides in Bosun's Chairs, swings from the barrels of 9 inch guns, the capstan pressed into use as a roundabout and - tea - all left an impression that the children will have remembered for many years.

During the commission, HMS Superb steamed some 16,000 miles, and entertained over 6,000 guests on board at official receptions.

H.M.S. SUPERB



Place	Arrive	Depart
Chatham		1 Nov 1950
Portsmouth	4 Nov	6 Nov
Portland	7 Nov	9 Nov
Gibraltar	13 Nov	21 Nov
Bermuda	30 Nov	5 Jan 1951



Blue skies - Warm Sea - Pink Beaches - Very expensive runs ashore - Cheap Rum & Coke at HMS Malabar - Sing songs at Malabar with Nutty Carr (Seaman PO Diver) on the piano - Swimming in the sea on Christmas day.

Guantanamo

8 Jan

13 Jan

Guantanamo, Cuba. An American Naval Base at the time. Both HMS Sparrow and HMS Bigbury Bay were also present. Exercises with the American Fleet. These exercises included 4inch AA shoots on aircraft towed targets as well as 6inch full calibre shoots. There were 'big eats' and cheap drinks at the American PX - and cheers from the American matloes for singing our version of 'The United States Marines'!

I was transferred to HMS Bigbury Bay to fix problems with her 293 Radar which was out of action. 293 was an Air and Surface Early Warning Set, but also the only navigation radar. Took passage on her to Trinidad. On the basis that clean sets might work, dirty sets won't, it was stripped down, cleaned, reassembled and set up. It worked.

Trinidad

16 Jan

18 Jan



The picture is of the High Street, Port of Spain.

The Bigbury Bay berthed at San Fernando (if my memory is right) whereas the Super-B was at Port of Spain. Taxi overland to Port of Spain - very hot - vast areas of sugar cane. Rejoined Super-B.

In Transit to Rio *Crossing the Line Ceremony*



Frequently 'hove to' for an hour at dinner time (midday) to relax and fish. We had to paint Ship's side before arriving at Rio. All hands on cradles over the ships side. Chief Gunners Mate on deck with a rifle - Sharks fins easily seen around the ship - my feet only a foot or so above water level at one stage - how good is he with a 303? - feet pulled well up under the cradles!

Rio de Janeiro

29 Jan

6 Feb



We arrived (still owning feet!) and went alongside in the Brazilian Naval Dockyard. Several other ships followed us in - the Bigbury Bay, the U.S. heavy cruiser Albany, a Chilean Transport and two Peruvian frigates. The occasion was the inauguration of the newly elected President Vargas. The



3rd Feb was the first day of the carnival - the Mardi Gras. Much partying - decorated floats - decorated streets - fancy dress - dancing all night - it seemed everybody had an aerosol and was squirting everybody else - it seemed intoxicating - cans believed to contain ether.

Climbed up to the base of the Corcovado, that well known statue of Christ. Went to Copacabana beach but did not swim this time. Also saw Sugar Loaf Mountain but did not go up there. Approximately a week after we left, it was reported that a cable on the Cable Car between the two peaks broke.

Port Stanley

12 Feb

16 Feb



Falkland Islands. Anchored in the outer harbour - wind - rain - more wind - more rain - penguins - more penguins etc. No trees - most buildings just corrugated iron. Liberty boats treacherous - the ship's motor boat sunk alongside the jetty- it took all next day to recover it. Best to stay on board unless you wanted to cuddle up to a Penguin!

In transit we passed through an Iceberg field. How big I am not sure, but it was said to have exceeded 150 'bergs and the field covered something like 70 miles radius on the Radar screen. The iceberg in the photo was some 300 to 400 yards away, and it will be remembered that 9/10ths of the 'berg is underwater. It was said that this was the first time for 20 years that icebergs had come so far north of the Falkland Islands. Navigator seemed keen that the Radar was 100%.



Buenos Aires

19 Feb

26 Feb



The Ship's Company were fallen in on the Upper Deck in No. 6's (best whites) for a visit by President and Eva Peron at 11am on 22 Feb. On the Quarter Deck was the biggest bunch of flowers that I have ever seen. Approximately 20 minutes after they were due to arrive a message was received saying that they would not be coming. It was said that this was a deliberate snub because Eva Peron had been refused an audience with the Queen when she was in London awhile earlier. Serious diplomatic activity ensued which resulted in an apology being received and arrangements for the Admiral to be received by President Peron that evening.

We had a 274 Surface Gunnery Radar on the Forward Gunnery Control Tower with three 275's, High Angle Gunnery Radar, one aft and one each side forward of amidships. The other 275 was a standby for the 274. During tests it was shown that output (IF) from the 275 aft could not be received on the 274. It was eventually shown that the fault was an earth in a pyrotenax cable in a breaker space between a boiler room and the ship's side. It was something like 120F up up in the sun, but fortunately the boilers were not 'flushed up' - guess who had to mend the pitch out of the pyrotenax cable junction box with a blow lamp, in that breaker space, to fix the earth problem!!

Ashore in BA was interesting in many ways. People would sit up to one in bars and talk quietly, making sure that they were not overheard. It was like I imagine 1938 Germany

Montevideo

27 Feb

7 Mar



Just across the Rio de la Plata from BA but totally different. Whilst in BA we felt enemies; in Montevideo we were among friends. Wearing a Naval uniform ensured that one was seen as a 'hero' from the River Plate action. Much partying.

- The picture on the left shows a monument to the memory of those who lost their lives on HMS Ajax, Achilles and Exeter. And on the right a picture of Ship's Bell of HMS Ajax



Punta del Este

7 Mar

12 Mar



Right on the estuary of the River Plate - a holiday resort. The picture shows the Casino. By this time we were short of cash. Five or six of us pooled our funds and went ashore just for a swim and a beer after. I happened to be treasurer and held the funds. After the beer I found that we had no funds. My wallet had been stolen on the beach. How do you plausibly explain to a bar tender in Uruguay, in Spanish, that you have no money and maybe need to wash up?? The outcome was that two or three of us went back to the Superb to obtain some money whilst the others stayed in the bar holding the fort. We resolved the problem without bloodshed!

Punta Arenas

16 Mar

21 Mar



Down on the southernmost tip of South America. We did not actually go round the 'Horn' but through one of the Straits. Stunning scenery. The picture on the right shows the monument to Magellan.

At Punta Arenas there was a 'banyan' arranged to a Meat Packing Plant. Literally sheep were driven in at one end, had done to them what had to be done, and at the other end there were carcasses ready for the freezer. We were invited to a meal which consisted of great trays of lamb with very little vegetables or potatoes. Very pleasant at the time. Around the bay, for hundreds of yards alongside the Packing Plant, the sea was stained red with blood, waste from the plant.



There was also a 'banyan' given by an ex German Naval Officer at a restaurant out of town. There was a spot of bother when he seemed to toast his former employer. He did not mean to be provocative but someone took umbrage. However all present ended up at the Chilean Navy Club with him and all parted the best of friends.

Valparaiso

26 Mar

2 Apr



I have heard it said that Valparaiso was the best run ashore ever. 'Ten bob' (50p) would buy all the wine you wanted, 'big eats' and anything else that took your fancy.

The picture shows the El Arco Britanica.

At this time I read the book KONTIKI by Thor Heyerdahl. I knew that this expedition started from our next port of call.



Lima probably created for me more lasting memories than any other South American City.

The picture on the left is of the Presidential Palace. That on the right is of Lima Cathedral.



There were a number of events arranged for members of the Ship's Company, one of which was a trip on the Trans-Andean Railway. This railway is the highest standard gauge railway in the world rising to approximately 15,000 feet. The trip was not organised to go that high but to a mining village, Rio Blanca, at 12,500 feet and expected to take 12 hours or so. I was one of those lucky enough to have the opportunity to go on this 'banyan'.

My memory never was very good, and has got worse lately, but as I recall it:



There were maybe 15 or 20 of us, who went into Lima around 7 am to catch the train. I do not remember much about the train but I do recall the journey, a couple of hours or so through the coastal plain to the foothills of the Andes. The track wended its way up through the foothills and there were many occasions when one could look back and see the track doing several loops as it increased in height. The terrain became more rugged and I remember well coming out of a tunnel across a ravine and into another tunnel the other

side. The vivid memory is of that bridge. It seemed to be narrower than the train - at least I could see nothing out of the window other than the ravine below. And at the bottom lay a rusty old engine!



At the train station at Rio Blanca, which was the end of our outward journey, we left the train and a small group of us, perhaps six or eight, were met by two couples who lived in a mining facility who took us to their Ranch. Of the two couples, one was a Canadian, one Austrian, one I do not recall and the other a girl from

Croydon - just 13 miles from where I lived at the time! We were provided with snacks and drinks and I remember thinking that whisky at 12,500 feet seemed a pretty powerful drink. We sat about and chatted, time passed and we began to realise that we were getting late for our return trip. At that time there were two trains each way each day and our train was the last back that day. We were hurriedly put into the back of a Land Rover and taken to the station, only to find that the train had gone - we had missed it.



Our hosts put us back into the Land Rover and took us the nearest small town. That was a hair raising ride. The road was a narrow track with a sheer cliff face up several hundred feet on one side and several hundred feet down on the other. We arrived at the village and were relieved to get out of the truck. Our hosts put us onto a local bus, kindly paid our fare and explained to the driver that we had to get back to Lima.

We set off and quickly wished that we were back in that Land Rover. Again sheer cliff faces on either side in a ramshackle old bus with a local driver with the locals - and I suspect their chickens although I don't actually remember that!

After some while we came to a sudden halt to find a stationary train right across and blocking the road. It had hit a lorry which was now close to the brink. It was our train. As you might guess, after our experiences on the bus we all quickly got out and back onto the train, as the lesser of the evils. From there we had an uneventful journey back to Lima and the Superb.

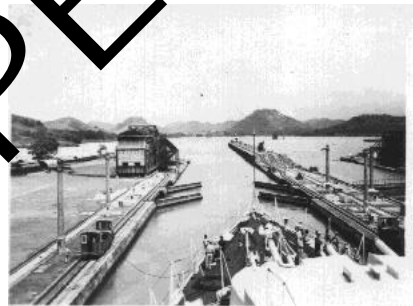
Balboa

14 Apr

16 Apr



I remember little of Balboa other than as the entrance to the Panama Canal. Balboa is of course on the Pacific end, the Eastern end of the Canal. Yes, the Canal from Pacific to Atlantic runs from East to West. Any doubters should



check their maps. There are three locks at each end, (spaced out at one end and close together at the other), and in the centre a large lake. Sailing through the lake is sailing through tropical jungle with tropical birds flying around etc. Quite an amazing sight.

And back to

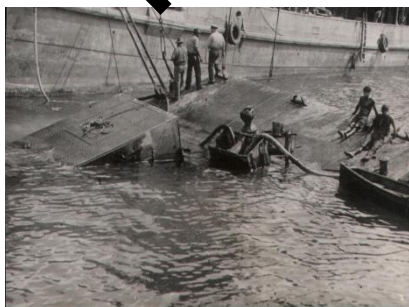
Bermuda

29 Apr

15 Jun

Captain Yendell, in command of HMS Superb up until now, was relieved by Captain E W J Bankes shortly after the Ship's return to Bermuda.

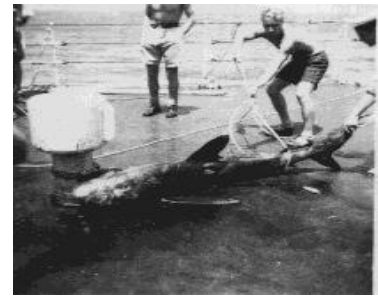
Whilst in Bermuda an employee of the Admiralty fuelling installation sank our oil barge. The barge was 60 feet long and held 300 tons of fuel. Whilst filling it, he allowed too much fuel to be pumped into one side of the barge so that the deck became awash, water entered a hatch on the deck,



the barge sank, and fuel oil escaped. A boom was put across Clarence Cove to protect one of the beaches.



And fishing on the way back to



Bermuda

9 Jul

23 Jul

And then to

Norfolk

25 Jul

27 Jul

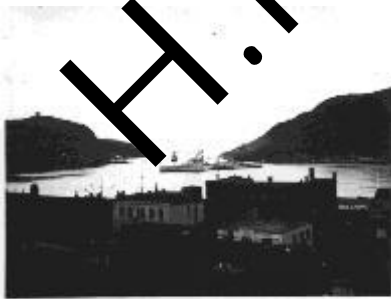


Norfolk, Virginia. On arrival in Norfolk that we were specifically instructed by the American Port Authorities that, under no circumstances were we permitted to fire our 6 inch guns whilst lying alongside the wall!! As you may guess, we never did! Good food, good bars and American hospitality, as usual, unbeatable.

St Johns

31 Jul

6 Aug



St Johns, Newfoundland - another unique experience. Many of the local 'Newfies' appeared to have Irish accents. Perhaps that tells us something about their origins. It was said that the local population at the time was 39,000 women and 19,000 men. Apparently there had been a high loss of life during the WW2, mainly on Atlantic Convoys - this being a mainly seafaring community. Given that population discrepancy there was another problem. When we were there, most of the men were away fishing.

H.M.S. SUPERB

Halifax

8 Aug

15 Aug



Halifax, Nova Scotia. There was a large parade and March Past held in Halifax which was well received. It seems this was standard practice by visiting ships at this time.

Sadly I remember very little of this visit and can offer no specific comments.

St John

16 Aug

20 Aug



St John, New Brunswick. Again a nice town, with welcoming people. However, it is said that the local bars did not appeal and that the town went to bed early.

Bar Harbour

20 Aug

27 Aug

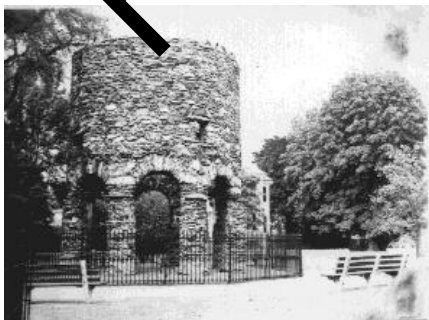


Bar Harbour, Maine. We were anchored half a mile offshore initially, and pleased later to go alongside. Rather a quiet visit but enjoyable nevertheless.

Newport

28 Aug

4 Sep



Newport, Rhode Island. Once again the local population laid on some excellent hospitality and entertainment. Inevitably, sailors ashore in a foreign, or even home port, will find the local bars, at least as a starting point. Those in Newport were full of interest.

Boston

5 Sep

12 Sep



Boston, Massachusetts. The Bostonians are very proud of their history, including, perhaps particularly, the 'Boston Tea Party'.

The picture shows the plaque commemorating that event.

The Admiral opened the British Trade Forum and the local community lent eight TV sets to the ship. In 1951 TV was not so common and these sets were most welcome.

At that time in the USA, it was common practice to sell blood for transfusions as opposed to give it as we do in the UK. The going rate then was \$5 for the regulation pint - US or UK pint I am not sure. Whilst in Boston several of the Ship's Company 'donated' a pint of blood to enhance their 'Run Ashore Funds'. There was a widespread 'buzz' at the time, which was also reported in the Press, that one enterprising Stoker, having given his pint of blood felt no after effects, thought that he was on to a good thing and gave another pint. Again there were no adverse effects - so he gave a third pint, left the centre and collapsed. He was taken to hospital, diagnosed as having acute anaemia, given a blood transfusion and charged \$25!

Philadelphia

13 Sept

20 Sept



Stores.

Philadelphia is a large industrial city, which welcomed us as well as any port. Again, many visits etc. were laid on. There was one negative point. The air was full of sulphur fumes, rather like a London 'smog' of that time. Those in the appropriate rig were warned to cover gilt buttons, braid and cap badges with nail varnish. Nail varnish was conspicuous by its absence in Naval



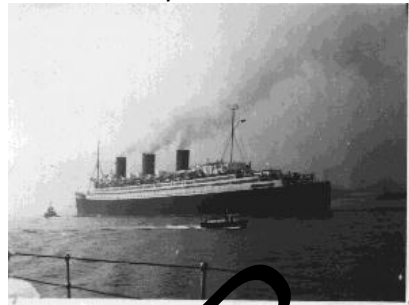
New York

21 Sep

29 Sep



We arrived off Brooklyn and the Statue of Liberty and anchored for a few hours waiting for the Queen Mary to clear her berth. We were then welcomed into New York harbour by the well known Fire Float escort - impressive in itself. We berthed at Pier 90, the Cunard Pier. The Mauretania arrived



on 24 September and berthed on the opposite side to us. Several other important liners were in port at that time, Queen of Bermuda, Liberte and Ocean Monarch are particularly remembered. We had to move later from Pier 90 to Pier 26 to allow the Queen Elizabeth into Pier 90.



New York was all, and perhaps more, than we expected it to be. Wonderful hospitality - many sights to be seen. There were many trips organised for the Ships Company - Visits to Radio City - The Empire State Building etc. etc.

I particularly recall going ashore one evening, walking along a narrow poorly lit road which suddenly came out into Times Square. Very impressive.

And back to.....

Bermuda

1 Oct

19 Oct

And then.....

Chatham

29 Oct 1951

However good the commission, it was always good to come home.....

I am indebted to the following members of the Ship's Company for reviewing my draft of this commission and providing additional information.

*Christopher Sherwood - Admiral's Secretary
Jack Sayers - Diver*

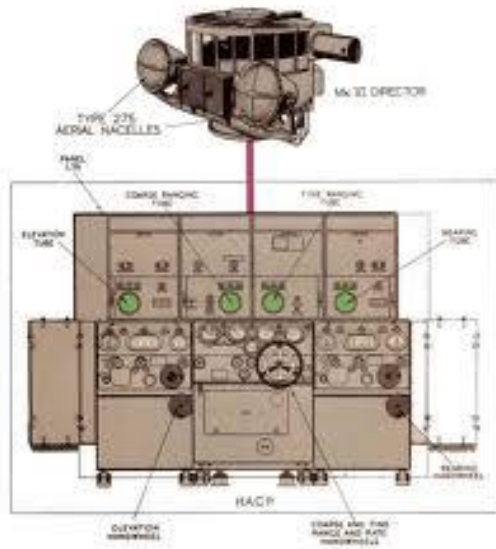
It will have been seen that we returned to Chatham on the 29 October 1951. A refit in Chatham Dockyard and some Christmas leave followed. Superb was back with the Home Fleet. *(Yes I did see that girl, she was prettier than ever, but that is not what this article is about!)*

On the 27 Nov I passed the Provisional Professional Exam for REA3 and was made up to Acting REA3 as from 20 Nov which was confirmed one year later as was standard practice. This carried Chief Petty Officer rate.

Early in the New Year it was off to the Mediterranean for around three months. I remember little about that, or where we visited, other than, of course, Gib – and no doubt Malta. I don't suppose any RN Ships operated in the Med without visiting those ports at that time. *(There were of course more letters!)* I don't remember when we arrived back in the UK. I can only say we were in Chatham when I received a Draft Chit to HMS Collingwood in July when life took on a very different aspect.

**HMS COLLINGWOOD Electrical Training Establishment, Instructor on Class 275 Radar
24 July 1952 to 13 Feb 1953**

I enjoyed my time at Collingwood as an instructor. There was real satisfaction in teaching people the intricacies of hardware layout, operation and faultfinding on well advanced radar of the time. I had previously maintained this equipment at sea on both HMS Gabbard and HMS Superb and felt good at passing on the experience gained to others.



Class 275 was a centimetric replacement for Type 285 and first built in 1944. It was the radar associated with fire control for a modern Destroyer's main armament, and a capital ship's secondary armament. A capital ship's main armament fire control radar was Class 274, the same electronics as the 275 but with a different aerial array. The 275 was fitted to Mark VI and Mark 6M and modified American Mark 37 directors. It had separate transmitter and receiver dishes, (parabolic reflectors) 4ft in diameter which gave a pencil beam, and allowed the 275 to be used for both surface and aircraft targets. The 274 could only be used for surface targets. The set operated at a frequency of 3526MHz (85mm wavelength) with a peak power of 400KW. It was the invention of the magnetron during WW2 that allowed radar

transmitters of this frequency and power to be built.

The diagram above shows the Aerial System mounted on the Mark VI Director at the top with, below that, the electronics panels and operating positions which are below decks.



The picture on the left is of HMS Superb 'alongside the wall' in Gibraltar in December 1950. The Starboard Mark VI Director with 275 aerials can be seen with the main mast behind it. An enlarged version is shown below.



Apart from the interest in the job, serving in a 'Stone Frigate' (shore establishment) allowed me weekend leave most weekends. *(And, of course, there was that girl. After some months we got engaged but there was a Foreign Service draft waiting in the wings).*

**HMS PEMBROKE Chatham Barracks, Awaiting Far East Draft
14 Feb 1953 to 22 July 1953**

I was drafted to Chatham barracks to await that draft to the Far East. *(Molly and I decided to get married before that draft came up. And so it was that we were married in Stourmouth Church on 4 April 1953. And 16 weeks later)*

I left Chatham Barracks on the 23 July 1953 to join the Troop Ship SS Dunera in Southampton for passage to Hong Kong. This was a six week voyage, at a steady 8 knots or thereabouts, calling at Port Said, Aden, Colombo, Singapore and Hong Kong.

Before I left, both Molly and I knew that I was headed for the Korean conflict, which was not appealing. Also, the Chinese Communists had just about completed their conquest of mainland China and were knocking on the door of Hong Kong, as well as Formosa and some of the offshore islands still held by the Nationalists, Quemoy and Amoy being of particular significance. However, again good fortune was with us and the Korean Cease Fire was signed on 27 July whilst I was in transit.

**HMS MOUNTS BAY Bay Class Frigate. Far East: Hong Kong, Singapore, Japan, Korea, etc
23 July 1953 to 14 July 1954**



Originally laid down as the Loch Kilbirnie, built by Pickersgill, launched 8 June 1945 and completed by Thornycroft. Pennant Number F627.

1.580tons. 286 X 38.5 X 12.75feet. Main armament 4 X 4inch, 4 X 40mm, 4 X 20mm and Hedgehog. Engines triple expansion with two shafts. IHP 5,500 = 19knots. Two Admiralty type 3 drum boilers. Oil fuel 720tons. Complement 157.

Transferred to Portugal 9 May 1961 as the Vasco de Gama. Disposed 1971

C.O. Captain A F P Lewis RN (Senior Officer 4th Frigate Flotilla.)

Succeeded by Captain F N Elliott RN 1 Nov 1953

I joined the Mounts Bay early in September 1953. The weather was still quite warm in the sub-tropics. I was part of the advance party. It was typical when changing crews on ships to change maybe a dozen or so key personnel initially and the rest of the crew a few weeks later to best ensure continuity.

The silly the things one remembers. I particularly remember that my hair was quite long. By that I mean that if I combed it forward I could chew the end. Obviously long hair was not allowed but it could be hidden under a uniform cap! I eventually found this uncomfortable and had it cut quite short. That was so much more comfortable that I swore that I would never grow it long again. Despite 'petticoat pressure' I never have! Perhaps tomorrow it will be different!

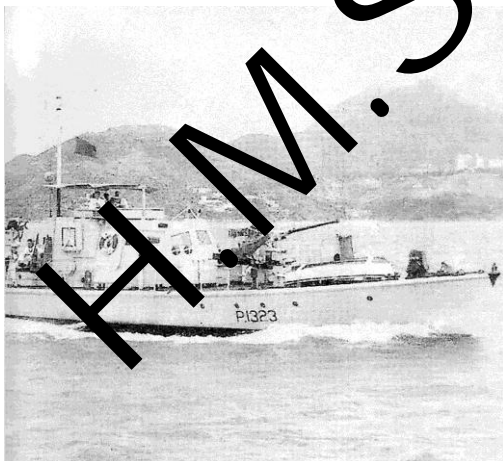
About a week after I arrived in Hong Kong there was a significant incident which became known as The Pearl River Incident. This incident is best described in the following article published in the November 2009 Newsletter of The Coastal Forces Heritage Trust.

Quote-

THE PEARL RIVER INCIDENT

In the early 1950s Far East Fleet vessels stationed permanently at Hong Kong were principally the Hong Kong Flotilla and by 1953 this was composed of ten SDMLs. Their role was to keep the Colony's waters open and assist the police prevent piracy and smuggling of goods embargoed due to the Korean War. Probably the last piece of action involving a coastal forces craft took place here in 1953. During the Korean War the Chinese communists had occasionally fired at MLs in the Pearl River estuary. In August 1953 the Commodore-in-Charge HK, found it necessary to order craft on patrol to be careful not to provoke any incidents, not to chase communist craft, even for photographic purposes, and to keep well clear of Chinese waters.

The situation was complicated: in the Pearl River area, between Hong Kong and Macau, both countries' territorial waters extended for 3 miles except in the area of Deep Bay, where waters right up to the Chinese shore were included, by treaty, with the Colony's waters. There was also an area to the South which was over 3 miles from both countries, so this was international waters.



ML 1323 sailed on a routine patrol on 9 September 1953. She had a crew of eleven and on this occasion carried an army Captain from the Royal Hong Kong Defence Force, who had come to gain knowledge of the scene on the Colony's western edge. The CO was known to enjoy "commie baiting" and had been warned, twice, to be more careful. During the afternoon the boat visited Deep Bay and then entered the international waters in order to view the Chinese coast further West. She was close to Chinese waters when a well-armed Chinese former landing craft (LCI) was seen heading in her direction.

The British CO chose an intercepting course but was signaled to stop - an order he ignored, although he did turn away. As he did so the Chinese vessel opened fire with small arms followed by a shell which smashed into 1323's engine room but failed to explode. As the crew went to actions stations another shell hit the wheelhouse. The CO was mortally wounded. Seven others, including the army passenger, were killed or wounded and the steering gear became unserviceable. Several more hits were sustained. By chance, two RAF Hornets were passing above. They noticed the events

below and, although unarmed, proceeded to 'beat up' the Chinese craft, which turned away and withdrew.

Meanwhile, on board 1323, Leading Seaman Cleaver had entered the engine room to look for injured crewmen. He noticed the unexploded shell, which he took up top and threw over the side. He then rigged the emergency steering and managed to navigate the damaged boat into a small Hong Kong fishing village only a few miles away. Sailors at an RN Coast Watching Station there had seen what happened and they arranged assistance for the only five crewmen remaining alive.

A few days later the Chinese authorities claimed that the ML was not flying an ensign and had been taken for a pirate vessel. The former was only true, temporarily, after her mast had been shot away. The subsequent Board of Inquiry concluded that 1323 had been very close to Chinese waters, that the CO had not complied with his orders, and that the crew members who survived had acted "in the best traditions of the Service". Twenty-year-old Ldg Seaman Gordon Cleaver was awarded the BEM.

Ninian Stewart and members of the Hong Kong Flotilla Association.

- Unquote

After this incident (possibly before as well, I don't know, I had only just joined the Station) the ML's patrolling these waters were supported by a Frigate or Destroyer and this was frequently one of Mounts Bay's tasks. Obviously the ML's could go into much shallower water and they did.

The following can be seen from the above Newsletter article:
'waters right up to the Chinese shore were included, by treaty, with the Colony's waters'

I remember being in the Mounts Bay Chart Room looking at the charts on one of these support trips, realising that there were places on the coast where one could imagine standing in the water and being in Hong Kong waters, but when the tide went out one would be on Chinese land! This seemed totally wrong to me.

As mentioned above, the Korean War Cease Fire had been signed but the truce was, and still is, fragile. Much time was spent steaming from Hong Kong to the United Nations bases in Japan followed by Korean Coast patrols. Then back to Japan. Then Formosa Straits patrols, to Hong Kong, perhaps a boiler clean, sometimes a refit, and then doing it all again.

The following movements are recorded:

September	Deployed at Hong Kong for exercises. (Note: Typhoon warning in force early in month.)
	Exercises included Bombardment support, tow of HM Destroyer CONCORD and Anti submarine procedures with SUNDERLAND aircraft.)
19th	Took passage from Hong Kong to Sasebo. (Note: Korean war armistice was signed on 27th July but UN Task Force operations were continued including RN deployments based at Sasebo with R&R at Kure.)
24th	At Sasebo and disembarked passengers. (Note: Carried cut exercises with HM Sloop OPPOSUM on passage.)
25th	Took passage from Sasebo to carry out exercises with US navy submarine. (Note: Other RN ships involved included HM Frigate ST BRIDES BAY, WHITESAND BAY and HM Australian Frigate HMAS CULGOA.)
30th	New Commanding Officer Captain FN Elliott, RN appointed as Senior Officer 4th Frigate Squadron
October	Visited Yokosuka, Japan on completion of exercises
2nd	Took passage from Yokosuka to Sasebo.

5th Deployed for exercises based at Sasebo.
12th On completion of exercises took passage for UN duties off west coast of Korea.
14th Deployed as Guardship at Taechong Do.
20th Return passage to Sasebo.
22nd At Sasebo.
24th Took passage from Sasebo to Hong Kong.
29th Arrived at Hong Kong
(Note: During passage escorted ss INCHARRAN through MIM KIANG Channel.).

November Resumed Squadron duties on completion of UN detachment.
1st Captain Elliot joined.
5th Sailed from Hong Kong for Formosa Strait patrol.
8th Deployed for patrol
to (Note: Ship anchored during, daylight)
11th Escorted ss INCHARRAN to sea after leaving estuary.)
12th Return passage to Hong Kong.
13th Deployed at Hong- Kong.
to (Note: Korean and UN Service Campaign Medals were distributed.)
30th Carried out Squadron exercises in Junk Bay.
Visited by Flag Officer 2nd in Command, Far East Station.

December
1st Deployed at Hong Kong with ships of Squadron.
to (Note: Sea Exercises included Replenishment, Gunnery firings, Anti- submarine
11th procedures with HM Submarine TIPTOP and aircraft tracking.
HM Frigates CARDIGAN BAY, ST BRIDES BAY and WHITESAND BAY of Squadron
took part.)
12th Passage for Formosa Strait Patrol.
13th Patrol deployment.
to (Note: Investigated detainment of British ss HYDRALOCK by Chinese .
17th This ship was released after 16 hours negotiation.
Darkened during patrol.
Assisted passage of ss YUNNAN, ss INCHWELLS and ss NIGELOCK.)
18th Arrived at Hong Kong on completion of patrol duties.
29th Took part in Squadron exercises with HM Frigates CARDIGAN BAY, MORECAMBE. BAY,
ST BRIDES BAY, HM Destroyers COCKADE, CONSORT and HM Sloop MODESTE.
(Note: Exercises included Gunnery firing, convoy screening, night encounter and anti-
submarine procedures with HM Submarine THOROUGH.)

1954

January
1st Hong Kong deployment in continuation.
8th Took passage from Hong Kong to Kure.
(Note: Kure was Base for Commonwealth forces deployed with UN.)
12th Arrived at Kure after exercises on passage.
14th Passage to Kure for UN patrol and Guardship off Korean west coast.
16th Sailed from Kure for patrol.
18th Relieved HM Canadian Destroyer HURON at Paenyong Do as Guardship.
23rd Took passage to Kure on relief as Guardshlp.
26th Arrived at Kure.

February
4th Sailed from Kure for Sasebo.
(Note: Call at Sasebo prior to surveillance duty in Formosa Strait during return to Hong
Kong.)
10th Arrived at Hong Kong after assisting ss INCHISLAY.

14th Took passage from Hong Kong with Squadron and Coastal Minesweepers to South China Sea for Fleet exercises.

25th On completion of exercises returned to Hong Kong with HMS MORECAME BAY and Coastal Minesweepers of the Hong Kong Coastal Minesweeping Squadron.

28th Arrived at Hong Kong.

March Deployed at Hong Kong.

8th Annual Harbour Inspection

9th Annual Sea Inspection.

16th Taken in hand for refit period.
Station Leave granted.

April Completed docking period.
Deployed at Hong Kong for local duties.

6th Took part in local exercises

29th On completion of exercises resumed Local duties at Hong Kong.

May

1st Carried out Self Maintenance at Hong Kong.

13th Took part in local Exercises including Night Encounter and Tow.

14th Flag Officer's Inspection.

18th Took part in local exercises including military operation support.

19th Resumed Local Flotilla duties at Hong Kong on completion of exercises.

28th Took passage for surveillance patrol in Formosa Strait.

June Nominated for return to UK to re-commission.

1st Sailed from Formosa Strait to Sasebo.

4th Called all at Sasebo
(Note: UN Task Force was administered by US Navy at Sasebo)
Took passage to Kure.

5th Arrived at Kure.
(Note:Open to Visitors during stay,)

15th Took passage for UN duties.

17th Relieved HMS MORECAME BAY at Paengong Do.

24th Carried exercises with HMS MORECAMBE BAY off Korean west coast.

28th Took passage to Hong Kong on relief by HM Australian Destroyer ARUNTA.

July

3rd Arrived at Hong Kong.

4th Prepared to return passage to pay off in UK.

8th Took passage to Singapore on completion of exercises with HM Frigates WHITESAND BAY and CARDIGAN BAY.

13th Arrived at Singapore with HMS WHITESAND BAY.

14th Visited by Flag Officer Malayan Area.

It was a crazy situation between Hong Kong and Japan. We were friends with the Americans in Hong Kong. We were enemies in the Formosa Straits, because the Americans were blockading shipping into Red China whilst we were protecting British registered shipping in the area. We were friends again in Japan and of course up on the Korean coast.

I remember one particular incident off Amoy. We were closed up at Action Stations keeping a watchful eye on a Hong Kong registered merchant ship. There was no way of knowing whether she was destined for a Red China port or one of the off shore Nationalist held islands – but she was a British ship and entitled to protection. My Action Station was in the 285 Radar Transmitter/Receiver Room which was in a compartment on the upper deck and I could see a very large echo close in on the 'A Scan'. I opened the Screen Door to see what this was only to find myself, quite literally,

looking straight up the torpedo tubes of an American destroyer, perhaps half a mile away! Obviously our Gunnery Radar was trained on them, I can't be sure about our guns – but it seems likely! They invited us to go away but our Skipper declined and suggested that perhaps they would like to do so. The language used was not quite that polite! This standoff continued until the merchant ship entered territorial waters.

I don't think we ever went through the Formosa Straights without being at Action Stations.

Visits to Japan were particularly interesting. Sasebo and Yokosuka were American bases, Kure a Commonwealth base. Listening to the Kyushu Cowboy on the 'wireless' was memorable, run by the Americans for forces operating in and around Sasebo. Sailing up from Kure through the Inland Sea was spectacular and the approach to Yokosuka took us close enough to shore to be able to see Mount Fuji (Fujiyama).

I also particularly remember a visit to Yokosuka. There was a large American PX Store in or near the Naval Base. It was in that PX that I saw and enjoyed my first 12 oz T-bone steak. I had never seen so much meat on one plate! Remember, meat was still rationed in the UK and had been for over 12 years. The ration was 1s or 1s2d (5p or 6p in today's money) per week, hence people bought the cheaper cuts, about 16 oz per person per week. Yokosuka also gave us the opportunity to visit Tokyo on a day trip by train. Bright lights and large stores but very few western goods at that time.

One of my more memorable events in Japan, I think it was in Yokosuka, was when I negotiated a deal with a Rickshaw Boy for me to drive the motorised rickshaw back to port with him as a passenger, as opposed to him driving me! There was a long and humorous discussion but in early post war Japan all things were possible. I also had a tool box made for me – I still have it. If I remember rightly it cost me 200 cigarettes.

In mid 1954 the RN Fleet worldwide converted from VHF to UHF voice communications. This was a major logistical exercise. The local dockyard fitted the new aerials but each ship had to install the new transmitters and receivers. One bright and sunny day I was dressed in just shorts and sandals on the upper deck and had to bring about six 'tropicans' each about one cubic yard. This bright spark, waving his arms to direct the crane driver, lowered one of these tropicans right down onto his right foot! At the last moment he snatched his foot away and left his right toe nail under the tropican. If you have ever seen a toenail extracted you will know that the blood wells up, in this case soaks into ones sandals and spills over on to an already hot steel deck! Not to be recommended, but, as is said, worse things happen at sea.

But that was not the end of it.

A few days later we were going to sea and I was told that we couldn't sail with those things on the upper deck. Fair enough, if the skipper says we can't, we can't, must get them off. But how? No time to arrange a crane. The brow (those bits of planks between ship and shore) were not wide enough between the side rails to carry the tropicans down. I thought that if we removed the end side rails we could turn the brow over and slide the tropicans off.

So there I was, with a 2½ lb hammer trying to knock out those side rails. The ships company was fallen in on the upper deck ready for leaving harbour and watching, you've seen it on TV, whilst I was trying to get those side rails out. Inevitably it happened, I hit my thumb! Well. I couldn't squeal and jump, I just had to keep going. We got the tropicans off and sailed. I spent all day with an extremely sore thumb and eventually went to the sick bay around 6pm. The nice gentleman there drilled a hole through my nail to release the pressure. I later had an X-ray and it was shown that I had broken it. As

a result of that I still have a 'Certificate for Wounds and Hurts issued on behalf of The Right Honourable Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty'

We also spent time south of Hong Kong with visits to Singapore and exercises in that area.

On one occasion we were steaming north off the Vietnamese coast towards Saigon and went up to a Royal Fleet Auxiliary (oiler) to refuel at sea (Replenishment at Sea). This is fairly standard practice but does require excellent seamanship, since the two ships would be steaming at maybe 12 or 14 knots and have to accurately hold that course and speed throughout the refueling process. At the same time mail and stores may be passed.

We came up to the oiler and fired a Costa Gun Line across to the oiler. The Costa Gun Line consisted of a 303 rifle with loaded blank charge. Loaded from the muzzle was a brass rod maybe 7 inches long with a nylon cord attached. The cord was carefully laid on the deck to unravel ready. The line was seen to straddle the oiler and after a brief pause a message came from the oiler - 'Your Gun Line has killed a man'. You can image the additional tension in an already tense situation.

Another message came later indicating that the man had not been killed but was seriously wounded. It transpired later that he was looking up to see where the line would land; the brass rod went into his mouth and out of the back of his head, fortunately missing any vital organs.

He recovered over time and came on board later when we were back in Hong Kong, fit and well. However he was complaining that he had lost his false teeth!

As mentioned above, in June 1954 we became aware that the Mounts Bay was to return to the UK. I thought that my luck was in and I may return to the UK earlier than expected. However that was not to be. During my time in the Far East a Foreign Service Commission was reduced from 30 months to 18 months. Those who had been serving in the Far East longest were to be brought back home first gradually reducing the time served from 30 months to 18 months. I had been out there for about a year at the time Mounts Bay was to come back and I was replaced on her by an REA who had longer service in the area.

I was not best pleased to be drafted from HMS Mounts Bay to join HMS Cossack, on Captain D's Staff, on 15 July to stay out there for another year. However, the contingencies of the Service and all those things

HMS COSSACK C Class Destroyer. Far East: Hong Kong, Singapore, Japan, Korea, etc
15 July 1954 to 3 May 1955



A wartime emergency 'C' Class Destroyer, built by Parsons M S T Co with the hull subcontracted to Vickers Armstrong, Tyne. Launched 10 May 1944.

1,710tons. 339.5 X 36feet. 4 X 4.5inch main armament, 4 X 40mm and 5 Torpedo Tubes.

40,000hp = 33Knots = RPM 321.6. Complement 186.

Mk VI Director with 275 Radar, 293, 291 on the lattice mast aft, and HF/DF at the top of the Top Mast.

Cossack was the leader of the flotilla which included Comus, Comet, Cockade, Consort and Concord.

The Contest, another of the Co's was launched on 16 December 1944 and was the first all welded destroyer.

The Cossack arrived at Troon 1 March 1961 to be broken up.

C.O. Captain L.W.Angles (1911-1966) Captain D 8TH Destroyer Flotilla

Awarded CBE 1961 HM's Birthday

DSC 1945 Bombardment of Andamans

MID 1942 Operation Anchery (raid on Vaagso Islands 12.41)

MID 1943 Japanese destroyer sunk 5.45

I remember little specific of my time on the Cossack. The patrols and exercises were much the same as on the Mounts Bay. Being on Captain D's staff did require that I work on other ships of the flotilla which created additional variety.

I passed provisionally and was rated Acting Chief REA on the 10 Feb 1955 and that rate was confirmed one year later.

Eventually my replacement arrived on Cossack and I took passage on another ship (I don't remember which) to Singapore and was drafted to HMS Terror the shore base there, to await a flight back to the UK. Trooping by air had been introduced whilst I was in the Far East.

There were several false alarms – I was told to be ready to fly only to have that cancelled at the last minute. I decided not to tell Molly my flight details until I was actually on my way.

I well remember walking across the tarmac to board the Hermes which was to take us home. We took off from Changi at 2.30am into the night sky. I had two reactions. One was how could this plane take off with so many people on board – I guess about 80. The other was to wonder whether those flames were supposed to be coming out of the back of the engines. However all seemed well and we arrived in Bangkok for breakfast and refueling. We took off again for Calcutta. I remember it was quite turbulent on the approaches to Calcutta where we landed for a meal and refueling. It was then away again to Karachi where we had an evening meal and stayed overnight. *(I sent Molly a telegram from Karachi to let her know I was on the way home.)* The following day we flew to Bahrain for another stop and then onto Cyprus where we stayed overnight. The following day it was to Rome and then to Blackbushe followed by a coach transfer to London. I had been away for 22 months and arrived back in the UK on Friday 13 May 1955. Who said Fri 13th was a bad omen?

I was due some leave, I think 28 days. *(After some days Molly and I hired a car and spent two weeks touring Scotland – I guess that was really our honeymoon)*

HMS PEMBROKE Chatham Barracks, Awaiting Draft
4 May 1955 to 8 July 1955

I was in Chatham barracks for about five weeks with little to do and then drafted to Collingwood again as an Instructor.

HMS COLLINGWOOD Electrical Training Establishment, Instructor on Class 275 Radar
9 July 1955 to 23 Aug 1956

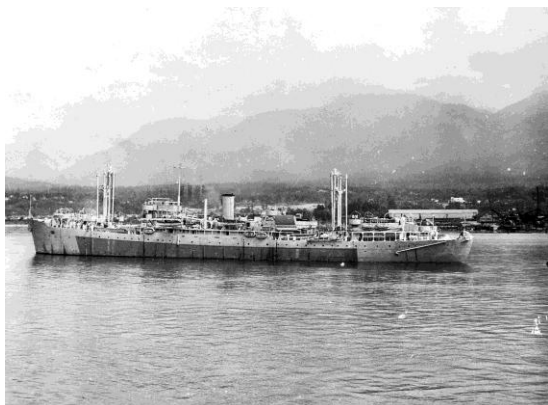
Although my work life was much the same as my previous draft to Collingwood described above, my personal life was now very different.

(Molly came to Fareham and we rented a small bungalow for a short while. The Admiralty were seriously short of married quarters and introduced a policy whereby one could find a suitable property which the Admiralty would rent and let to service personnel at the same rent as married quarters. We found a semi-detached three bedroom house on this basis. This was only maybe two miles from Collingwood so I was able to go home every evening, to work in the morning and even home for lunch.

And so it was that on 23 July 1956 Colin arrived. He was christened using the Collingwood Ship's bell).

About four weeks later I was on leave when I had a telegram recalling me as a result of the Suez Crisis. I was to report to HMS Mull of Galloway in Harwich the following day. *(Molly was left on her own in Fareham with a four week old baby. What did I say earlier about 'the contingencies of the Service' !)*

HMS MULL OF GALLOWAY Minesweeper Depot Ship with four flotillas of 'Sweepers
24 Aug 1956 to 17 Jan 1957



A Coastal and Inshore Minesweeper maintenance ship. Built by Vancouver SR Co in Canada. Launched 26 October 1944 as the Kinnard Head and re-named April 1945. Pennant Number A225.

10,000tons. 416X57feet. Armament 16 X 40mm.

Engines triple expansion giving IHP 2,500 =11 knots.

Broken up in Hamburg, Germany in 1965.

I joined the Mull of Galloway quite late in the day of 24 August and we sailed early the next morning. Our task was to sail with four Flotillas of Minesweepers out to Malta, the 104th MS Sqdn, and support them on arrival. The 104th MS Sqdn, based on HMS Woodbridge Haven and previously nominated to support military operations in the Cyprus area, arrived on 19 Sept.



The ships we supported consisted of two flotillas of Ton Class Coastal 'Sweepers (440 tons, crew 33). The picture on left shows HMS Fenton, one of the Ton Class which was there at the time. Another of the 104th MS Sqdn was HMS Darlaston. For an account of her passage from Harwich see: <http://www.tca2000.co.uk/story4.htm>



Also one flotilla of Ham Class Inshore 'Sweepers, (164 tons, crew 22), and one flotilla of Underwater Clearance Boats (also Ham Class). The picture on the right is of HMS Bottisham, an example of the Ham Class.

The passage through the 'Bay' was rough and those little boats had a very unpleasant time. It was commented at the time that they should have been taken down through the French canals, but I suppose that would have taken much longer, and time was important.

It is recorded that a total of twelve Ton Class 'Sweepers took part in 'Operation Musketeer'.

These boats were the first into Port Said and the canal entrance to clear any mines or underwater obstacles that may have been laid, prior to the landings.

At the same time as the Suez crisis was the Hungarian uprising. *(No doubt Molly was at home wondering whatever was going to happen next).*

Whilst being recalled from leave to join the Mull of Galloway at that time was not something I would have wished, it did turn out to be a blessing in disguise. I was due for another Foreign Service Commission, most likely in the Far East. But by early 1958 I no longer had 18 months left in the Service. So it was that I was again drafted to HMS Collingwood.

**HMS COLLINGWOOD Electrical Training Establishment. I/c Maintenance of Training Equipment
18 Jan 1957 to 22 Apr 1958**

My experiences of being transferred from Mounts Bay to Cossack when she was coming home and recall from leave at the time of Suez made me re-evaluate my private life against 'the contingencies of the Service'. It was a simple decision – that I should 'take my twelve' and leave the service.

22 April 1958 RN Service Completed Transferred to RN Emergency Reserve

And 50 years later

HMS Cavalier, a 'C' Class Destroyer as was HMS Cossack, is preserved in Chatham Historic Dockyard and is open to the public. She is the last remaining WW2 Destroyer in the UK.



H.M.S. SUPERB

293 Radar Room
Transmitter, Receiver and associated equipment



275 Radar
Primary Electronics Panel and Operators Position

