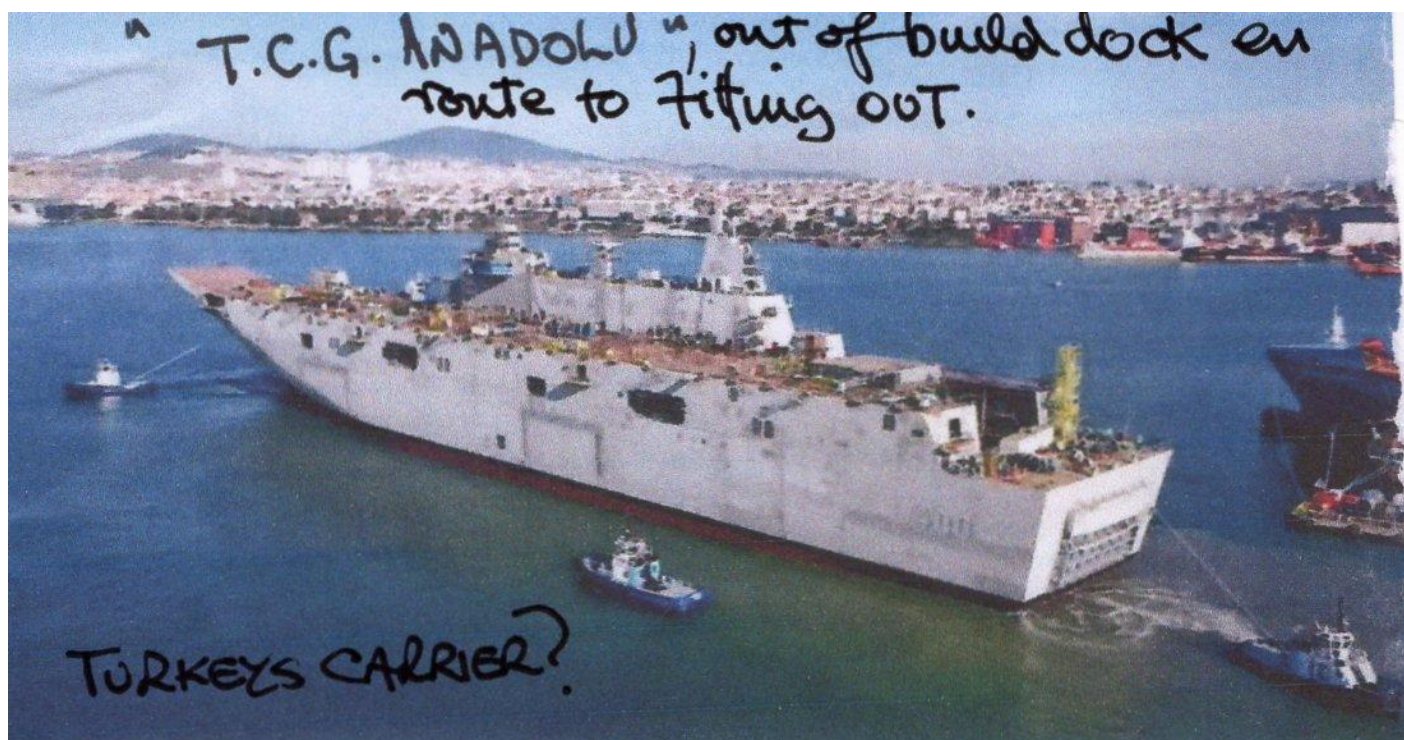


Hello Shipmates,

We could call this Black Sea 2

Bit of a coincidence that the area should be my interest in last month's newsletter



A couple of days later Destroyer *Diamond* caused a furore off Crimea. I learn Ukraine has a contract with Turkey, who now supplies them with advanced drones, re-con and attack capable; that really must tick the Russians off. If an alliance between those two countries becomes close, and Ukraine is accepted into N.A.T.O. they will be the third non-E.E.C. member, with the U.K. and Turkey. I find it hard to understand why N.A.T.O. member Turkey decided, about a year and a half ago, to purchase from Russia an air defence missile system S400. The immediate result of that was the U.S. government banning Turkey's part in the massive F35 programme, not wanting its technology going back the other way to Russia. The complication for Turkey is compounded by the fact they have a nearly completed hull of the Spanish designed flat top by Navantia, a multi-purpose, so called, L.P.H (landing platform helicopters). Exactly like the duo just delivered to Australia - *H.M.A.S. Canberra and Adelaide*.

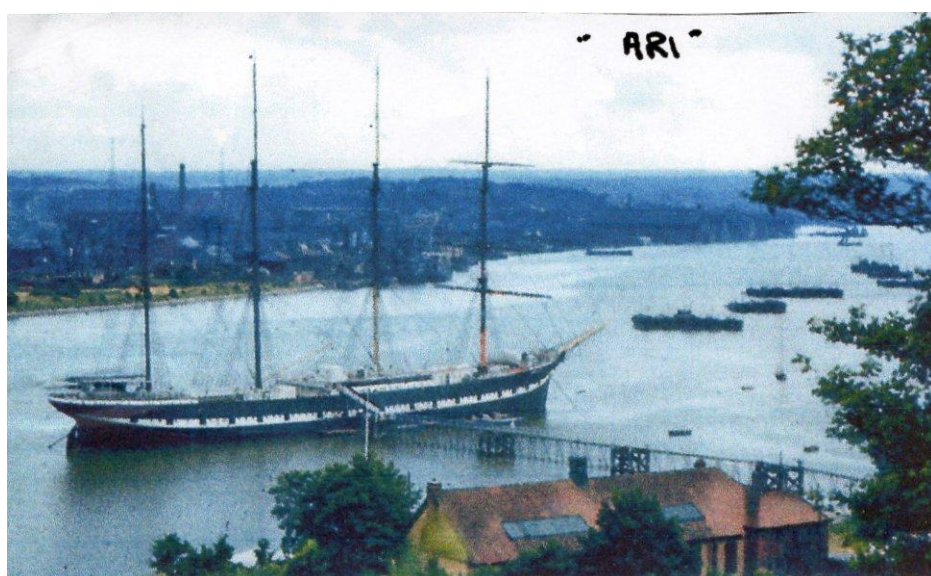
The Spanish, of course, operate their own build of the design; one called *Juan Carlos* operates Harriers to this day; their second hull acts as disaster relief vessel. Who would have thought that Turkey had desire to be an aircraft carrier operator, then have plans thwarted by such a thoughtless move.



Hark back to last month's letter - origin of China's high tech - this picture illustrates a J15 (Ukraine Flanker upgrade), about to snag a wire on Liaoning (ex-Ukraine build for Russian carrier contract).

Another continuation from last month's story - R.A.F. Coltishall; a true tale of a particular waypoint on recon exercises by their Jaguars over Welsh hills, a regular route passed over a lonely barn that infuriated the farmer as they scared his sheep. On the barn roof, in biggest possible letters he painted PISS OFF. Developed photos of the route became a squadron highlight, all pilots wanted their copy; as you may imagine the poor farmer ended up with far more than he bargained for with low flyers getting even lower.

Not many of our vintage will have served not knowing an ARI BOY; a Shaftsbury Homes, *Arethusa* resident. For near 40 years she was moored at Upnor on the Medway, exactly opposite St. Mary's Island off Chatham dockyard. I made a special effort to see her in Sheerness Dockyard being prepared in 1973 for a tow to Seaport Museum, New York. Much later did see her once in that place, surprised to find it was lacking urgent TLC. Perhaps not



being a U.S. build had it down their priority list. The trustees of that place decided it no longer fitted their plans. A final solution of scrapping was averted when Hamburg made provision to have it transported back there on a heavy lifting ship. Being of 1911 build that was very wise as several feet of concrete had been poured in

the hull; it's been removed 'pig pen forward', restored, fo'csle bell returned to its proper place.

Living in this area since leaving the Andrew I saw her so often in the nice Upnor village location and am very pleased Germany saved her from the torch; after many things in her life, including providing grist for the Royal Navy's manpower mill.

The M.O.D. hides in the small print another of its 'super deals'. Most recent Air to Air Missile in U.S. inventory is the A.I.M.120 D.; 200 were ordered in 2018, none are fitted to a Typhoon as none have been delivered. Quoted price \$650 million. How do we squirm out of that balls up?

I would guess the Typhoons in question are the 24 languishing in storage since being built.

They are tranche one models, so by now must be stuck to the store floor by cobwebs, plus un-airworthy. One cannot help musing if that pair of 'super' carriers had left Rosyth equipped with proper carriers, arrestor wires etc. for a relatively meagre sum, in the scheme of things. The M.O.D. could have fitted hooks to a strengthened rear end, upped undercarriage strength of those 24 Typhoons and clewed up with a very creditable fourth generation strike jet. That would allow a dozen on each vessel. Add half a dozen F35 B models, so called Jump Jets, to ice an operator's cake.

Our Navy has proven experience to make that package a real tough nut. It goes without saying: "A quick absolute divorce" from the dead hand of senior R.A.F. officers would bestow ultimate credibility. Do recall they were heavier than air experts who left Fleet Air Arm with 3-man crew, swordfish, biplanes to combat ME 109s and such when Adolph's battle cruisers made their channel dash. The F.A.A. did not inherit one decent aircraft to face the 2nd world war; a crime to their expected pilots and crews. Only when Grumman sold their cat series, that the R.N. called Martlets, did they have a decent expectation of life.

Remember Captain Winkle Brown? He used them to spectacular effect. A stroll in Gillingham cemetery will bring you across the F.A.A. leader of the channel fiasco, Esmonde, V.C. He is amongst row upon row of headstones of ships and crew members spanning many years, an education of sorts.

Esmonde, shot down into the channel, was considered lost until his body washed up a couple of days later. The R.A.F. never showed up for that prime target about 16 miles from Dover; as useful as hens' teeth. I don't blame the workers; the management was out of touch. A not unusual sight, sound in the untidy corner of the conservatory that I habituate, is a Spitfire or Hurricane, rarely a Mustang, doing a lazy bank to or from whatever commemoration is taking place on the day.

Most times I think en route to that large B of B memorial near Folkstone. I have said to Jo: "Wonder what's on today"; she offered Diana's statue was to be unveiled by princes William and Harry. Wondered what on this regular flight path were the navigation way points; 2 massive local chimneys from redundant power stations have been 'blown' down so maybe the, now active, Southend (Rochford) airport has a beacon role to play.

I waited expectantly for the much talked of piece by an English sculptor, the subject pose



chosen by the princes. I do have a liking for portrait sculpture. This had absolutely no appeal for me, thought it totally non-descript, lacking any kind of impact. Garden created as part of unveiling was a glorious effort in colour. Media has fed us a surfeit of Diana; I hope new matters, to affect the general good, will take over and population will get back to work.

Had a cropful of empty offices that fail to answer

calls. The N.H.S. backlog blamed on everything but next door's cat, but it got them awarded the George Cross; I thought it was a joke. That award is forever devalued. Grey suits on six figures will take all accolades - for swift action, forward planning, silky smooth organisation, and transparency diversity adherence. Have you spotted the deliberate mistake?

Grumpy old man signs off.