

Hello Shipmates,

To get the news Shipmate Norman Webber crossed the bar was most unexpected. I did not know him onboard, but always collided during reunions for an open exchange of views; nothing serious, but he always had a valid opinion on what one had to say, and a quick chuckle for our sort of non-service exchange.

I thought him a quiet person of value in our sort of association; summed up by a piece by Masefield:

"All I ask is a merry yarn with a fellow laughing rover  
And a long sleep with sweet dreams when the long trip's over" (from *Sea Fever*).  
Rest in Peace Norm - and the finest of epitaphs - "You will be missed".

### **Carrier Stop-Press.**

Super Carrier No. 2 now tied alongside at Pompey dockyard, suffered a major - read total - ship's electrical power failure. The problem is so severe ship's company 'bags and baggage' had to evacuate 100 yards down the jetty to embark on Super Carrier No. 1; there is plenty of room!

'Electrical system' is a version of that fitted to the much vaunted billion pounds apiece "D" class destroyers, all of which could not be deployed until a mega-million rectification programme was/is executed; an obvious result of having all your eggs in one basket; the B.A.E. Clyde basket, our nation's 'only' warship builder.

Should you be looking for a change in R.N. fortunes from the imminent Defence Review I would suggest you look away now.

**Another carrier tale;** China has launched its second carrier, entirely home-built in just less than three years, to complement the second-hand item of Russian/Ukrainian design and build, named Liaoning. New construct is named Shandong. It looks very like the Liaoning, all rolled edges to flight deck and sponsons, a single Island and ski jump; to this plebe, a bit of eye candy.

The surprise to satellite watchers is - no catapults are fitted. My own feeling is provision must have been made below decks for retro fit of EMALS technology when matured. They will be bending over backwards to filch all possible information from U.S.N. experience.

China's forecast of a rapid 'six carrier' build - number three has had metal cut -, according to South China Morning Post, has been put on a stretched build time, remaining three similar!! Makes one wonder if their new, so called, carrier buster, a hypersonic missile, had exceeded expectations on the trials, thus piling resources into carriers 'poor' perceived 'value for money'.

Another probability is, maybe they are a bit breathless trying to catch up with the U.S. navy's 'eleven' nuclear-powered carriers, plus 'nine' assault carriers, like the class act, *America Class*.

Last published annual defence budget was \$700 billion; that's serious cash; plus their carrier strike squadrons are acknowledged the world's very best.

China's defence budget is \$250 billion annually; many years will be required to catch up.

A recent news letter lamented the sale of U.K. high-tech. companies to 'foreign asset strippers'. Now departure from Europe had us informed by France, who lead the *Galileo Project*, we are no longer a member.

U.K. intellectual input, R & D plus billions of Euros contributed, to count for naught. I am staggered such conduct is legal. Also, collaboration with, principally, France, Germany, Italy and Spain on military aircraft projects, a situation since WW2, to name the models would be teaching you to suck eggs, will cease forthwith; U.K. is informed it's no longer a member in new air superiority programmes about to start. We have always been the 'wing' builder for Airbus Toulouse, a centre of excellence, whose quality and developed performance are advanced as the world's finest.

A move by Germany to arrange our exclusion from that work is underway; it is worth mega money to the U.K. plus many thousands of high tech. jobs.

I thought at the time, when we sold our share of Airbus it was a bloody stupid move by Whitehall. That antipathy towards us by the E.U. has resulted in S.A.A.B. Sweden, surprisingly Italy and Turkey, voicing the desire to create a consortium for the next generation 'air superiority aircraft'.

Turkey has worked with Lockheed U.S.A. for a long time and is considered a desirable aerospace partner, but alas, their new president is very close to Putin and has just purchased the A.A. missile system from him, so is considered not exactly in our camp now; feel he will be blackballed.

A high tech. question, decided by our new Premier, was the decision to hire Huawei communications. The other four members of the west's closest intelligence sharing club, the Anzacs, plus Canada and the U.S.A. asked us not to touch this Chinese state-owned major intelligence gathering and hacking company.

We ignored their collective opinion and advice.

To get elected the Boris sang, 'There will be lots of jam tomorrow'. I was prepared to wait whilst the 'fat lady sang' in his new quarters! Crushing disappointment for me, he was off tune and did not understand the words.

I apologise for the politics Shipmates, would love to be sat amongst you listening to your opinions on the question, knowing the Peoples' Liberation Army - cyber section - run the business in question.

Was watching Airorash Analysis on TV; mainly because an accident occurred during the approach to U.S. base Guantanamo. Always been interested in that place, its treaty with Cuba still rigorously adhered to. The plane was a four jet freighter, four crew but no passengers, a hidden blessing as all perished. Never did manage to get a decent map of the area, perhaps being a military installation was the reason for that. The Base, in programme, filmed at great

length from many angles and heights on crystal clear skies. For me an excellent education, very informative and twanged some nice memories.

I remember the enormous fish that congregated below the ship's tube space for stale loaves, I swear, some were tuna, and Pete Tasker could be wound up after all these years if I reminded him their 'rifle match versus the U.S. Marines. It was a gross embarrassment to the web-footed because they lost.

I know there were extenuating circumstances, to save both parties reputation, and he explained they used each other's rifle type. I have often wondered if U.S. used the *M1 Garand* or the later *M14*; our side, of course, had the old clunker .303 SMLE

Are any of that team on our books? I would like to know, out of interest.

Must go, Jo has just rung the dinner bell and I've not set the table.

Tatty bye Shipmates