

Hello Shipmates - in frigid May

An odd coincidence has a pair of shipmates pursuing the same aim, i.e. to get a hip connected correctly to the thigh bone. I had not met Shipmate Ron Clay, or known him prior to a phone call out of the blue a couple of months ago..

He, like me, had an early January, 2021 operation to correct things - cancelled! I mirrored that exactly six days later. He heard of my problem via this magazine (see, it works), hence the phone call.

After swapping tactics on how to get back onto their rosters (two different hospitals) Ron is up for surgery on Friday 6th May. On that day I go for a third lung scan as my question still seeks an answer to, 'Will I take an anaesthetic?'. Ron tells me it's a three hour job with the full tool kit. Asbestos plus a wee growth of sorts prevents my box being ticked.

I will ring to wish Ron 'bon voyage' before he leaves home. I realise the warning - if you wish to kill a conversation, 'talk about your ailment'.

I cannot say I am in love with, or even satisfied with, the police service as currently constituted by the 'liberal elites' of the last ten to fifteen years, or thereabouts. The role - authority - respect due - as taught at home, in school perhaps or just absorbed as the British way of doing things, is now alien compared with the police force of my pimply youth. The Sunday papers all front paged a picture of a policeman slashed across the cheek bone, from just under his eye, caused by a broken bottle hurled by a football fan, at point-blank range. Luckily he still has the eyeThis, during an illegal break into a football stadium.

Copper and comrades sent there to 'maintain good order'. In essence you and I sent him, we elected his authority, we pay his wages. What's become of 'Old England' when we tolerate it being devoured by knots of misfits who set themselves up as self appointed 'moral guardians', or so-called arbiters of 'good taste' to the quiet majority?

Do we sit back indifferent, or kick that newly elected strata of civil servant - a non-uniformed police commissioner, on six figures I'll suppose - up the arse with instructions to give us back a police force with some teeth, to deal with thugs, arsonists, shop window smashers, looters etc.?

Reports of one million burglaries in the last five years, uninvestigated, thus unsolved. London reports 90% of burglars are aware they will just get away with it. What happened to 'Due Process' and 'Justice seen to be done'? Do you live in one of those increasing communities, neighbourhoods that collect cash to pay for private night-time patrols, even keeping mobs of noisy youths in order with a simple lecture on their 'responsibilities' in a place they live? Are we

going up the route to local vigilantes? I expect to be considered a cockroach for voicing the opinion; lawlessness seems to creep up with the dilution of our island's residents, allowed by the Border Force, of gangs from Eastern Europe, North Africa and Asia fleeing retribution in their own homelands. Our view of what's 'acceptable conduct' or 'religiously tolerable' being chalk and cheese.

When on the road in North America and Canada I was ever captivated by the number of high quality murals on bare flanks of buildings, homes, shops, factories, not to be confused with graffiti in any way, shape or form. They covered all and any subject; history and local events seemed the favourites.

After all this time I can exactly place many in my memories. Entering San Francisco from the south the whole side of one building, full face as you drive into town is a B17 Flying Fortress banking, it being life-size or bigger maybe, executed by a master artist. I cannot think of anywhere in the U. K. where such art exists; I would expect local authorities to forbid it as driver distraction; one is, after all, expected to submit your shop sign for size and colour. Even flying the Union Flag was subject to permission from some wonk.



Then, about four miles from home a month ago, I was bowled over to see an example, in a narrow alley on the flank of an old shop.

It is ultra topical, beautifully executed as the young lady curls her finger to flick away a Covid virus. I have tried to find out who painted it; was it commissioned? ... passing that way most days I don't recall seeing a scaffold, or trestle to work from. You may feel, little things please little minds and I heartedly concur, I am shameless!



MV Havengore

A part of that tale triggered a memory for me of several notable friends and acquaintances whose ashes, following cremation, were poured into 'the Nore' (Medway river estuary) and the channel beyond, a form of 'burial at sea'. I initially saw the Port of London Authority Director's cruiser alongside their facility on the Thames at Gravesend. When sold into private ownership its new home was the classy marina

next to the old Admiralty pier at Gillingham. A beautiful boat, 65-70 foot long, all timber of the

finest quality, varnished and buffed; a builder's showcase. These many years later I hear a large slice of running costs are aided by 'Ash-Scattering' trips out to the Nore, and beyond. Our own Fred Kinsey will be out there, poured into the start of the ebb from Thunderbolt Pier in Chatham dockyard; he will be in good company with a pair of my own special friends, a father and son.

It's just dawned on me that y'all will have seen the boat in question - it carried W.S. Churchill down river on his way to burial ashore.



Of the well-known whose wish was the Channel is one Paul Tibbets. He came to the U.K. with the first U.S. 8th Air force, B17 crews and piloted a Flying Fortress named *Butchers Shop* on their first outing to Europe on 17th August 1942. He flew from Grafton Underwood, very near my boyhood home, survived until his tour expired. He returned to the U.S., retrained on a new Super Fortress B29; the U.S. most fraught and expensive programme of World War 2. He became a 'Major U. S. A. F.' and piloted the *Enola Gay* to Hiroshima to drop the world's first atomic bomb. He died at home following a long and peaceful retirement, always shunning invites to publicity. His time in the U.K. and the loss of so many young friends in a crippled B17 into the Channel left him with a wish to join them. His will stipulated his remains to be brought back to England and

dropped into the Channel, without fuss or ado. The U. S, Air force saw to that!

Hope that interested the aircraft fans.

Last week's Press Banner Headline: 'Boris sends gunboat to sort French blockade in Channel Islands fishing dispute'. The following day the same paper headline: 'France follows tradition, surrendered'. How embarrassing can the media be? What calibre of journalist are universities turning out? Their mantra of 'don't let the truth spoil a good story' is strange value for education given at 12k per degree.

Picture on the front page of *Formidable*, a naval vessel, leaving Plymouth was an O. P. V, as that type is known the world over - Offshore Patrol Vessel. A new official M. O. D. Category refers to ours now as *Ocean Patrol Vessel*; delusion reigns supreme; its formidable armament, one 30mm machine gun, un-shielded on the foc'sle.

Fleet Air Arm Harriers had a four pack of these in some variants in their nose.

I recall the comment made by U. S. M. C. Officer heading purchase commission when Harriers were being considered - 'Our current Gatling Phalanx can strip leaves from trees, Harriers blow the trees down!' The French frigate lurking in the misty background was, no doubt, itching for retribution over Merselkabier, that piece of naval history taught in France. Naval history reported scrubbed from curriculum at Dartmouth.

We were in luck when the fishermen went home at tea time for a crêpe and a jar of red ordinary; had they had the jar at lunch time our 'ocean' patroller could have experienced problems and may have come to grief.

As things are in the Royal Navy 2021 'JERSEY' will be painted on a battle honours board for screwing onto the quarterdeck. During lock-down when there is no one to talk to but oneself, this is the sort of stuff I have to listen to

Was it Churchill who suggested 'Jaw, jaw is better than war, war'? Where were all those fraud-steeped political types we employ who allowed events to get so tense? We import wine, cheese, fruit, meat and motor cars by the shedloads, all bargaining chips surely to aid a quid pro quo with a N. A. T. O. ally; a partner in several high tech. covert research programmes.

What gets done during these interminable political five-course lunches that protocol demands, usually held in locations like the Maldives, with secretaries present as things must be taken down, and a foul shame on him who immediately thinks only of knickers. The cartoonist's lot cannot be an easy one, to be humorous or acid to get a punch line across in one simple drawing, time after time. An example that twanged my g-string about the unsackable class a couple of Sundays ago; pin-stripe suited civil servants depicted as cash bar codes beneath a street sign saying Whitehall. That leaves nothing to chance about who these folk are, lobbyists for sale to the highest bidder - friend or enemy.



Last week the 'pretend industry' got into a mighty twist over the dole out of awards; black and white divide causing the friction. There was I thinking baubles were issued by popular acclaim on acting merit. Not that I follow the industry but one cannot avoid it writ large on all front pages, and on the 'box' as it's considered prime time news of national importance. Trouble for the likes of me who fail to sort out his GRAMMY from his OSCAR and EMMY or, maybe, OLIVIER.

A very small piece of show biz news that caught my cynical, watery eye was a new rule that Morris Men from mining districts are no longer allowed to follow the tradition, from medieval times, of blacking their faces. It's been thus from about the 15th century, it's now 'blue or nothing'. I feel it a safe bet neither dancers nor audience had seen a genuine black man at that time. How would I feel if black performers had a desire to 'whiten up'? I had never given it a conscious thought until now, but feel no malice would be intended. Michael Jackson comes to mind as a young black kid famous for his dancing and singing who just failed to see who he was, renowned over the western world even before puberty. I have read he spent millions of dollars to whiten his skin, altering features. Just a sad young man who imploded and I have never recalled he had any opinions about colour.

Every evening you and I see adverts begging for cash to provide swathes of Africa with clean domestic-use water in lieu of that collected from filthy dykes shared by cattle bathing and peeing in it. Another always on screen wants cash to make kids with Trachoma see again, that's a real heart-tugger. I cannot equate these campaigns with a continent rich in gas and oil. When working for B. P., Nigeria was the new bonanza location, massive reserves and western money to prime the pumps, a country corrupt beyond belief, the epicentre of blatant scams even here in East Kent. Congo, beloved by that national bandit of Zimbabwe for their diamonds, Mugabe, he had them in his Chinese bank by the wagon load; millions dug by bare hands of impoverished youths for a pittance. Similar youths dig in similar fashion for very rare earth minerals to make electronic chips and such in China; they seem to have that industry sewn up. Gold in the central belt, hydro power needing development. Africa has sufficient wealth to purchase G. B. Plc. with change to spare. Recalling school history - maybe geography - the U. S. A. was instrumental in creating an African country fit for freed return slaves. 1822 saw Liberia constituted for that sole purpose, its flag was, maybe still is, easily confused with 'old glory' at a distance.

Scribbling about it had me wondering what became of that endeavour, how many chose to return to Africa, what was their G.D.P. based on?

I've just had my schoolboy atlas out to see their capital is Monrovia, it sits on the Gulf of Guinea - massive oil basin there.

The clement channel weather aired on Southern TV news, I was washing dinner things so not able to turn over with wet hands, I listened, the previous day 200 illegals had rowed over from France. BORDER FARCE collected them for medical checks, transported to army barracks near Folkestone for hot meal, social security check-in, issue of clean bedding - with sheets - (wonder who does their laundry), then some cigarette money, before sitting about to decide the best way to incinerate the barracks, a tried and trusted method of getting relocated to a proper hotel in the south east. They seem to like Croydon, picture of them embussing showed only

black men about fifteen to thirty years old. I feel if black lives do matter why are you not kicking corrupt despots out of Africa, then share its bounties and encourage democracy to flourish; it's not an old man's task. The continent's richest asset is those youngsters going blind for want of cheap medicine, or drinking filthy water for want of a cheap old technology drill rig. Benefits for the masses instead of Mercs and Exec jets, villas in Marbella and Thailand for the despots. I do care - about those rowers not caring about Africa, free loaders here to stay undeportable. What a jumble that all is Shipmates, may be jungle is a more appropriate word,

Promise to try harder next time.

Ta're well

It's tatty bye the noo as you prepare for Flaming June!

See you in October - eh! !

Note for anyone thing of going on a quiz show !
The *Enola Gay* was named after Paul Tibbet's mother