

Hello Shipmates,

My desire to communicate overrides an awkward arthritic hand. Have been as if I put something valuable down, am now unable to recall where it was put, which leaves an irritation - frustration one is unable to resolve, left open-ended so to say.

Reunion Friday and Saturday Jo and I were the first to leave the King Charles, only because I could not stay upright for much longer as I was in pain having only left hospital the previous day. Following that escape I was determined to attend the King Charles feeling it may be the associations 'swan song', and so it turned out - was worth the effort - a gold plated "Yes".

The sparse sprinkle of shipmates, some of whom put in a major effort to be there, was highly animated and in laughing mode; a bitter-sweet weekend which leaves me sad, knowing it will never be repeated. A 'Hawke boy' in October '46 at Shotley I feel it was all terminated at the old N.A.F.F.I. which morphed into the King Charles in May of 2022. Can only say the interlude has been a highly interesting ride, full of great experiences, meeting some folks who were worth, literally, dying for.

An old goat at the end, from very humble beginnings. My father, a junior footman at Ardcross Castle in Scotland, who met his wife in that place, a junior laundry maid, for three brothers and me, was a massive stroke of luck as neither would allow us to sit on our hands, we were expected to be up and doing; 'luck favouring the prepared maid'.

Did not set out to serve you a potted history of us - me. I suspect it's precipitated by that feeling mentioned of 'being in a wilderness of sorts'. The fickle finger of fate must have known a little more than we chickens when Shipmate Brian Turner decided to make this year's star prize a splendid rendition of Superb passing Gibraltar with the pair of residential Loch Class. Then to decide that all us losers at the draw would get a high class printed copy encased in stiff envelope, was an inspired use of accumulated funds by our chairman Brian. On a private thought, just then thinking, the older I get the more emotional I become on a whole range of things; is that a sign of getting ancient?

Surprised to see in today's paper the U.K. currently enjoys a full labour force, somehow the figures are well manipulated to account for - i.e. - Bank of England staff working only one day a week. A vow to maintain that rugged schedule has been issued by 'labour force' to 'management'. That, to me, is the most radical change to social order heard in the modern world. It does, of course, only apply to the 'scribbling Pharisees' of our land. Should you have a job that produces a bit of hard work, like a house brick or aircraft component, the nation's revenue would hit the buffers at once, with you at home, P45 in top pocket ready to meet the glitterati of the labour exchange.

Because of Putin's attempt to ravage Ukraine a massive shortage of seasonal land workers has been created in Britain. I read that in recent years 60% of the 300,000 workers granted visas under the 'Government seasonal workers' scheme' have been Ukrainian. I never thought before such vast numbers were required; does such an imbalance benefit their nation more than ours? Those land workers all evidently troop off home at harvest's completion with pockets full of hard currency earnings; what a win/win situation for Blightly. That seems all domestic because when I attempt a look at R.N. accelerated ship building programme it was patently obvious some fertiliser was still being used - bullshit. Not one of M.O.D.'s current 36 major programmes are on, or near, schedule. Pity Boris is not as cutting with those bloated heads of departments as he has been about Putin. Governments are in dire need of a massive cull to let merit surface and run a much slimmer department 'at pace'.

Before I shut up I would like to say reinstatement of name list with phone numbers will be a step in the right direction to keep in touch, for me at least.

It aches like stink so tatty for the noo, and thanks for your company in days gone by.