



# ANDY BRIERLEY'S BLOG

Hello Shipmates,

**A** visit by R.N. big brother brought up in conversation a contemporary of his from school who also joined the R.N. His name David Stanners lived in the next road so I always saw him when on leave.

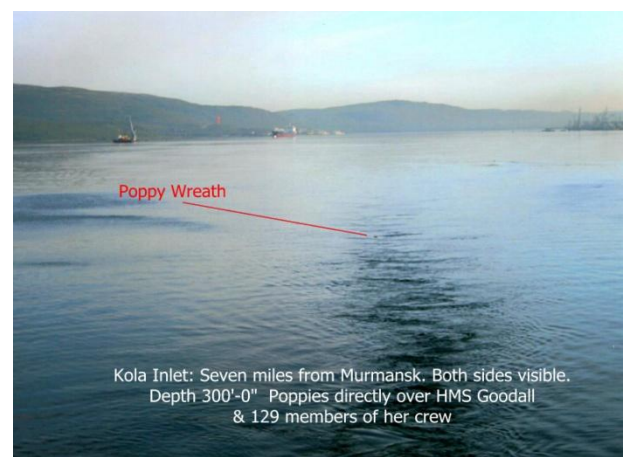
Two uncles were in the R.N. before WW2 as boy seamen, so little doubt where I was to go from elementary school. As an adult reader I feel lucky to never being old enough to have endured a 'Russian convoy', the 80th anniversary of which has just passed. The first run in 1941 was named *Operation Dervish*, thereafter numbers were the norm with an alphabet prefix to denote an 'outward' or 'homeward' bounder.

When first I joined this association a piece was written for Fred Kinsey; he was very selective, I do not recall if it got printed. It was, more or less, the tale of that school boy's trip on a Russian Convoy. At risk of boring I shall repeat the story of his demise in Kola Inlet. He served on one of those lovely 'lease lend, diesel electric' frigates, capable of crossing the Atlantic, both ways, unrefueled. None of that breaking off half way through a convoy to nip to Iceland to refuel, an affliction most U.K. vessels and escorts. Built in Boston, U.S., in July 1943 as D.E. 275 it was in R.N. service as the *Captain Class*. U.S. fit out had adequate bunks for all, a decent modern galley and mess space etc.

For R.N. service she was named *H.M.S. Goodall*, K 479, with Captain Fulton R.N.V.R. It was on its way out of Kola Inlet April 29th 1945 as escort to 'last' returning empty convoy R.A. 66, 8 miles from Murmansk, when a torpedo from U-968 hit her forward magazine; all from and including the bridge forwards perished. Kola Inlet is a fiord by another name, so very deep, *Goodall's* wreck is at 300 feet, in water of fluctuating salinity, so lousy Asdic operating conditions.

Captain Fulton's death was added to his brother's, who was killed at El Alemein, a major blow for his family when, to all intents and purposes, the war had ended. I was able to drop a poppy wreath over the exact coordinates of the remains; that information came from the R.N. museum at Portsmouth.

A lady answered my phone call, listened to the one sentence enquiry, asked why I sought the numbers, came back in seconds with them. I would



call it a very Senior Service indeed.

I dropped the wreath over those exact coordinates at 05.15 on a blazing sunny morning. Will say never be reluctant to ask Pompy R.N. museum any question, my lady was mustard, far too slick for a government department.

On those voyages to northern Russia 1,900 R.N. crewmen were killed on 16 warships. 1,400 merchant vessels sailed for Russia of which 85 were sunk with 800 crewmen killed. Those merchantmen delivered 400,000 tonnes of trucks, planes, tanks, medicine, oil, fuel etc. The U.K. only finished paying the interest on the overall bill a VERY FEW YEARS AGO. The U.K. paid the U.S. for what was loaded, Russia paid for what arrived. Cannot help thinking why we never got round to the manufacture of a simple diesel engine for the 'war emergency build programme' of 145 Flower Class corvettes.

Another 121 were built by Canada, a fine example of emergency build and mobilisation in a short time to crew them from what was an agricultural economy. Could stretch the story to say Canada grew a large proportion of our tucker, then built and crewed the escorts to ensure it got here.

The escort engine and fuel problem that made convoy escort commodores' life a game of snakes and ladders persisted in WW2 from start to finish. If we were incapable of designing and building a decent simple diesel we could have done what Jo Stalin did, or ToJo, or Chairman Mao and copied the German designs. As a result Stalin had a far superior tank from Western designs that did not brew up at slightest hit.

I recall the Germans referred to the Sherman, the most prolific tank in the west, as Tommy Cookers. Was surprised first time I saw in the back of a Sherman to see an aircraft Radial engine, petrol of course. The decent name for 'copy' became 'reverse engineer'.

All the U.K.'s M.T.Bs, M.G.Bs were powered by high octane petrol, versions of mainly Rolls V aero engines, they brewed up as readily as Sherman's.

My first job, on leaving the R.N., was an education in that respect; in the large workshop was at least one E boat engine. The mechanic who happened to be a close neighbour with whom I got on very well, put himself out to satisfy my interest (my insatiable curiosity could be labelled as 'nosey bar steward' in some quarters). The engine was diesel, of course, and could be built up in multiples, depending on power required; crankshafts were in various lengths to allow for that, crankcase ends boltable together to accommodate. Like a host of things in my life I wish, in my dotage, I had paid more attention when young, used the camera etc. An image in my mind of those engines is the maker's name cast into crankcase, Heinkel. There happens to be, in the

U.K., an E boat under restoration by a recycler, military enthusiast. It was seen on TV when a dealer sold the restorer a working principle foc'sle gun, Mauser cannon, plus its authentic mounting (rare as hens' teeth, worldwide) plus several other small parts. Hull was in deplorable condition, derelict perhaps a better word, but visible work looked faultless;



hull of timber had steel frames. It will take countless thousands of pounds and several years to complete, but I'll wager the price of the Taj Mahal will be as a garden shed in comparison when it is; a thing I would like to see floating before my systems switch off.

We really caught it in the neck from France over, so called, A.U.S.U.S. deal for submarines. Oz currently operates six Collins Class, diesel electrics and was negotiating for twelve French designed Barracuda based diesel electrics. That the vast Pacific area is far from ideal for D. Elects was brought home to the U.K. in WW2, though I recently read of *H.M.S. Trenchant* sinking Japanese cruiser *Ashgara* in the Baltic Strait, where no great depth of easy escape route was available. A Chatham build with a Chatham crew, targets were few and far between, widely dispersed. Our T class carried most diesel but compared to the U.S.A's ocean goers were tiny with crews sleeping on false floors of tinned goods, or spare torpedo racks for reloads, hot bunking etc., unable to loiter or roam because of fuel, fresh water restrictions.



I was able to visit the *U.S. Sub. Pampanito* in San Francisco; truly amazed at available space, to see full width bunks with proper mattresses, decent mess area, galley and sample menu for all crew; they referred to them as 'pig boats'. Prior to that I had been on three of our own (visitor); short patrols in ghastly conditions was their normal life, enough to convince the U.K. designs were tailored for

'European and Mediterranean' waters, with U.S. types tailored for the vast Pacific.

France lost no time deriding the U.K. as a U.S. vassal state; so be it. I see no sin in reorganising 'what's possible'; France will shortly have its turn at E.U. presidency, bound to be their platform for renewed call to run all European military and there is nothing new in that. President Macron is a Gaullist; I recall the mood when de Gaulle expelled the western alliance H.Q. out of Fontainebleau in Paris, along with all U.S. aircraft and army types from French soil. It left the west open mouthed to be informed it was not a participant in N.A.T.O. Military Command - and is still not a member of the N.A.T.O. nuclear planning command. A learned article I came across

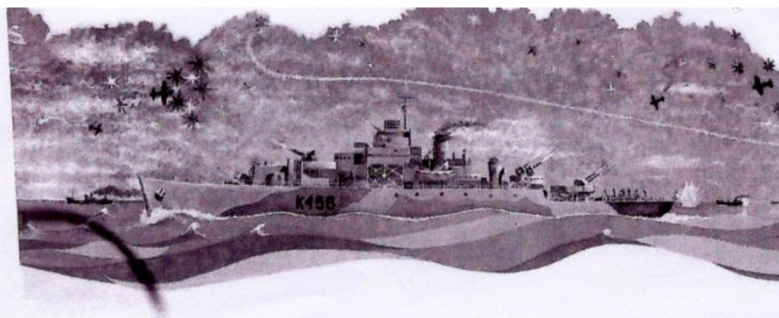
↑ asks "How can it be an A.U.K.U.S member with such semi-detached conduct?": Russia delights in the destruction of N.A.T.O.; know no current member of the E.U. is capable of filling the void left by flight of U.S.\$ or U.K. sterling, plus hardware from both countries. During Desert Storm, when the coalition had an overall commander, General Schwarzkopf, France refused to allow him any role in their forces employment - that's how a coalition works!!!

There are four or five alliances in Asia Pacific; some have worked well for 50 years, like the so called Five Power Defence Arrangements (F.P.D.A.), a commonwealth wide agreement that takes in Malaysia and Singapore.

They are not 'the pill to cure all ills' but it makes the opposition wonder what the trigger could be if control of sea trade routes and energy are their aim. An oddity in that region is India, obviously commonwealth but, as mentioned in a previous news letter, buyer of Russian aircraft which results in their exclusion from 'aircraft technology' or 'sales of the 5th generation carried aircraft' from the U.S. A similar scene exists with nuclear submarine technology; India has long leased a nuke sub from Russia, an Akula class, and has recently agreed to lease a second, so no way will they get to share U.S. technology or operating wisdom.

Back to Oz: though going nuke are at great pains they will not carry any nuclear armaments, and no plans to exist to do so in the future. That's their stance today, by the time this reaches the readership a different balloon may have gone up.

Have just enjoyed the computer news letter thanks to Jo. Excellent cut away of Holland One, the heart sinks to see the engine made the atmosphere border on the lethal. My lamenting about not knowing about why *U.S.S. Bear* sank was comprehensively answered by Libby Saunders and accompanied by a picture of its stylish hull. Pity it did not make its goal of preservation, would have been a splendid example of Scottish ship building at that time.



Excellent feedback, is it general knowledge Libby has just had a new knee cap fitted, report of satisfaction and return to mobility with stick is good news.

You may recall my going on about wall murals and a taste for such things. Have recently come across one of Canadian frigate *H.M.C.S. Saint John*. Picture in book is only 5" long in black and white, detail bowled me over. I would just love to see it in the flesh, full colour. I am tempted to write to address mentioned in the caption to see if it still exists, maybe acquire a photo. Frigate was launched in 1943 and sank at least one U-boat, 309.



December is upon you, you do not need reminding letters to Santa should be in the post by now or his fairies (old connotation) will be pushed for time to meet your needs.

That 'star in the east', check first it's not Russian or Chinese, be assuming it's the second coming of Python's Brian. Those dastardly fiends could be running another cyber attack.

Jo and I wish y'all happy contentment, and God bless the wider families.