



## ANDY BRIERLEY'S BLOG

A chilly autumn greeting Shipmates,

**D**id write a bit about the Baltic Pipe Line in my last letter... U.S. President Biden's policy over, what is now called Nord Stream 2, turns out to be toothless. It was initially meant to go through Poland and Ukraine - it now passes through Sweden, Denmark and Finnish waters - E.E.Z.; hence Russia no longer depends on being reasonable to a pair of nations they harass and intimidate mercilessly, trying to twist their arms on any possible occasion to advantage Russia, the latest and poorest members of N.A.T.O. It is not hard to see N.A.T.O. - E.U. will suffer energy threats in the future as cable meter price of gas spirals upwards; Mr. Putin's only source of riches.

Should the west want an arms race - prepare to lose.

I still feel Merkel as bed fellow with several other high Germans of Putin's Russia. Their nuclear capacity vanished in short order when gas was discovered a-plenty in Russia; they know how to play the long game.

President Joe Biden, author of Total Withdrawal Chaos in Afghanistan is now glossed over less than one month later.

In 1975 President Ford, lumbered with ending the Vietnam war, went to congress for a relief package - get allies and U.S. personnel evacuated in a seemly manner, not least to look after 'good name' and the prestige of the U.S.A. One senator opposed any such support; scenes from the roof of the U.S. Embassy in Saigon must be etched in all thinking peoples' brains. The 'one' senator embarked on an all out campaign to leverage it politically against President Ford, who nevertheless managed to rescue 1500 South Vietnamese up for execution as U.S. stooges.

U.S. President Ford again requested a package to assist their settlement and integration into society. The 'one' senator torpedoed any support. President Ford recruited Christian organisations of volunteers to help; the 'one' senator belittled even those efforts at humanitarian aid for the dispossessed who had stood by the U.S. in that tragic mess of a war. Now, check the record of congress business shipmates; that 'one' senator - is now known as President Biden.

Our Boris is currently in Washington, doing business deals with that serial liar. Do we seriously imagine we will not be ditched, abandoned and/or stabbed in the back at his slightest whim? Example: At the White House reception for I.R.A. fund raising and a pointed slur against Northern Ireland before the entire press corp. - his sort of diplomacy.



New Blackpool Tower looked an interesting build. Very informative TV show seemed to demonstrate why our submarine programme may be in such a stew. The tower is a slender 162 meters and that dictated a pretty thick tube of 88 mm; my imperial head has that at about  $6\frac{1}{4}$ ". No U.K. contractor would cast a plate that thick so it came from Germany ! Who would roll it into that high spec tube? Holland !

Glass for viewing platforms had complex compound curves to give self-supporting integrity; had to be done in Italy then shipped to France for fitting ! Bet that makes you proud to live in what claims to be a world class industrial nation. Don't scoff as here is an example: Astute class submarines are £1.5 billion a copy - so far - massively over budget and five years late; who for the love of Nelly challenges or questions such fiascos?

Have you had a look at Halford's mega bicycle sale of late? All heavily discounted, made in that country of five letters that begin with C; nil points if you came up with Chelmsford, don't feel sad, I thought it was Colchester.

I had some idea what was paid for illegal channel crossing; all was put right last week by Q.C. Badenoch of Chelmsford, he represents the Crown case at court. H.G.Vs do it for 2 to 3 thousand pounds per head, inflatables charge 2 to 4 thousand pounds per head, last week a converted trawler with 69 migrants and a crew of 3, estimated at 1500 pounds a head. Where do these poor migrants get their cash? And the Q.C. says it's all cash. If that affluent why a reception organisation to issue social security numbers, free board and lodging with three hot meals a day, in hotels - not hostels! Testing for any malady that needs N.H.S. attention 'at once, a small cash hand out for immediate purchase of essential small sundries. A report in the marine press on August 4<sup>th</sup> states number of illegals crossing from France so far this year totalled 1,000, beating previous record of 8,500 for the whole of last year.

The culture we grew up in Shipmates is ever more alien from that of my grandchildren, already turned on its head, the common place we accepted and respected alas long gone. I confess to being a trifle delinquent, the local Bobby knew me and my brothers by name. He was a person who knew his remit to the letter and knew a sharp bit of local justice was appreciated by most parents. His boots shone, his uniform immaculate, brushed and pressed and a helmet that



conveyed as much authority as a lifeguard's, polished and plumed. Compare with today's scruffy, mostly unshaven, in whatever mix of uniform he fancies today, like duckbill hat or peaked issue,

dirty boots or shoes, un-pressed slacks festooned with kit round the middle, I bet most stamped 'made in China'. Old films always showed the 'boss' inspecting his shift before they went on the streets.

Listening to the early morning world news on the wireless this morning I learned the U.S.A. are concerned about a very similar situation. A report on their census says the population made its first radical alteration, it tipped over the line for northern Europeans to be the types as the dominant block of U.S. population. What's commonly referred to as Hispanic has taken place and the gap is getting wider a pace. I thought many years ago when by popular vote California and Arizona changed to dual language states it may not take long. It used to be a rule; English was the only language. Last week President Biden chartered a nine plane fleet to take Haitian migrants back to their island, recently laid waste by an earthquake; thousands homeless with death toll unknown, it so horrified one of his key advisors he resigned.

I wonder, is the American dream over?

Found a tiny picture of India's latest carrier, out for the first time from Kochi, on trials. They say it is the first 'indigenous'; first designed by Russia and contract to build was given to Ukraine just before U.S.S.R. broke up that resulted in Ukraine's independence. Russia was broke, carriers cancelled with not a rouble paid. As we now know China bought one hull from Ukraine for good money then India bought the other, hence the word 'indigenous' designs is, to me, a porky.

The aviation fit and control being supplied by Russia - M.I.G. 29k, KA31 airborne early warning, with it is said a pair of U.S. H 60s helicopters. These carriers, of what I consider the same family, are full blown angle deck catapult wire trapping. Design appeals to my watery eye, lovely rolled deck edges, no stick-on sponsons; make our over hyped so called carriers that can only operate one type of aircraft, unsuitable for fleet use in emergency, no landing sight, no wires etc. a liability, designed by political committee. India is now a proper two carrier navy.

Here another example, read this very day, of respect for constituents by M.P. for Litchfield **Michael Fabricant**, known in the House as its arch narcissist. **He charged the public purse £4.98 for a selfie-stick.** Questioned he assured expenses scrutineer it will be used only to photograph his voters when public speaking. Never to be used on holiday with husband. What a miserable, penny-pinching turd to offer such an excuse to his grown up flock.

Thought I had exhausted my submission for next month just when Jo told me the October Magazine was on the ether.

**FIRSTLY;** the wreath to sit with Robin on top of his coffin I thought was the most splendid I've ever seen, to my eye a classic original. Who chose it and where from I know not, but it hit the spot for Jo and me.

**SECOND;** readers letters of thanks for keeping us afloat successfully with assistance from the 'sisterhood' says it all.

Was surprised to read it had been steaming along for twenty years after Fred Kinsey first got the urge to float our boat with the aid of his daughter Sharon - who sent her condolences to the family.

Now Miz Libby sits on Monsieur Brian's elbow, it shows graphically one thing I feel, without 'Les Girls' the Superb Association would have sunk into oblivion many moons ago. I recall the old saying: 'The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world'.

**LASTLY:** Shipmate Brian Turner's models; can only keep asking myself, where on earth does he get his inexhaustible patience for such detail? Cannot imagine Margaret calling out "Dinner is on the table sweetheart" when he's mid-way up that crane jib's construction, it alone must have taken weeks on end, a master class in detail. Have a few questions to ask when next we meet in the New Year.

As you may have noticed above I wondered about President Biden's reliability towards the U.K. Prospects of decent trade deals with Trump's trade rep receded rapidly since Joe Biden won the White House. An aversion to anything Trumpism killed that stone dead. Our Foreign Secretary, at her party conference, refused to guarantee one with the U.S.A. by the end of the decade! It did not take Biden long to revert to type, following I.R.A. advice.

News today tells trade to and from Europe is about to come to a crashing halt; senior French officials threaten to 'up their sabotage' by use of French fishing fleet, and cut off electricity supplies. Easy task enabled by our own dilatory political elite who wasted nigh on ten years of 'self-sufficiency' development time in pursuit of their own personal aggrandisement, precedence devoted only to the latter.

It made me think of a naval history lesson at Shotley - Lord Salisbury observed: "France always was, and always will be, our enemy". The great struggle had just concluded, naive; I saw us in an alliance with common cause, value. French acreage sufficient for a major city filled instead with crosses, three paces apart, marked the remains of my countrymen and those of our commonwealth. And now, what of our N.A.T.O. allies? I am certain you all know our nation is not only broke, but **broke, broke!**

To get out of N.A.T.O. would save a generous sum; to have major barracks, and caches of military hard ware in northern Europe today seems nuts to me. Politicians and cavalry-minded Generals speak of it in the 'long dead' language of 'imperial grandeur'. I am a devotee of the idea; if you cannot play with the big boys, you can certainly be a very smart little one.

The new type of asymmetric warfare ably demonstrated against the 'world's policeman' has worked twice in recent history; in Vietnam and Afghanistan.

Back to trade; it is claimed for creating the U.S navy. Following the war of independence U.S. traders wished to do good business in the Mediterranean, it being an easy sail across to the Straits of Gibraltar. Alas Algerian and Barbary pirates had further progressed and had the North African coast firmly in their grasp, capturing, enslaving crews and vessels, many ransomed, they got mega rich.

A reported 1.5 million European and Americans between 1600 - 1780 suffered this fate, ransom being a favourite. Eventually the U.S. patience at breaking point, the corps of U.S. marines was assembled and well trained enough to do a flanking campaign along North Africa. Landing in Egypt and marching inland so taking by surprise towns and ports who had, by tradition, been assaulted from seaward, expecting things to stay as usual. They demolished strongholds, burnt towns and harbours, released countless slaves. You will be familiar with the U.S. Marine Corps anthem **FROM THE HALLS OF MONTZUMA TO THE SHORES OF TRIPLOI**; that campaign is its origin.

Found one record of Barbary pirates in their hay day. They landed at Baltimore, a Southern Irish port and town, carried off to slavery in one solitary night the entire population. The pirate problem was exacerbated by R.N. Patrols of the time being severely restricted, following the independence war, responsibility being no longer important. Crippling demands of ransom paid by the U.S. became reason famous poets, both U.S. and British, wrote serious pieces. Common name of ransom was *Dane-geld*. A favourite of mine, Kipling, published this last verse on the subject:

It is wrong to put temptation in the path of any nation,  
For fear they should succumb and go astray;  
So when you are requested to pay up or be molested,  
You will find it better policy to say: --

"We never pay any-one Dane-geld,  
No matter how trifling the cost;  
For the end of that game is oppression and shame,  
And the nation that pays it is lost!"

I see a version of this being used by China on Taiwan today. Is there a President Jefferson in the White House preparing his corps of marines to do a flanker?

I also wonder if the 'freed from colonialism, independent Americans' thought there was any parallel between Barbary holding hundreds of Americans and Americans holding hundreds of African black slaves under conditions that could not have varied a great deal.

Still with the U.S navy; I saw a picture of part of a, recently found, sunken wooden vessel It was the remains of U.S.S. Bear which sank 260 miles off Boston U.S. in 1963. Why she sank is not reported. (In 1963, while in tow by the tug *Irving Birch* to Philadelphia, *Bear* foundered about 100 nautical miles (190 km; 120 mi) south of Cape Sable Island, Nova Scotia, at 42°40'N 065°11'W.



(She went down early in the morning of 19 March 1963 after a gale struck and severed the tow line. The mast collapsed and punctured the hull, causing the

sinking. Her crew of two were rescued by *Irving Birch-( Libby)*).

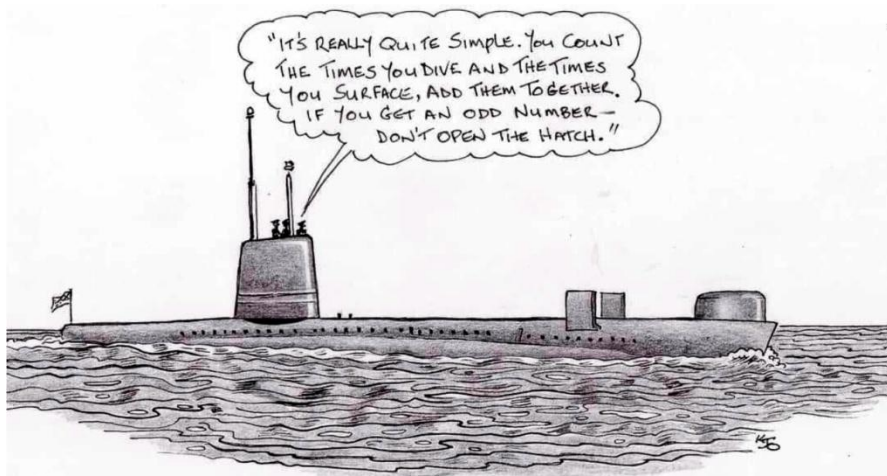
Built in Dundee in 1874 and purchased by the U.S. in 1884 especially to help in search for the Greely Arctic Expedition Bear ended up serving in the Alaska area for 40 years. She was that navy's first black captain and did the job for 9 years until 1895, son of a plantation owner and slave. U.S.S. Bear was not decommissioned until 1944 which has her serving through two world wars. 90 years has me wondering what price was paid those Scots for her. Whatever it was Uncle Sam really got value for money.

We homo sapiens certainly are a queer lot (old connotation). I watched the TV show that demonstrated the humble carrion crows ability to rapidly learn and make decisions based on that learning. I followed the general belief that all we had over the animal kingdom was the ability to reason. Now I feel the statement has 'qualifiers attached'. What degree of reasoning has one half of the world threatening the other with annihilation at a cost of trillions as large percentages of each camp go to bed hungry, cold, sick maybe, and homeless each night. School boy philosophy I guess, but I ponder, does Jim Crow have thought on eliminating half the world? if only we could communicate, maybe he could teach us a few basics.

I imagine rejoicing in large parts of the Royal Navy at the elevation of noble Lord Radakin from First Sea Lord to Chief of the General Staff is rather muted knowing the fatal result of his persistent desire to subordinate the Royal Marines to the limp wrist direction of his own naval command; naval rank, insignia being a small corner of his power grab. I tried to follow the noble lord's career highlights but ran out of places to look. His opponent to such vandalism of one of the nation's Elite Forces was major General Mathew Holmes, later promoted to Commandant General R.M. He developed a new concept of 'littoral strike' for the Commando Force. The tactic by Admiral Radakin was, in his own words to, 'kick him upstairs' to find a role in the 'dead legs repository of the M.O.D.', effectively removing him from close involvement with his Royal marines.

They were to be relegated to a more pliable, less senior officer, under the Noble Lord! Holmes' position as R.M. Supremo was dropped half way through his tenure by a reported email - vigorous defence of a national elite band, always in the thick of action was casting a shadow over the Noble Lord's lack-lustre performance. I would suspect he rode high on the back of his Masonic lodge, and don't snigger at that, there are pointers. In contrast the list of achievements of Major General Holmes on the way up is an eye opener, should you wish them itemised let our chairman know and I promise a list in my next news letter; it is not a figment of my imagination, a true warrior who led from out front.

I don't know but think the navy section that considers itself 'elite', - and rightly so - are the sea-going submariners; where they go and what they get up to remains a mystery to be revealed, perhaps many years later. I feel they will not be



fiddled with by any Noble Lord, at his peril. Even their association, locally, is a step different; personally I feel they earn their title, I hope they live long and give their detractors many sleepless nights. Elite portion of the surface fleet was Fleet Air Arm, following recovery from the bi-plane three crew R.A.F. who had trashed it.

Sadly politicians got a foot in the door, Lords and Admirals milled about like headless chickens whilst the R.A.F. did a power grab and again, took it back without a whimper several decades later, after their WW 2 sparkling era under young, go-getting air-minded direction. F.A.A. is now a laughing stock, even Putin thanked us publicly for provision of such nice targets.

Better call a halt lest the publication date is missed, if it's a load of ill-conceived crap, do let us know- you will still be loved.

To conclude, I wish all y'all a calm collected autumn, with no contact to Covid bug or even a runny nose to spoil your cravat.

Jo and Andy Brierley.



**REMEMBER - IF YOU'D LIKE TO COMMENT ON ANDY'S MUSINGS - DON'T BE SHY!**