

Hello Shipmates,

It was my vowed intention to attend Robin's service on the twentieth, come what may - threat of a 'hip joint, roll out', has precluded that as the chance of getting an ambulance back to Stanmore is, I am threatened, very remote. Having experienced such an event on two previous occasions would not wish it upon anyone. Of all people, I am certain Rob would not wish me the risk. Suffice it to say I will know exactly where he is, on that day and hour being very familiar with St Margaret's, just a few miles up the road from my home. It is a fitting place, Norman with a fine square keep and sparse interior, as traditional and old English, as could be said of Robin himself. That events should turn out this way is a fine example of Sod's Law; the best laid plans of mice and men!

I was in the habit of pushing my Navy News through his letter box when I had finished with it, but it is in my corner still - a funny turn cautioned me 'wait until the service is over' before letting it join the waste newspaper pile, thus sealing the fact he will Rest in Peace and be Not Forgotten.

I had a phone call from the King Charles saying my deposit for dinner was being returned. Told the lady to keep hold of it 'til May, but she was adamant. Since being intimated to me a lucrative period of room and board, with tax payer footing the bill, is in their offing as illegals continue to flood in by the hundreds per day, room and board being at a premium in this Kent area.

What a haunting mess the 'bug-out from Afghanistan' has proved to be. I saw on Jo's computer sufficient brand new equipment to fit out an army left behind by Uncle Sam. It mentioned their claim to 'Own the night' but that is no longer the case when the haul of night vision goggles was displayed by the Taliban.

Currently the Woke Brigade are doing their damndest to vilify Churchill - saw a small box in the paper on Sunday with the words he wrote in 1897 on military action in Afghanistan. **Financially it is ruinous. Morally it is wicked. Politically it is a blunder** - a piece signed by Lord Lexden in the House last week.

It seems pretty obvious our often supposed oldest ally in that region - Pakistan - was the pipeline for Taliban intelligence to know the West's intentions at all times. We delude ourselves about that nuclear-armed, Muslim republic; most despotic of States that still considers honour of spouse killing legal, not to be investigated. Should we forget who they buy their men-o-war from? Who has largest mission in country and conduct compatibility with their armed forces - China? Their enmity with China greatly aided by the constant friction on the common border. Yet we provide millions of pounds annually in aid to Pakistan.

It is of note the chaotic withdrawal of U.S. Forces is laid squarely at the feet of President Biden, as Commander-in-Chief. He is the person, we now learn, who dictates all decisions taken on carrier *Queen Elizabeth* (Her Majesty's ship) while his marine squadron is on board.

The R.A.F. also has a finger in that pie. Who do you understand is the Senior Service in military U.K. P.L.C? - and - when will someone put his sea boot down? Perhaps hazard his career but say "Fund us" or "Fire us"!

I can only say this is the, alleged, season 'of mellow fruitfulness'; it gave this old goat a good kicking; I do think that's about over with.

Looking for an upside it serves to let one count one's blessings, i.e. this morning I found a pound coin down the back of the sofa, won't tell Jo, she will swear she lost it a week ago, then accuse me of obvious slipshod attention to my domestic duties as a week had elapsed when it lay undisturbed. Wilum of Stratford had a name for it, 'the tyranny of wedlock'.

Whilst in dock my grandson came to visit, was made to jump through hoops and allocated a specific hour to be strictly observed; Stanmore hospitality, rightly paranoid about importing Covid, M.S.R.A etc, even after testing. For a chuckle, as he entered, I put the receptacle to my lips and told him, "This Rosé is a bit acidic". A weak pun but he twigged at once, it was a pee bottle, which the observant will have recognised; clean and empty at the time! He put his phone up for a picture.

The Rosé is a bit acidic today"



Great joy in Westminster, Boris has pushed some of his 'inner circle' off to other jobs in the nation's beating heart. That dirty word 'sacked' does not apply - it will be buggin's turn somewhere along the line.

One of immediate interest is Angus Lapsley, M.O.D. Director General, a really high office; he who left a bunch of sensitive documents at a bus stop in town. Not hard to notice as all are on pink paper marked 'Secret, U.K. eyes only'. Such papers circulate a very limited readership, also marked 'not to be taken out of building'. It would be hard to ignore so many blocks to circulation, all on A4 sheets, so not an easy handful.

Foreign agents no longer need to break into guarded offices, or cultivate a traitor in high places; just hang around bus stops in Whitehall and all will be delivered unto you!

The breath-taking kicker, should you not know already, is Angus is about to be made United Kingdom Ambassador to N.A.T.O.

Should you be near that gas pipe line from central Russia, across the Baltic Sea to central Germany, put your ear near it; shrieks of laughter from the Kremlin will be plain to hear. The Dutch P.M. in Downing Street wants a better deal with the U.K. over our N.A.T.O. role in

Europe. We are already a high spender in that lack lustre set up. I bet they want more cash.... Yup, they seek access to our air lift capacity. E.U. also wants a Rapid Reaction Force, independent of the U.S.A.; yes, seriously!

They are really hissed off at the U.S.A. and U.K. for not consulting the E.U. over the new alliance with Australia. I feel it is not the '28 states' we should have considered, but France. The relationship may seem fraught but we have droves of tie-ups with them that put the rest of Europe in the shade. Of course President Biden was the driving force behind that, for home consumption reasons. I recall he publically crapped on the U.K. meeting the I.R.A. delegation in the white House the previous week in the U.S.A. on a fund raising mission; that he has a record of always being Anti-Anglo from way back is no secret.

Life gets even more tangled on learning New Zealand is no longer a partner in 'intelligence sharing' between Oz, the U.K, Canada and the U.S.A. They declare a desire for closer ties with China, even to the point of banning Oz submarines in its territorial waters, on visits or exercises - I am floored by that, I could not envisage such events in my wildest dreams. Do you think they may eventually afford China docking facilities!?

The fall out twixt France and the U.S.A. has an even more ironic twist; senior French naval officers were in Washington for a gala event at their embassy; French naval Man o' War was in Baltimore. The gathering was to celebrate their country's part in the defeat of the British during the war of independence.

Then - France's lack of consultation in, what they called, an Anglo-Saxon deal caused their embassy gala to be abruptly cancelled; Paris ordered its vessel to sail home at once, all in a state of high dudgeon.

One could consider it funny, but the stakes are high; one expects diplomacy amongst friends to be paramount. The foregoing is hardly what one could expect from several nations' highest, most prestigious 'politicians'. Did that lot devolve rapidly into an unfathomable muddle? Do forgive me and put it down to the rosé sipped earlier.

A further reason we need close cooperation with our nearest neighbour is the nuclear electricity we purchase by the shed load. No doubt the cable fire of a couple of weeks ago came to your attention, with dire forecasts of looming electricity shortages.

To think Rutherford first split an atom at Oxford in thirty something, but our leaders dropped the ball, and are still fumbling about as a national treasure and expert in small reactors (subs and carriers) is on the verge of liquidation or insolvency. France flourishes on such small local reactor generators, steering well clear of the mega, over-priced-by billions, late delivery by years, monuments to inefficiency that appeals to the gray suits with access to our public purse. To think of China as a main contractor boggles my mind. I mentioned earlier who our N.A.T.O. ally are in thrall to for their gas and energy, a polluting fossil fuel; do you think Angie M does not still owe allegiance to Ivan in some way.

Must get this off to my editorial boss, don't wish to suffer stoppage of grog at next reunion.

Best regards to you all,