

Hello Shipmates,

Last month's moan about poor military statuary being produced of late, came back to kick me up the backside on seeing this month's Navy news. About three years ago, on the same theme, I recall putting an artist's impression in the news letter of proposed piece, to go in the centre of the dock, at what used to be *H.M.S. Vernon*, depicting clearance divers at work in Europe's harbours at the end-ish of WW2. Buster Crabb and his like.



I did not hear a peep in the intervening years, then - lol - The enclosed picture appears of a maquette, in prep for the finished article. Contributions have swelled enough for building to commence - a unique piece, unlike anything, anywhere else.

A 'Must View' should you visit Pompey.

Another piece, not far away, is a 'Field gunner with Wheel on Shoulder'. Such stuff is a joy to my watery eye, out of the ordinary and 'Pure British'.

Over the years several faces have become very familiar amongst the few shots inside 'infantry landing craft' on approach to the beach on D Day. I always wonder - did that chap survive ? Who was he ? Where was he from etc.?

About three years ago this letter, of high interest to me, appeared in the Mail. I never fail to say 'Rest in peace Billy Tibbs'. The expression on his face clearly shows tension, waiting for the ramp to drop. **(Please see cutting at the end of this article)**

I have a nephew in the Australian navy, a midshipman specialising in navigation, so that art is of interest, and another one touched on in a past news letter. At 1.30 a.m. a U.S. destroyer, *Fitzgerald*, collided with a container ship, damage severe, seven crewmen died. Nine weeks later *U.S.S. John McCain* collided with a tanker, ten crewmen died. Later in the year *U.S.S. Lake Chaplain* collided with a fishing vessel, damage and casualties unknown. The *U.S.S. Antietam* ran aground off Japan dumping 1100 gallons of hydraulic oil into Tokyo Bay. Alarm bells jangled at the Pentagon. An operational pause was ordered in the entire U.S. fleet, of 24 hours, allowing crews to review 'navigation and rule of road' operations aboard 277 vessels, plus a week long 'bow to stern' safety review of fundamentals. The 'three star' admiral in command of 7th fleet (Pacific) was sacked; Captain of the *Fitzgerald* likewise, plus his No.1 and navigator. Other Captains' fates must be similar.

Prior to 2003 U.S. N. officers spent the first six months solid on 'how to pilot a vessel', basic seamanship. Now reliance has quietly devolved onto 'technology'; each new officer is given a box set of 21 C.D.s for computer based instruction. Young middies (Ensigns U.S.) have no tutor to question, are expected to 'master seamanship', by laptop, between all his other duties.

Here is a 'true tale' of a young lieutenant U.S.N., who learned of his sloppy seamanship the hard way when on R.N. ship exchange for the usual two years. I quote him "Frankly, I was embarrassed at my lack of maritime knowledge and skills. My first 90 minute long, written, 'maritime rules of the road' exam was a disgrace. I was used to the U.S.N. 50 questions multiple answer choice exam. The 'Royal Navy' sent me for remedial training, which was gratefully absorbed and of 'infinite value!'"

R.N. officer navigation and seamanship schooling is rigorous, they must qualify for the International Maritime Organisation's 'Standard of Training Certificate and Watch Keeping'. The robust training being a far cry from 21 C.D.'s that a whole generation of, now advancing, U.S. Navy officers experienced.

Does it highlight 'Grey matter is more important than 'silicon'? People before technology, so to speak, to avoid such death toll, for want of proper training. One hopes that generations of officers are burning the midnight oil.

The first woman to hold the post of Secretary of State for Defence, Ms. Mordaunt, was quick to wear, on her lapel, 'Submarine Dolphins'. Thought only qualified nuke crews had that privilege and right. Have no problem with gender, and would be considered a chauvinist pig if I voiced the thought; she is 'mature crumpet'.

First speech revealed: "We have done a great deal to wipe out inefficiencies and Britain already has an incredible ship building heritage". I quote her further: "The aircraft carrier alliance shows Britain has what it takes to produce first class, fifth generation ships!" Ms. M's experience being nil, one can only assume her civil servants wrote such equestrian by-product.

To allay fears I am just a biased grumpy old fart.

Here is a performance recap.

U.K. 1998 Defence Review: pledge to deliver 32 destroyers and frigates + 2 assault ships.

Delivered: 2 assault ships, 6 destroyers and frigates (the infamous D's that don't work in warm waters)

U.K. 2010 Defence Review: pledge to deliver 2 aircraft carriers + 19 destroyers and frigates, 6 of which were to be type 45's + 13 type 26's'.

Delivered: 2 carriers. Type 26's reduced to 8, and then only 3 ordered.

U.K. 2015 Defence Review: pledge to deliver 8 type 26's, 5 type 31's, 2 O.P.V's, 4 Ballistic missile submarines.

Delivered: would you wager a lead washer on their completion?

Bear in mind the struggle to crew them, fill all fuel tanks or send to sea with a 'war load' in their magazines.

Two fleet auxiliaries built in Korea are heavily criticised by our politicians because not U.K. built - by whom one may ask? At what cost? In what time frame? **Rare as hen's teeth they were delivered in a tight time on budget, after sailing 13,000 miles from the builder to arrive fault free.**

Unlike our brand new carrier No. 1 who had prop failure on first outing with attendant flooding. The second recent outing brought it back to dock again with flooding that must have been no small ingress as bulkheads and deckhead are reported 'pressure deformed'. Poor workmanship, by the way, was cited for the prop failure.

It is reported she will go back to sea in the last quarter to embark a 'Strike Squadron' - that surprised you! - But wait - it will be sent to the U.S. coast to pick up those of the United States Marines. R.N. equipment to be supplied; plastic hats and life belts, cocaine may be optional.

To see the highly experienced Captain dismissed his ship is a national embarrassment round the world's navies. Then it was compounded by said Captain letting the Joint Chiefs know they could shove his naval career up their joint hawse pipe. I suspect there was not enough room for another 'fly on the wall' at M.O.D. when that reaction entered the fray. Be certain you'll not see his replacement nipping up to the Co-Op in Dunfermline in the company car.

Have been a life-long member of the R.N.L.I.; never failed to send a couple of quid, even when things were tight. Southern TV shows, on a regular basis, local Dover boat on patrol in mid channel picking up illegals. It makes me upset that another National Charity is being misused to aid Border Guard task, a government responsibility, to pick up boatloads of 'young men' with kids. Their entry has its own reception committee, a mini coach to Croydon for medicals, meals laid-on, accommodation, cash advance etc...

R.N.L.I. can start charging each illegal they pick up (not rescue) to fill the minor shortfall of my contribution. That sounds churlish really, but it makes me angry, being suckered, once again.

Guess I'll get over it.

Tatty bye the noo

Daily Mail

Billy, the face of D-Day

This being the 70th anniversary of the D-Day landings my Mum, now aged 93, has said that as there are so few people left who remember it first hand, this may be the last time it's described in great detail. Shortly after the landings, local cinemas across Britain showed clips on Pathé News, using a particular shot of a young soldier on a landing craft, at Sword Beach.

Over the years this clip has continued to be used and is, perhaps, the most used clip of the event. It features every day in the BBC's coverage of the run-up to the anniversary.

Mum has always wanted people to know the name of this young soldier (pictured). He is her brother, Private 5784588 1st Bn. the Royal Norfolk's, Arthur William (Billy) Tibbs.

The film and the still from it show commandos of No 4 Commando, 1st Special Service Brigade, aboard an LCI's landing craft on their approach to Queen Red beach, Sword Area on June 6th, 1944.

Billy survived that day but was killed by a sniper on August 4th in the Battle for Caen, nine days after his 21st birthday. He is buried in St Charles de Percy War Cemetery.

Mum told me that despite the strict control of information from the region the boys were allowed to send notes home confirming that they were OK. Messages from Billy came to an abrupt end, signalling the sad truth, and an injured colleague from the next village broke the news to the family about two weeks later.

James Gower, Huddenhams, Cambs

