

ANDY BRIERLEY'S BLOG

Greetings Shipmates, the Rosyth Windbreak set off on its journey to become Portsmouth Windbreak.

Very first day at sea a press release from M.O.D. Navy announced; The crew have named their vessel Big Betty. I made an urgent call for a sedative. M.O.D. P.R dept. have been sweating this out for several years, cool dudes have conferenced in five star hotels to 'brain storm', plastic expense cards have worn thin to achieve this target, box is now ticked.

Referendums are out of favour at present, but I would like to be a 'bulk head fly' and hear what 'the crew' really think. I feel someone tries to make the R.N. look ever more ridiculous. I also wonder which lickspittle insisted on ship's official name. Don't know a nation in the world that names its flag ship after their current head of State. It avoids embarrassment from all manner of incidents.

God forbid we ever go to war and precipitate a vicious competition to be first to sink her, despite monumental risk. A Russian commentator said, 'Thanks for the new large target' (cheeky bugger).

Was interesting to see the M.O.D. considers 'super carrier' a 'prototype design'. Viewing it alongside world current launchings I say it was obsolete, at best obsolescent! Advertised in service date of 2020 put alongside its conception date surely bears that out.

Perhaps you know of U.S. Senator John McCain, he has always been against the 'super carrier' programme (at \$ 13 billion a copy). He is not a hot air politician on this subject. In his previous life he enjoyed a room at the Hanoi Hilton for several years after being shot down when on a mission from a 'small carrier' during the Vietnam War.

I assume 'super carriers' are attractive to political 'bean counters' from the economy of scale point of view. To task force admiral, 'two or three for the price of one' when in harm's way must allow a degree of 'sphincter relaxation'. He has the Mariana's fight as an example.

Hundreds of planes flown by sons of Nippon with a chip on their shoulders, forced to divide their massive effort between four carriers was a classic counter measure with the desired pay back for U.S. commander. I read this week's newspaper report that Senator McCain has a 'large brain tumour'.

As a citizen who had paid his dues in full to his homeland we must all wish him well. It makes me smile to hear 'that navy' considers a small carrier like the old Midway class (currently preserved in San Diego). A current equivalent would be the new America class assault carriers that I harped on about in a previous rant. 40 - 50 thousand U.S. tons as opposed to 100,000 tons and still able to operate those ultimate carrier planes 'Super Hornets'. Another subject, in a previous article, was E.M.A.L.'s electric system for catapults on Super carrier new launch *Gerald Ford*.

The failure rate of system is cause for great concern, have wracked my feeble brain but cannot remember the exact figures quoted, something like 'one in many hundreds'. Old steam system is counted in multiple thousands.

It may seem like nit picking of new kit but bear in mind the cost of Hornet at millions of dollars, then add the magic ingredient 'the driver'. Failure to launch, at any number, is a chance too far.

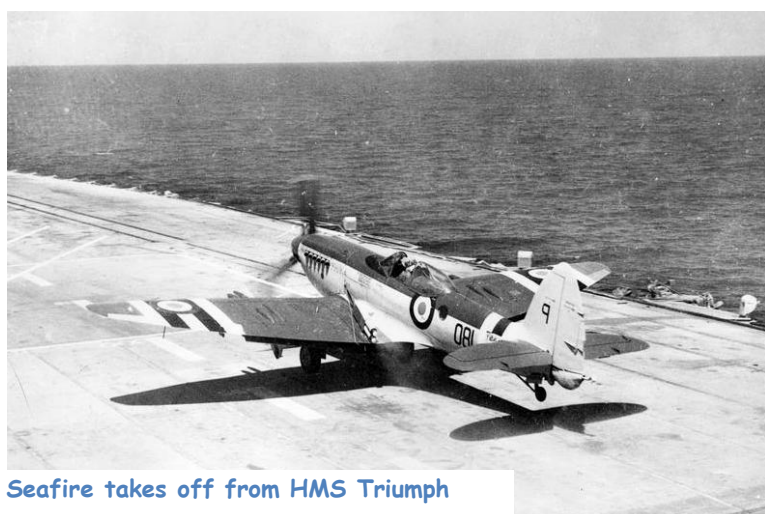


HMS Triumph entering Grand Harbour, Malta

To stop the use of a system whilst on trials is prudent. Knowing the contractors pedigree they will kick this problem to Hades and back to find the solution.

Early on I was a 'boy' on *Triumph*, one of two light carriers (11,000 tons) in the Med. Fleet, the other was *Ocean*. Following a day's flying the easy, no fuss end to a day's proceedings was to drop anchor in Marsaxlokk, Malta.

On one occasion a static catapult launch, anchored into the wind, was conducted. The shuttle stopped for some reason half way up the track. The aircraft rolled over the bow and sank. A diver located the pilot out of his seat but caught in his harness. This is the sort of accident that sickens one to contemplate. I cannot recall the aircraft type, but near certain was a *Seafire 14*. Somewhere there must be a record of such events.



Seafire takes off from HMS Triumph

A particularly theatrical catapult launch was made by *Triumph* in grand Harbour immediately following slipping our buoys - 8 and 8A right up to the top of the creek. Only buoys beyond us was Mountbatten's *Sheffield*; he was C.S.I.

The second *Seafire* was off as the breakwater was passed. To see this from the top of Barrakka Gardens lift must have been a jaw dropper.

Merlin engines with throttles at the gate at about 40 foot, noise enclosed by high buildings.

Again, I feel a photographic record must be tucked away somewhere; would love to see it!

'There you go', a brief trawl through my opinions and memories. You can wager your best pair of Harrods's pink "Y fronts".

Health and Safety executive would hold a mass Hari-kari if such a demonstration was mooted today - Navy flyers did that - not R.A.F !!

That's it folks. If you cannot catch a bird of paradise better a wet hen than nowt, or nuffin, as they say down here.

Tatty Bye, be joyful eh!

