

Hello Shipmates,

Reading through August's newsletter I was taken aback at the mention of sexual harassment in Ganges; had not heard those words before associated with that place. It lays emphasis on me, being a naive yokel, who forgot that in any bunch of Homo sapiens there is, invariably by nature, an aberration who looks like all the rest.

Could I suggest, apart from the deviant, another type who has authority?; would closer examination of your 'bits' in an undignified posture just to establish superiority and grind home what the 'pecking order' is, by humiliation, a psychological ploy for a different motive.

Whilst in that place myself, I never heard of an improper approach being made to anyone. I see, with hindsight, an adolescent straight from school, parachuted into that alien environment in that era, silenced by embarrassment - phew, that's a heavy homespun view. I confess looking back there with a degree of affection. Did not expect it to be easy, a couple of uncles had been through the system, one from each side of the family, pre-war, but it, equally, did not reach my definition of 'hard'.



Came across an N print from 35 mm film camera, three in fact, all of Shotley; how they survived this long is magic. The scene is one I mentioned in a newsletter not long ago.

Endless trot of redundant R.N. vessels laid up, several deep, awaiting 'the torch' on the river Stour; a couple of cutters at water's edge disgorged their compliment

of boys for swimming and frolic for the afternoon, unsupervised. Freedom was amazing, suppose 'health and safety' had yet to rear its head. The faces are etched in one's memory; no amount of brain squeezing can dredge up the names. Cannot help wondering; where did they go? What did they do? Are any still up and running?

Was very close to one real character, Roger Berry who joined from the Channel Isles, spent his youth there under German occupation, and would tell me tales from home, later all verified by a book published on the period. He was an absolute squib of a kid, reporting life as 'a major exercise in out-witting authority', with the constant rumble of hunger in the belly. When he drifts into my memory I see his finger nails, unlike any other, all chewed right back to the quicks; am told a sure sign of high strung nervous energy. Our Shipmate Brian Hill, a member of Ganges Association once tried a search for him, alas, without success.

A couple of years ago I was told 'the mast' is about to collapse from sheer neglect; anyone know if it's still standing? 'The Button' should be rescued, if Ganges bell resides in a naval collection

somewhere that 'Button' deserves a place alongside. It does not stretch the point much to suggest it saw as much to build the R.N. Story as *Victory* itself. Recently I saw a report on *Peking*, a.k.a. *Arethusa*, our one-time co-producer of Boy Seamen. I am at a loss, knowing its prominence locally, that no pictures appeared in the local press or TV of its journey back east across the Atlantic from Sea Port, New York to Germany on its 'piggy back heavy lift ship'. Funds for the restoration are from 'Public and Government'; work proceeds apace, high class workmanship is a priority over completion date.

Recently had a rant about Iran's 'plastic outboards' capturing tankers in Hormuz Straits with no appropriate response from the U.K. R.N. - like with like and 50 cal. in bows!

If reports are to be believed a far better tool is now available called Martlet, an ultra lightweight missile for use in multiple situations, initially for the upgrade helicopter. A man-portable tube-fired version suitable for small boats etc. rides a laser beam out to six kilometres, a measure superior to 30mm Phalanx A.A mounts. Not vigorous enough to fly off into the 'wide blue yonder', doing unplanned and unforeseen damage.

The warhead of 3 kgs. will execute any small scale task with splendid efficiency; its strong suit, plastic deniability. Oh dear, the matelot-marine in our bow slipped and inadvertently touched the trigger. He will be disciplined on return home (a weekend in Savoy, with spouse). The Napoleonic maxim 'Never fight unless 75% sure of success'; the 3 kg head on Martlet will see to that, the 25% left to chance can be passed to our ambassador, to earn his corn, talking a way out of the hit.



The sermon from all R.N. Holy Joes', delivered with lots of 'fire and brimstone', 'Let us go forth brethren and bite our tormentors in the arse'!

In the same report of above mentioned was a reference to a direct energy weapon having highly successful trials; further explanation was not offered, leaving one speculating what on earth it is. My understanding of *directed energy* is a laser beam.

Still on weaponry - we are informed type 23 frigates will donate their Sea Sceptre missile systems, the 4.5 main gun and Artisan radar, to new build type 31 frigates, when scrapped. Grand new names for the new builds are already chosen, honest!

Is that a cart before the horse situation? How many seminars, conferences and think tanks on Lake Geneva or Hotel Splendid in Miami did it take a plethora of Admirals to settle on a choice?

Meanwhile at M.O.D. the fixed price for type 31 frigates at £250 million a copy, is now abandoned and revised slightly upwards to £330 million. Time to sigh in resignation knowing the 'six pees' are a foreign concept in that place; sometimes it makes you wish Noah has missed the boat.

Am minded to write to the M.O.D. and suggest first class type 31 should follow naval tradition and be named after a flower - Second Hand Rose.



Tribute: The memorial sculpture

Here is a wee picture of that group being cast for centre piece of new Normandy monument. Do you think it worthy?

Keep the home fires burning.