



ANDY BRIERLEY'S BLOG

Hello Shipmates,

The much trumpeted (Integrated Defence & Security review) a step change promised by newly elected government with two classes of frigate about to start rolling off the slipways has come to nought, deferred for 1 year? Surprise! Surprise! Culprit is, of course, Covid; Covid 19. All things that fail to cut the mustard in 2020 is Covid's fault, reduced trains, ditto bus service, crucially my medical centre, even the mighty N.H.S..

Today's paper says their P.R. department works harder than the doctor population to keep their myth 'healthy'. I know it has many fans in the Association, how many examples are needed to dispel the delusion. To heap praise on abject failure is now the 'British Way'.

I was in a lane, in Berengave, a stone's throw from our chairman's door, last week; also my camera was not in the car to record this prime example of the 'British Way'. A Highway Maintenance van pulled up, a lady alighted, opened the back door, took out a plastic shopping bag - carrier bag. She carried it and its contents to the opposite lane and upended it into a hole. I could see it was cold-lay tarmac, which was then subject to a twenty second dance, to compact and smooth, level'ish. Honest truth. Sequel! I am certain in this very wet weather, hydraulic shock will evacuate the hole before twilight. Try a stab at costs, infrastructure, vehicle, operator, health & safety risk assessment and so on, ad nauseam.

I was tempted to travel to a north London destination of some importance, to me, some days ago. I researched road works, plus the congestion charge, plus vehicle emission charge, plus availability of parking, plus about four hours cost of that; one realizes the motorist is a cash cow to Metropolis mayor, Sadiq Khan. More cycle lanes are being rushed in. The result; motoring chaos; you can only be Mr Mayor's enemy. Why any tourist would contemplate a visit to our capital, also known as 'rip off Londonistan', must have deep pockets.

Check this on your electronics, (T.F.L.). The Transport for London employs 500 bodies on over £100,000 per annum. A recently retired T.F.L. chief earned £508,301 - last year his department faces bankruptcy - but paid himself £133,586 bonus, that's £641,887 - before the pension and employment package. How we have the gall to call Venezuela corrupt, while public servants gorge on the teat of tax payers cash to that extent.

Action for Today - shun the Metropolis, visit, instead, the village of Lesser Snot Fester for a red carpet welcome, parking free, first glass of swill on the Mayoress - book early, there's going to be a rush. (Now! Prepare to tack)



Another P.R. Department, as expected, gave Battle of Britain day their full attention again this year, saving us from a Nazi beach landing.

I take nothing from the R.A.F. for execution of their campaign against Herman the German, or the semi-trained boys who 'flew for their lives', and ours. But it is fanciful to keep claiming 'fighter command' was all that prevented the realm from being occupied; grossly inaccurate in fact. Fleet Air Arm battles, off Norway, set the seal for that.

**IT WAS A DISASTER FOR THE KRIEGSMARINE GNEISENAU
TORPEDOED BY SUBMARINE CLYDE, JUNE 20TH;
SCHARNHORST BY DESTROYER ACASTA, JUNE 8TH 1940.
NEITHER WAS REPAIRED IN TIME FOR ANY CHANNEL ADVENTURES DURING THE
BATTLE OF BRITAIN.**

Royal Navy assets in home waters; approximately 50 -- 'five oh' destroyers plus several cruisers between Plymouth and the Thames Estuary. They would find several hundred modified motor barges from France their very own turkey shoot. The German navy never regained a surface punch following the R.N. destroyer fights in fjords at that time - That is beyond dispute. Add to that the R.N. once again, rescued British and French troops from mainland Norway, minus Air Force cover.

There was not a lot at Dieppe. In Crete the R.N. did it again with absolutely zero air cover, at monstrous cost in destroyers and sailors. Do not forget the R.N. was also involved in its biggest and longest fight at this time; the Battle of the Atlantic, ongoing every single day of the war. It was conducted minus R.A.F. support for the first three years. The Royal Navy never abandoned our soldiers when in need. Admiral Cunningham, when questioned about the cost of Crete replied: 'It takes two years to build a destroyer; it takes two hundred years to build a tradition'



Where are his sort up at M.O.D. today, banging the R.N. drum?

The R.A.F. had a 'strategic purpose' at that time, to quote Air Marshal Harris: 'To let Germany reap the whirlwind'. From the evidence he did just that, very well.

I feel from that time the R.A.F. 'strategic purpose' is a limp wrist, to my untutored mind. The R.A.F. during the Libyan debacle with operating space hired from Italian civil airfield, tanking out to Libya seemed absurd in the knowledge P.M.

Cameron had just sold all the superb F.A.A. assets for scrap value to the U.S. Marines (still to this day front line planes for them) on U.S.S. America. What an accolade for that private venture by De Havilland and Rolls Royce. The *Sea King* sea harrier heavier-than-air-



machine extraordinary. It burnished the reputation of our proper Air Arm in its Falkland swan song.

The R.A.F's strategic purpose in that war was attempt to 'grandstand' with use of fifteen tankers to get one bomber from Ascension to Stanley to get one dumb bomb on its runway, then a fault forced it to land in Chile.

Cannot help feeling the cost of that one bomb tanked so far would have paid for the *Shar*, sold by Cameron. I see in my mind's eye that evocative aerial picture of them



lined up at Davis Monthan air base in Tucson, a few minutes car ride incidentally from my late brother's home, my mentor and role model ... A few minutes the other way he was killed at work in the copper mine. I apologise for giving him a mention, but we were in the location.

Now the treasury has denied the Queen's Navee its rightful ships, we may as well get Mayor Khan of London to make overtures to the mayor of Magnitogorsk with a view of twinning their cities. An opportunity to kill two birds with one stone here, while furlough money is rolling off our presses, backed by nothing but fresh hot air, we could run off a few million roubles; Vodka money don't you know.

Do not take my rants about the R.A.F. out of context; I am a fan in parts. On the 50th



anniversary of the Battle of Britain a very detailed specially bound, limited edition book of the air war was compiled. H.M.Q. got a copy as did the P.M plus a mere handful of notables. Each paragraph was headed by a lovely silhouette relevant to that event. In an aircraft magazine a few of these were shown, one in particular took my fancy, so I copied it up to a size or two. I transferred it to a sheet of 1/8" brass plate, drilled and filed to make end result as shown in photo.

A plane person will recognise the Hurricane and pilot in his 40's kit, he's told the wind in my back garden those past 20 odd years; perhaps another manifestation of the Steptoe in my soul.

Still with R.A.F. I learn from a TV biography on Barnes Wallace, the bouncing bomb was a pure naval requirement-programme, pooh-poohed by R.A.F. for first years of research and development funded out of the R.N budget, as a grand waste of bomber time. After Taranto the R.N. could see its potential for rolling its way into busy harbours.



I was in the large Tesco hereabouts to peruse the Christmas card section. In just two years the 'equality works' have had the first part of that title removed from the shelves. I am not a 'bible thumping zealot' by a mile but, as an Anglo-Saxon Englander who ever ticked the Christian box when a questionnaire asked that multi-answer question, I am grossly

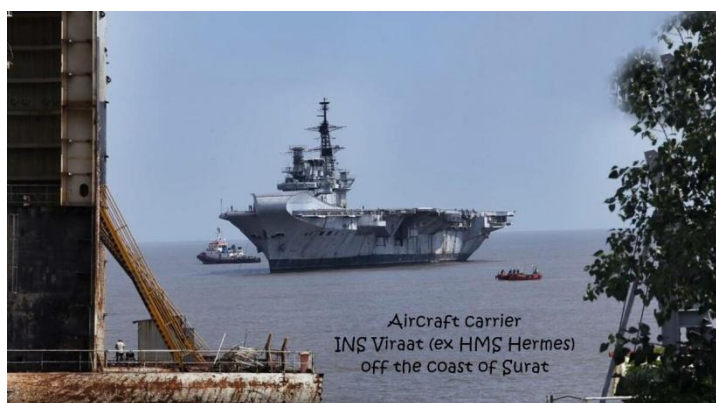
embarrassed by what a gutless crew are now in charge of our direction when that simple basic tradition can be eradicated in approximately twenty-four months.

There is rejoicing in the base of Anglican Church goers, that Archbishop Welby has taken a three month Sabbatical. He abdicated his duties over what is the cornerstone of Christianity; that duty was to me and mine. This head of the Church of England will still be able to pick up his three hundred quid a day cash from the House of Lords. I imagine him flouncing in, in his highly embroidered ankle-length frock to sit on his front bench dictating my life's direction. That is a tradition I expect him to hang onto with clenched teeth.

Thrown a bit last week to read *God had, in fact, died*; all newsprint headlines in large black letters reported it. Several referred to the body as a Saint. The general public consider train spotters, say, a very weird set of anoraks; or airplanes enthusiasts who haunt every chain link fence round any runway with their cameras and notebooks. The first group mentioned, who lost their *God/Saint* are the ultimate freaks whose grasp of reality so often leave one amazed. The object of adoration, operated in what they call 'the beautiful game'. Beauty is, indeed, in the eye of the beholder, but this had me fooled - perhaps an easy exercise.....

I struggle to name another pastime - sport - so unsportsmanlike, with sly attempts to break ankles prevalent; feigned sleights (fouls) with writhing on the ground, attempting to gain an unfair advantage. Constant triumphalism, yucky to observe in a culture where the winner I was taught was magnanimous. Crowds who attend will fight a team from the next town with all possible venom that can be mustered. Recall the Monty Python sketch, *Gob of the Month*, glitterati of the game clearing throats to pollute the pitch with their discards on full TV coverage. Cash flows into turnstiles like the Amazon's output; graft and corruption as ever its close companion. Have I failed to mention the *God* in question is a small portly South American, Argentinean; drug-addled, in need of a brace of working girls every few days. All openly reported; a saintly role model indeed.

Relax Shipmates, it's only my musing. Please, no bomb threats from footie pundits, accept my humble apologies, I did not set out to offend as I do recognise it to be a recognised religion, paramount to all other things.



Aircraft Carrier
INS Viraat (ex HMS Hermes)
off the coast of Surat

It is now cut and dried, dear old *Hermes* then *Viraat*, Indian Navy has failed to attract a preservation scheme in either nation. Her life of fifty-five years embraces her spell as Falkland's Flag Ship, peak of her warship life. She is upon the beach at Alang in the province of Gujarat, India right now; no doubt the torch has made enormous inroads. Four

↑ million Stirling was paid by the Shipbreakers Trade Organisation. For two sovereign states to get such character use and pedigree from a 1944 build Centaur class light flat top has been real value for money surely. I just revel in the fact a Private Venture aircraft, propeller less, capable of vertical flight was conceived and built in Britain. Provided the ultimate in strike planes for both states when the merde hit the fan, and vessel was in her

dotage. That would have been pure science fiction in 1944. Here is a lovely tail piece; she was laid down as HMS Elephant; had a ship of that name ever graced the fleet in history?

Sad to see, as Brexit meanders towards a conclusion, it could be acrimonious; who in their right mind would ask a politician to settle such thorny questions? They are, after all, our N.A.T.O. ally, cannot think of stronger glue than that to stay friends, with Mr. Putin just up the road. An E.U. threat to cut off - top up access to European gas pipe lines and electricity if their negotiators fail to get 'what they want' is extreme and vicious to my mind. I feel the situation can be laid at our own door when Rolls Royce has begged for business these many years for their small nuclear reactors. Self-sufficiency and an easy goal over the years, wasted by braying, unemployable fraudsters at Westminster. Last fortnight's revelation on size of that fraud, by members and informed cronies, swamp rational thought.

Another ramble through my grey matter with the thought 'enough is enough', for any old piece of stuff so feel I should now go and stand on the naughty step for vilifying my peers; they are brass-necked so will make no difference.

I do hope Christmas was a relaxing family time for y'all, and ready for the fray in twenty-one.

Fare thee all well,

Keep wearing the muzzle.

