H.M.S. SUPERB (CRUISER) ASSOCIATION

A MAGAZINE FOR THE MEMBERSHIP

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CHAIRMAN OF THE ASSOCIATION, ROBIN SMITH

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Superb - Defending Britain Since 1710

ANDY BRIERLEY'S BLOG

Ay Oop Shipmates,

It would be correct to say I have no right to nitpick the content of Navy News. It comes to me free, gratis and second hand, from my brother then, later, may get pushed through Robin's letter box.

Recent issues have increasing space devoted to (L.G.B.T.Q+). I found exactly what that acronym stands for in the monthly magazine, British Legion, who have a dedicated staff lady handling that department; it's quite a mouthful (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, plus).

Back to Navy news; it had an approximately 6" by 6" article on a recent Pride March, plus a further full page on aspects of that persuasion of very (to me) complex grouping – complexity of which, if you are a 'people handler', 'manning' or 'welfare person' grows by the day.

In very recent history the fact of female crew members on submarines – or not – hinged simply on loos; resolved, again simply, by an expensive reallocation of space to allow fitting – back-in and sit – as opposed to –shuffle-in and face – loos.

Current reports on demands by transgenders, of which I read, there are 'eight sub-species' with specific rights by legislation, have blown that all out of the porthole.

To me, purely on the shipboard aspect of all this, a major radical cultural revolution is taking place in the space available; hot air and cash being expended on it over-shadows a paramount need to be prepared to do violence to the Queen's enemies.

It comes to a pretty pass when a U.S. Mideast ambassador has to tell H.M. government, it's up to you to look after your own merchant marine, not to rely on U.S.N. vessels that may be in the area.

The mentioned 'cultural revolution' in 'tween decks brought about that pernicious contrary SEX and its impingement on ship board life can get admirals dismissed from the Service for smiling at their captain (a lady) with an off-the-cuff remark about their situation or surroundings, or some other innocuous thing, never mind a covert cuddle or illicit interlude.

My fertile imagination sees a new boy joining his ship being issued with his watch card detailing Port or Starboard, Fo'csle or Quarter deck, First or Second Part of – which part of the loo arrangements you are assigned to and when it's your watch's turn to wear the knickers. A dash of rouge may be worn on 'make or mend' days. Lipstick for chiefs and P.O's only.

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Ball gowns on Wednesdays in the wardroom. Wednesday was, of course, traditional 'make

and mend' day.

If the historic pipe for such a break was made today i.e. (hands to dance the skylark), lord knows what would ensue; can envisage a replay of Caligula's bacchanalian feast.

Be assured I am not homophobic, just enjoying the diversity gradually developing in the new world of 2020.

Acknowledging that nothing ever stays the same I would mourn the restrictions to mooch about, visit another mess etc. at the day's end, free to speak on any subject with no rancour intended, unsegregated! Maybe I missread the reason for construction of those two 'white elephants' recently departed Dockyard Rosyth are cutting edge vessels to accommodate a host of bathrooms for a dozen categories of sexual orientation; ample space is available. Their 'alleged' carrier planes reside at R.A.F. Marham, flown by R.A.F. squadron leaders. Great rejoicing took place last week at end of Portsmouth special mega dredge – elephant #2 was tugged in tied up ahead of elephant# 1.

Be not surprised if upcoming defence review (budget chop) closes Pompey barracks and all move into the elephants, again room enough to absorb them; savings on barrack gas bill will enable a trip just out to Spithead for next review of vessels in various state of 'moth balling'. Am I over sceptical, fearing for the nation's assets?

Half a dozen miles down the road in the ancient parish of Faversham the council fathers have safe keeping of a 700 year old copy of the Magna Carta – on velum of course -. It's up for sale; local paper says it's up for sale 'outside the U.K.'

Can you imagine Washington selling a copy of their 'constitution'; it's less than half the age, or President Putin cashing a copy of Peter the Great's little black book, courting comely crumpet in Crimea?

How can we allow another high tech group Cobham, recipient of substantial government cash, be sold to a U.S. asset stripper? Bluntly, it's your and my tax cash going into Pentagon coffers; any R & D or patents belong to them, income so earned becomes theirs.

Specktral Edge, GKN, Apple and GE, all high tech, gone to asset strippers; same background of nuture on your tax pounds.

Theory is, we are once again, an 'island trading nation'; what will we trade with our bright stars gone – plus the jobs? Remember Commonwealth Preference, where we traded high quality goods with them without the 'rip off'. Vast amounts of meat, unpolluted by drugs and antibiotics, 'cut off' by order at a stroke when our 'statesmen' make us a 'vassal state' –that's one who pays taxes to a foreign government E.C.

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I do use the 'statesmen' word loosely and believe the 'intellectual property' of those firms belongs to us, lock, stock and barrel, to be passed to apprentices from our families.

Oh lor! You say, he has got his knickers in a twist today.

My progeny, and yours, passed an impoverished hand to embark on life's journey.

Do you feel embarrassed at our airport customs U.K., seeing Canadians, Aussies, New Zealanders line up in the 'foreign' section? In your life time they fed us, risked the dreaded U-boats getting here, and died, a large proportion of the 55000 air crew.

Bit of a jerk around but a last word on Pompey Barracks; 14 Admirals have employ therein and at Whale Island. What do they do in a navy paying off frigates and destroyers to get sufficient bodies to man those plane-less carriers? M.O.D. has 32 Admirals on the books, I suspect Prince Andrew was scheduled to join their ranks ere long, now on hold I gather.

I would like them lined up with a C.V. of achievements, plus salary and expenses.

An article seen recently numbers 107 Canadian vessels on the French shore for 'Overlord'. Looking up Canadian casualties on their designated beach Juno on that day records 961 – shame on us.

It wearies one to see/hear the labour peer Lord West, full title, of Spithead, bang on about the lack of frigates to meet current commitments, while the Super Carriers (misnomer) soak up man power and cash. He, the very person of power, still in the R.N., a sea lord of obscure merit, scratched the backs of Blair and Brown, along with other ticket punching admirals when political decision was sought to get jobs into Rosyth, Mr. Brown's constituency.

Jobs to polish those M.P's C.V's was the only consideration, not the national need. The 'Noble Lord of Spithead' was on the Westminster scene when Cameron and Clegg, of the shared government, totally axed our Maritime Patrol Squadrons. Millions invested in their enhancement upgrades, simply flushed down the tax payers' drain.

Those planes were named Nimrod, a biblical name that really suited their purpose and ability, frequent winners of NATO & Pacific anti-submarine competitions, with time on station near double the opposition.

Here's the biblical passage: 'In the eyes of the Lord, Nimrod, was a mighty hunter'. Such lyrical prose has got to be from that translator William Tyndale; a northern lad hunted down and burnt at the stake for making the book readable by plough boys, in English, not Latin.

I digressed there; my hands are up in surrender!

Please, before I shut up, allow me a thumbnail sketch of Poseidon, purchased from Boeing, a version of civilian 737/800, cost will scare you, to fill the 10 year M.P.A. gap. They will enter service incompatible with R.A.F 'brand new' Voyager airbus tankers. We will have to purchase and maintain. U.S. origin MK54 torpedoes, ditto sono buoys, ditto anti-ship missiles, all radically different from R.N. Brit fit on our ship-borne helicopters.

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How efficient, or economic, is that to R.N. budget, as ever you are paying Shipmates.

If same purchase team bought your underpants, they would have no flies and your shoes would squelch as you walk; keep a change of socks handy.

Be happy,

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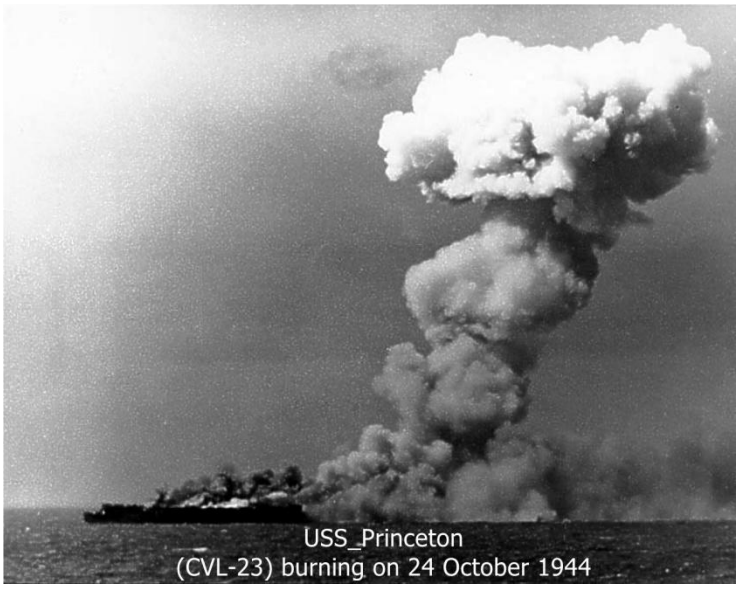
Ray Lambert's words of wisdom

My family keeps laughing at me because they think I'm bombed out.
I keep laughing at them because they don't know it's hereditary.

My memory is getting so bad that
I can't remember if I've forgotten anything!

NAVY MATTERS

The Largest Naval Battle EVER

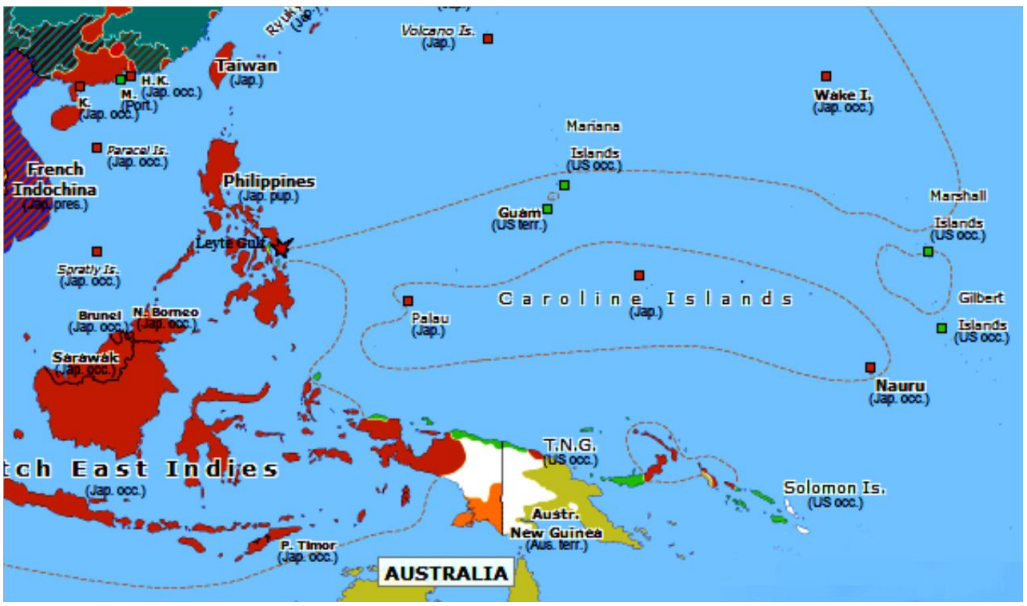


USS_Princeton
(CVL-23) burning on 24 October 1944

As epic naval stories go, they don't get any bigger, louder or more objectively awesome than the Battle of Leyte Gulf - the Biggest Naval Battle in History. EVER.

Also known as the Second Battle of the Philippine Sea (October 1944), Leyte Gulf was essentially four different engagements carried out over the course of three days, and resulted in the final, decisive crippling of the remainder of Japan's fleet. To be fair to Japan, its fleet was already whittled down to a quarter of its former size by this point in the war. They brought 67 ships to the American and Australians' 300 ships. These included their last remaining fleet carrier, three light carriers, nine battleships, 14 heavy cruisers, and over 35 destroyers.

Among them, the Allies sunk all of the carriers, three battleships, 10 cruisers, and 11 destroyers. That's a lot of numbers, but here's what it comes down to: a whole lot of stuff exploding, shooting, burning, and firing the biggest artillery rounds ever. This battle was notable as being the first use of Kamikaze attacks in the war, which says something of Japan's desperation. True, Leyte Gulf was a bit one-sided, and you almost want to cheer for the Japanese underdogs. But by Japanese standards, if you're going to lose, this is at least the way to go out: with an epic, apocalyptic battle to the very last man.



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Shipmate Andy Brierley recently wrote to me on our visit to Montego Bay in Jamaica way back when and this prompted me to reminisce on that trip. Distance, in time as well as space, tends to lend enchantment to the view. But, I thought, what were my real experiences like? Was it special?

Yeah but, "It weren't nothing to write home about "so I didn't.

It's a known thing that you can never recapture good experiences by visiting the same places years down the line. They just don't measure-up to that first memory.

We were celebrating our 60th wedding anniversary so I had in my head to take Janet to somewhere different, somewhere I remembered with fondness,

Firstly the hotel was so big it had to be split into three.

The pillars supporting the grand entrance were a good 50ft high, of course everything was top class and the staff were friendly ,but I'm sorry, these hotels have the same appeal to me as those bloody great Cruise Liners ,

There were trips to be had but observing the security that was in place and, considering our age, I thought it prudent to spend time down the beach rather than dodging lead in Kingston Town.

Things don't seemed to have changed much from when we were there last in '54, on our coach from the Airport the housing looked pretty tatty and the jungle looked about ready to close in if one of the locals turned their back .

One's view of a holiday can always be completely opposite from another's view so we shall just have to keep on looking.

At our age now it costs as much for the Insurance as it does for the holiday.

John & Janet Ward

NOZZERS GO WEST

Part 8

A week or so stay off Portland Bill and then they upped anchor and pointed the ship's bows in the direction of the West Indies

A shout went up and everyone on the upper deck raced for a vantage point, either on the fo'csle or B gun deck, all straining for a sight of his first foreign landfall of the new commission.

Ginger was heading up a ladder at the back of the bridge when the excitement erupted. He had not been able to learn much from the shouts that had died away almost as quickly as they had appeared but, with all work at a standstill and everyone rushing forward, he guessed that whatever it was must be in front of them.

He made his way swiftly around the bridge structure to the deck that brought him out alongside B turret. There were several others there already and, as they were reluctant to move, he couldn't see what it was that was holding their attention. There appeared to be nothing out there, nothing that he could see anyway and even standing on the bottom guardrail for a better look didn't improve his line of sight. They were all straining their eyes hoping to catch sight of something. It must be something out of the ordinary whatever it was, he surmised. Surely a submarine or even a whale wouldn't cause such a furore.

Curiosity had got a firm grip on him by this time and throwing caution to the wind, he retraced his steps and climbed the ladder that led up to the bridge, hoping for a better vantage point higher up. His natural survival instincts were at full power warning him to proceed with caution as he was heading for foreign territory, and one that was inhabited by officers, but those instincts were overridden by his desire to learn what it was that had grabbed and held everybody's attention.

More and more people were coming out onto the upper deck all the time so something was definitely afoot. The few that were on the bridge paid him no attention; their eyes were fixed firmly ahead, most of them with binoculars or telescopes. Ginger got a foothold on a vertical ladder to his right that was attached to the side of the gunnery director, to give him a bit more height so as to be able to see over their heads. He scanned the sea in front, looking for the object that everyone else seemed to be looking at. There appeared to be nothing unusual until his eyes picked out three little black dots way out on the horizon.

'Bermuda, lad,' said an old sage from behind him. He must have followed Ginger up the bridge ladder. 'That's your first sight of Bermuda,' he continued. 'Those three hills become visible long before you can see the rest of the island'.

The Three Graces, Bermuda
(looking west)

So, they had crossed the Atlantic and this was their first landfall on the other side of the world. It should have been an historic moment. In fact, it was an historic moment although Ginger failed to grasp the significance. They'd had an event-filled voyage and it had taken them eight days. Eight days of work-ups, eight days of testing, re-testing and very often testing yet again. Eight days of hard work and those eight days had taken the shine off his historic moment. He was glad to know they were almost there but his happiness was for the wrong reasons; he was looking forward to tying up alongside and having the ship keep still for a while. In any case, before joining the ship, he had never heard of Bermuda.

There had been a few moments to lighten their darkness. One was at the very first morning's divisions to start the day, when a young national serviceman strode proudly out to take his place wearing sandals. Everybody looked at him but he failed to see what was wrong. He explained that as he had been issued with sandals, he thought he would wear them. The Buffer shook his head in disbelief and, smiling, explained about rig-of-the-day and tropical rig, which was yet to come, before sending him on his way to change.

It was early days and as Ginger had been hidden away down below in the flour store for the majority of the time, he had had no dealings with the Buffer. But that soon changed now that he was working part-of-ship and he was about to learn that the Buffer was not the kind smiling man they had witnessed at divisions at all, but a man that had a definite down on boys. There was no telling if he had been an instructor at Ganges, although all the signs pointed in that direction. Where boys were concerned he was a loud obnoxious bully.

Ginger's encounter with him also involved a pair of shoes. Prior to leaving Pembroke barracks the word had got around that the stores slop-room had some new shoes in and they were going quite cheap. That word 'cheap' got his attention and he raced down to see for himself. They turned out to be nice black shoes but instead of laces, they had a strap over and a buckle on the outer edge. As everything in the navy had to have a name, and possibly a number as well if truth were known, they were called deck slippers and, as they cost less than a pound, Ginger bought a pair. Then, just like the national serviceman before him, his first trip out on deck with them on he ran into the Buffer'. But this time there was no smiling kindness; the man had a screaming rage and confiscated the new shoes on the spot. He was not prepared to listen to any

kind of argument from a mere boy and the fact that they were naval issue and bought from the naval stores made no difference whatsoever. Ginger suggested that Pembroke was sent a signal asking for confirmation as he was in the right. But to no avail, those shoes were never seen again.

In fairness things were not all bad. As boys they had not had to keep any night watches and that was good, but to some extent the boys mess having to turn out half an hour before reveille to scrub the wooden quarterdeck, cancelled out that good fortune. But even that was not all doom and gloom because, after a few days at sea the weather changed. It was as if someone had turned a heater on and one morning they awoke to a complete change of climate and, from then on it was tropical rig. That made the early morning scrubbing a far more pleasant job. They had been obliged to scrub the deck with freezing cold water from a fire hose and in bare feet but now, with the water and the climate becoming a whole lot warmer and them all in shorts; it had become almost a pleasure ….. apart from the 0550 starts.

Perhaps the first indication they were heading into tropical waters was when they were met by a school of flying fish, or at least when they sailed in among them. Although, being boys, they wouldn't have been privy to information as to where they were exactly; it was when there were still two or three days to go before reaching their destination.

Ray Leeward, the OHMS Law guru from their *Ganges* days, was working on the quarterdeck and watching the flying fish perform when two of them took a detour and smacked themselves into the side of the after six-inch turret and lay floundering on the wooden deck. Ray, who didn't want any trouble for having a mess on the deck that he had been charged with keeping clean, promptly chucked them overboard hoping no-one had seen the incident. Unfortunately for him he was seen, and he received a fearsome dressing-down for not following naval tradition that states the first flying fish found on board should be taken to the Captain, who had them cooked for his next morning breakfast. Single handedly Ray had scuppered the Captain's gourmet meal.

HMS Superb
Entering Ireland Island Bermuda
16 October, 1954

Whenever possible Ginger kept an eye on those black dots as they grew bigger and bigger throughout the remainder of the day. They drew closer and closer until the pipe went up: 'Hands fall in for entering harbour' and soon after they nosed through the breakwater and nestled gently alongside the wall of *HMS Malabar*, the RN dockyard, amid shouts of 'Get your knees brown' from the deeply suntanned members of *HMS Sheffield*, the ship they had come to relieve.

Sheffield was already alongside the wall and *Superb* slid in ahead of her. The boys had a front row seat for the proceedings because they were all lined up in their whites, for entering harbour. At least they were good for something other than early morning scrubbing; they made

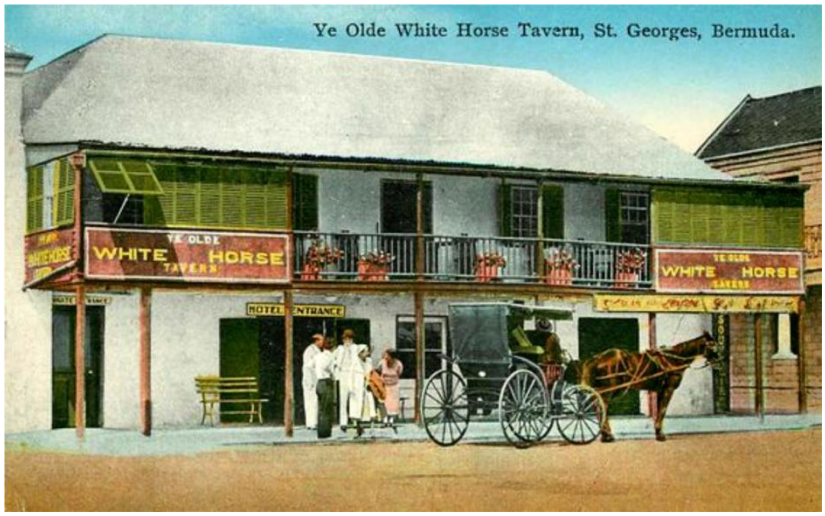
decoration for entering harbour and it crossed Ginger's mind that this was likely to become a major role for them as time progressed and they entered and left various harbours all over that part of the world for the next twelve months.

A hail of potatoes from the *Sheffield* punctuated by taunts of 'Get yer knees brown' and 'Whitey from Blighty' as they manoeuvred alongside. The ship's company that were handling the hawsers for berthing returned the good natured banter but the boys, who were new to this game, stood stoically at their positions praying that the potato throwers were not very good.

Soon the call came to secure from entering harbour stations, but if they thought that was the end of their involvement for the day, they were sadly mistaken. Pots of paint appeared as if summoned by some unspoken command and, having changed at breakneck speed, they found that those paint pots and brushes were earmarked '*Boys – for the use of*'.

This, apparently, was the pattern of things to come. Every time they entered harbour, or sometimes even on the way in, they were told it would become routine to give everything a coat of paint. No wonder navy ships always looked spick and span. Now they had firsthand knowledge of why they always looked that way.

TO BE CONTINUED



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BACK IN 1956 Part 2

UMM SAID

After Bahreïn, the ship spent two days at Umm Said. At first it looked as if the Navigating Officer had lost his way and that the ship had anchored off a desolate and barren part of the Arabian Desert. But, on closer examination, one or two buildings could be discerned amongst the sand dunes - and Umm Said turned out to be a little more than that!

Invitations were extended to the ship's Company to visit the local oil filed at Dukhan. The first party found it a bit of a shock to discover that 'local' meant 75 miles distance. The bus was reasonably comfortable however, and the road, made by crude oil being poured onto the sand, not too bad. On arrival, the oil company provided some very welcome chilled beer and a substantial lunch. The party was conducted round by a former Chatham G. I. who was delighted to meet some of his old cronies again.

Whilst at Umm Said, the Captain called on the Ruler, and with several officers, stayed for lunch. We learned that one of the Ruler's private yachts anchored off his palace had recently been presented by King Ibn Saud, this kindness having been reciprocated by a gift of 52 Cadillacs !

DUBAI

On arrival at Dubai a Royal Marine platoon was landed to exercise with the Trucail Oman Scouts in the desert. After an energetic day it was apparent the scouts knew their ground and tactics too well, but this was good experience.

In the forenoon the Rulers of Dubai and Sharjah came off to the ship in the ceremonial dhow to call on the Captain, each being accorded a five-gun salute. In the afternoon 85 of the local Arabs were invited off to see the ship and have tea on the quarterdeck. The visitors included a number of 'subversives' whom we were asked to 'impress'. Arrangements were therefore made to fire demonstration rounds from four-inch Bofors and pom-poms. It is understood that they returned ashore considerably impressed, particularly by the pom-poms and we hope there will be no disturbances from Dubai at least!

KUWAIT

The next port of call was Kuwait, one of the largest and most important oil centres in the Gulf. The channel is not deep enough for ships as large as the *Superb* so we had to anchor 4 miles from the nearest jetty. This resulted in long (and very wet) boat trips ashore.

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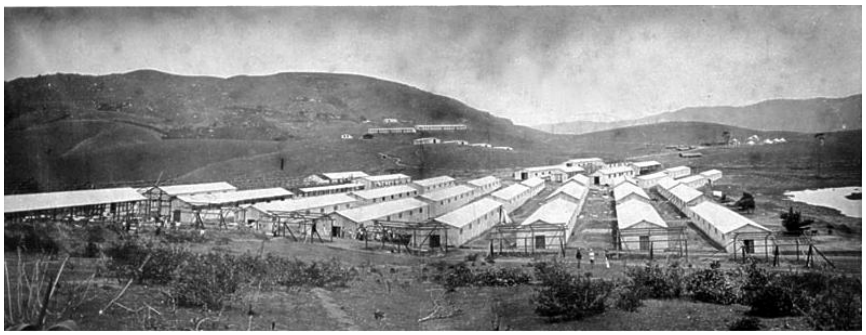
Strong winds blew the whole time during the stay in Kuwait, considerably curtailing sports and shore-going activities. Boat running was extremely difficult, so much so that when the pinnace was returning one evening it shipped so much water that liberty men, by now knee deep, were bailing out with their caps. When the boat was almost in a sinking condition, it retuned inshore for the night. In those conditions only five of the 200 guests were able to come off for the Wardroom cocktail party in the, which had been arranged on the quarterdeck. Needless to say, they were more adequately looked after by the 50 officers!

BAHREIN

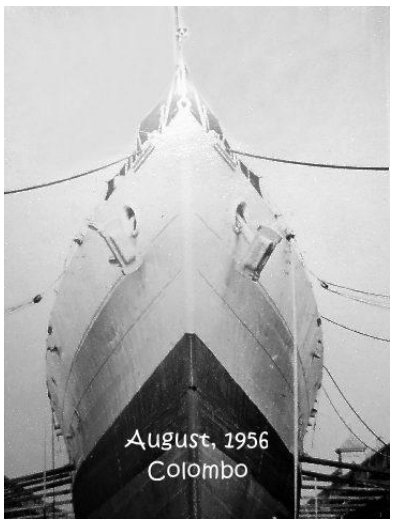
News now came that it was considered that the political situation in Bahreïn was such that the presence of a cruiser was no longer essential: and although there was some satisfaction in knowing that our presence may have done much in lessening the tension, it was great relief to bid farewell to the Gulf. Little did we realise that within three weeks, we would once be back in Bahreïn.

COLOMBO

On Friday 13th the ship secured astern of the aircraft carrier *H.M.A.S. Melbourne* on her way out to Australia, and immediately starting de-ammunitioning 'Y' magazine prior to docking,



During the forenoon, a party of 200 officers and ratings left to embark in buses which then transported them to Diyatalawa Rest Camp. The party comprised of all juniors in the ship, many of those who worked in hot compartments, and convalescents. The party arrived in the evening and spent the following four days shooting, cycling, hiking, playing golf and tennis and generally relaxing. The order to relax was carried so far that when some of the Juniors had been seen wearing particularly brilliant and flowery shirts, their Divisional Officer is reported to have had the whole division fallen in to inform them that uniform was *not* good enough and *everyone* was to provide himself with a flowery shirt!



In the meantime, the ship had gone into dock where repairs were going ahead satisfactorily. The remainder of the ship's company were enjoying the experience of looking round the first large town with proper shops since leaving Chatham. Although the N.A.F.F.I. and R.A.F. Club were popular centres, it was not unusual to see Jack dining in style among the Barons of Colombo in the Galle Face or Grand Oriental Hotel. Vive le new pay code!

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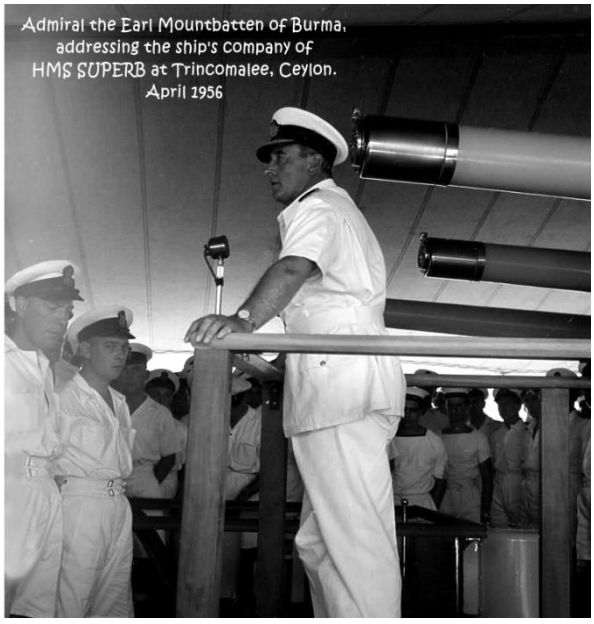
All too soon, the refit was finished and after undocking, the ammunition was re-embarked. A weary but contented team climber back on board after a somewhat eventful trip down from Diyatalawa. Before the ship sailed, the Captain paid his first official call on the Commander-in-Chief, and shortly afterwards, Vice-Admiral Sir Charles Norris came on board to return the call and have a look at his new Flagship. After meeting Heads of Departments, lower deck was cleared for the Admiral to address the ship's Company when he gave his ideas of what was expected of us in the future.

TRINCOMALEE

The following evening the ship finally arrived at Trincomalee-one of the most picturesque natural harbours in the world. After our peregrinations round the station, we had at last arrived. But the gremlins were rubbing their hands with glee at the new devilment they had worked up for no sooner had the ship secured to the flagship buoys opposite N.H.Q. than came the dread signal 'BACK TO BAHREÏN'!

Stouter men might have broken down and wept over the guardrails, but the *Superb's* are made of stern stuff and at once everyone started buckling down to get the ship ready for sea again. Storing and provisioning proceeded throughout the day with volunteering parties of officers and ratings helping the duty watch until completion just before midnight. The Queen's Colour and Band -a particularly welcome addition to the ship's Company - were embarked and the ship was soon ready to depart.


Admiral the Earl Mountbatten of Burma, addressing the ship's company of HMS SUPERB at Trincomalee, Ceylon. April 1956

Before the ship left, the first Sea Lord, Admiral Earl Mountbatten, who was visiting Trincomalee on his world tour, came on board and gave a most interesting talk to the ship's Company. Wearing his famous bush jacket, emblazoned with a sea of medals, he told us about his tour, current and future developments in the Navy and assured us that *Superb* was well to the fore in the minds of those at the Admiralty. We were also told that our presence was a great help in the Gulf during the present troubles, but that he would see we were not kept there a moment longer than was absolutely necessary.

To be continued next time

Photos kindly supplied by Bill Cook

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1950'S MEMORIES OF RNB CHATHAM

By Michael (Mickey) Warr (from Barrydale in South Africa)

The following article, written by Mr. Warr, was found on the World Wide Web and is produced below for our enjoyment. At the time of writing, 2009, Mr. Warr was aged 79.

My wife and I visited the Dockyard in 2006 and drove into the old Barracks at the main gate. I was delighted to see all the old buildings in prime condition.

After basic training at Royal Arthur in Corsham Wilts I went to Cookham Camp Rochester to train as a Telegraphist. I joined my first ship HMS "Truelove" an Algerine Class minesweeper then in dry-dock at Sheerness. Trot boat up the Medway to join her and up and down the river on many weekends. Truelove was half leader of the 5th M/S and was part of the fishery protection squadron. After eighteen months aboard her I was back in barracks to attend Signal School which had moved from Cookham to a temporary situation on the Gillingham Road. (Later on it moved again next to the Barracks/Dockyard Gate within the barracks). We were accommodated in St. Mary's barracks within the main barrack site and 'dined' in one of the blocks there. There were tales of ghosts up at St. Mary's, never saw one, although those buildings were old enough to have more than one! Think the buildings had previously been stables. Whilst on course a good duty watch was Church sweeper or better still the Utensil Party (UTP) washing up in the main kitchen. For that we got a "Friday While". Up the line hitch hiking to Leicester (My home town). Always home before the pubs closed!! Then the 0200 train Sunday night back to London and down to Chatham in time by 0800 Monday morning.

Just to the left as you entered an accommodation block was the bathroom sweeper who kept the hot water going and laid a bet on the horses if you wanted one. The sweeper was usually a retired Chief or a three badge Seaman seemingly from Nelson's day. There were no bunks and we all used our "Micks" (Hammocks) slung between hooks placed there for the

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purpose. I remember the large mirrors placed at strategic points outside to check your dress. Next to one was a large blackboard on which were written any forthcoming Drafts. Remember seeing my name there and a visit to the drill shed on the left - bottom right- were a number of small windows behind which sat the draftees. Telegraphist Warr is to do a two and half year stint at Simonstown. Two weeks leave and then join a Union Castle Liner *Stirling Castle* for the trip out. That's another story except that my wireless instructor at Cookham Camp said that anyone getting a draft to South Africa was sure to get married there. He was absolutely right.

Then back to barracks again and drafted to *HMS Mercury* (Leydene Near Petersfield) for a PO's course. This time married accompanied. Barracks still the same. After the course back inside and through the same routine - draftee in the drill shed - got a draft to *HMS Grenville* then TS2 Training Squadron) at Portland.

This was the routine for a number of years. During that time the barracks never changed. "K" basement and the whole joining drafting routines remained the same. I can remember one occasion when all hands had to muster and line the main thoroughfare past the blocks down to the main gate to bear silent witness to some unfortunate soul being drummed out of the navy, his Uniform devoid of any embellishments and no cap. Truly a journey into Nelson's day in fact the messdecks on the Warrior and indeed the Trincomalee were the same as that on the Algerine Sweeper *Truelove*. Canteen messing (each Mess prepared its own food and took it to the Galley where Chefs cooked it) and the routine just the same. Make and mend clothes on a Wednesday was a hang-over from the same old navy.

There is such a lot to be said and written about Chatham - The dances at Gillingham Co-op. The walks up on the "Lines", Goffers in the canteen not forgetting the "Lister" trailers loaded up with bags and hammocks and three ton Bedfords too with a party of lads off to play sport for their depot.

Yes we were proud to belong to the Chatham depot. A depot having its own traditions built up over the centuries. It's satisfying to see that entire historical place put to good use.

Chatham Barracks was more than the buildings we see. As I mentioned it was our depot from where we went to and from the ships in the Chatham Command. It was a place where we came across old shipmates and those back from foreign lands talking about places we had never been. "Old timers" had tattoos and wore light colour collars. In time it would be our turn to emulate them. We all went ashore in uniform. The best that Bernard's could provide complete with white silk scarf and a tiddly bow. A pussers holdall was a must in place of the small issue attaché case. Whatever, we wore had to look 'pusser' when running the gauntlet of the main gate.

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Gentlemen in white belts and gaiters were there to ensure that the leave party was turned out correct - Then of course we all had rabbits. Perfume or Nylons for the girlfriend and maybe some ticklers for mother. Nothing more than the allotted allowance. The *NAAFI* shop had lots of brass and copper trinkets made in the barracks. Tea caddy spoons with HMS Pembroke on the handle and framed pictures of Nelson. The run 'up the line' to the 'smoke' was easy. Many long distance lorry drivers would always give "Jack" a lift. One of our 'commuters' had an ancient Rolls Royce into which we all piled for the run ashore. There were also some motor bikes and with luck you could be in the 'smoke' before the train got to Charing Cross.

The drill shed was as stated a place where drilling could still be carried out in inclement weather. Divisions were often held in there too. It was a place where one laid out kit for inspection and where one commenced joining and drafting routines. There was also the "Anti-Gas Training Unit"; a mobile unit stationed up at one end of the drill shed. On Navy Days, many static displays were put on show in the drill shed. I have a photograph of a communication group together - all in "Blues", cap tallies with the single "HMS" and no ship's name.

On Divisions days a command was given for Roman Catholics to fall out. They doubled away behind the Drill Shed and had their own church service, or so I believe. On the order Roman Catholics fall in, they in turn had also finished and doubled back. How did they find their rightful places amongst the other 1500 still on parade? Other than the R.C's the remainder stood fast and enjoyed the Chaplains service. The highlight of divisions was of course the Royal Marine band. If it was incidental music we knew that someone somewhere was doing the inspection. With luck they were down 'the other end'.

Back to the blocks again. Between some of the blocks davits had been fitted complete with ship's whaler or cutter. There the fundamentals of lowering and raising a ships boat were taught.

Ships damage control and the firing range were all at Sheerness an enjoyable day out down the Medway. There were many ships on the trot and destroyers and minesweepers were triple banked on both sides of the river. At one time I had a job carrying out radio modifications to these so called dead ships.

Visiting the barracks in 2006 brought back many memories. On the lawns in front of the wardroom there were two Greenwich University students eating sandwiches and drinking coke, both seated at a wooden trestle table. I can distinctly remember the duty Commander complete with telescope having his pre lunch walk there - Times have changed.

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What happened to the brass dolphins at the top of the steps? That was a job for the duty cleaning party. Chatham - Both the RNB and the dockyard were more than bricks and mortar. The dockyard is of course another story. Again, I can ramble on and remember the time when we went for a run ashore in Lowestoft; Tromso; Brest; Gib and Snoekie. Can you remember playing Cardinal Puff in the canteen at Scapa? A sailor's life was for me and it all began in CHATHAM.

Enough from me for now before I become "Pearly Gates Sweeping Party"

PHOTO ALBUM

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WINNING WHALER CREW GEORGE SALMON EXTREME RIGHT

CROSSED THE BAR

Further details of ex shipmates (but not necessarily members of the Association) who have crossed the bar can be found on the appropriate page our website.

To go there please click **HERE**

Crossed the Bar (Recently Notified)

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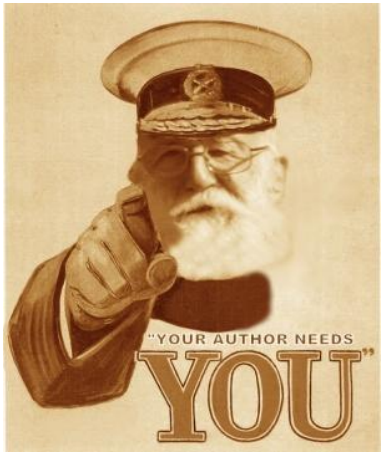
SLOPS

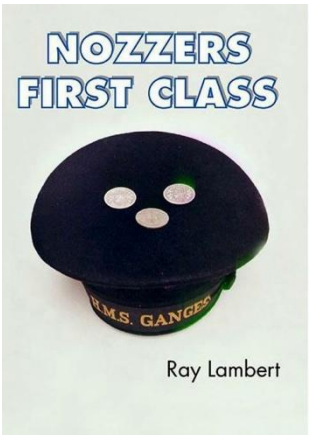
Journalist & Best Selling Author

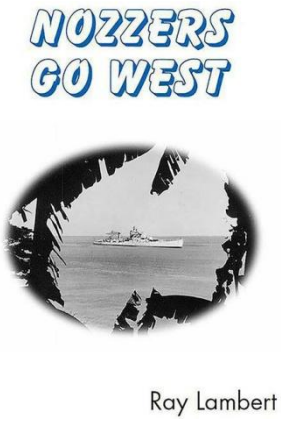


OUR IN-HOUSE **BEST SELLING AUTHOR** IS OFFERING THE FOLLOWING BOOKS AT A SPECIAL PRICE FOR MEMBERS OF THE ASSOCIATION.

Ray Lambert

Follow the author when he was a handsome young man in Ganges and as he joins HMS Superb at Chatham. Go with him as he begins the "Luxury Cruise" of 1954-55. Join him from Punta Arenas to Vancouver and much in between. Learn of Guantanamo Bay and the Falklands before they became headline news. Each book costs £7.99 including UK postage. Click **HERE** for more information & to contact Ray by email





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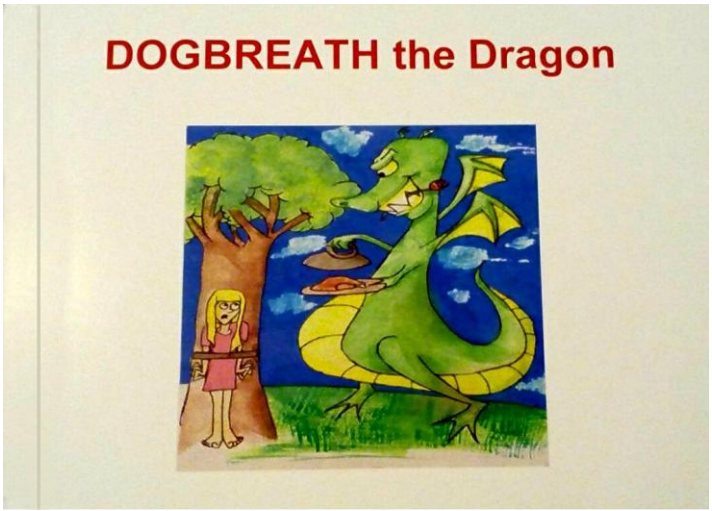
Something for the Youngsters

Phil Grimson



Shipmate Phil Grimson offers his latest book for sale targeted at children from 8 years upward. It is a magical tale of chivalry which should enchant most youngsters and lead them into a make-believe world where

there's fierce and fiery combat when a princess is captured by a dragon.

There are bold knights charging to her rescue one of who wins her hand in marriage.

KINDLE DOWNLOAD £5.59 **PRINTED VERSION £13.99 + P&P***

Phil can be contacted by email by clicking on this LINK

*** IF YOU CONTACT PHIL DIRECTLY YOU CAN BUY THE PAPERBACK BOOK FOR ONLY £12.50 + P&P AND PHIL WILL DONATE £1 TO THE HMS SUPERB (CRUISER) ASSOCIATION FUNDS**

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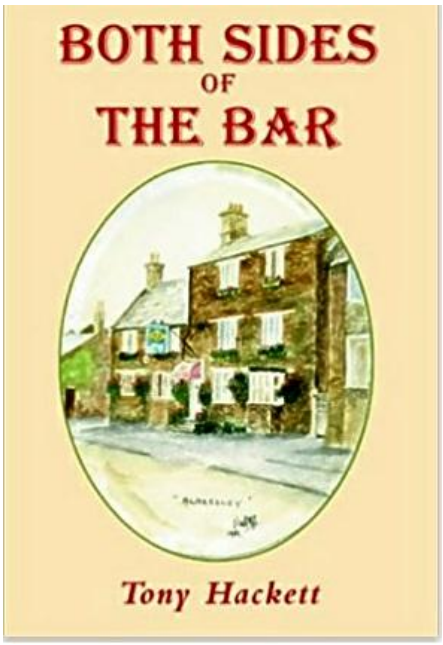
Life After the Navy

Tony Hacket



Tony, the son of a police officer, joined the Royal Navy aged 15 and spent the next 10 years travelling the world. He entered Civvy street in 1959 and went into the pub trade. This book relates Tony's endeavours in balancing his life between his love of rugby, managing often run-down pubs and his love of the sea and finally his successful ownership of his own free-house.

An interesting insight into the trials and tribulations of being self employed.

Available as a hard back book from Amazon at £12.99

PEOPLE SEARCH FOR PEOPLE

If you can assist with any of these appeals please contact Brian Saunders in the first instance. No details will be passed on to third parties without express permission. These appeals will be left in the magazine for a few months

There's been a request from the step-son of Keith (Danny) Lambert who was a stoker on the 1952 cruise and also on the 1956-57 cruise to Mombasa. He's wondering if anyone remembers him. If so please get in touch with me and I'll pass the message on

From previous issues

The following message received from Derek Thompson, via Facebook
Just wondered if any of you gents knew my father **Derrick Thompson (Tommo)** he was a stoker mechanic (E) 1st class on board HMS Superb in 1955/56. He passed away in 2003 aged 72. I myself was in the Andrew and served for 23 yrs. I would be grateful if anyone knew him

Neil Cooper, the son of Terry Willey, writes
"My late father appears to be mentioned in the booklet from the 52-53 tour of West Indies. He's stated as leading electricians mate. His full name was **Terry Keith Willey**. Be great to hear from anyone who knew him"

Derek Baldry (Killick Sparker) would like to contact Ginger Dunne from 1956

Stoker Clive Godley would like to get in touch with old shipmates - I have his telephone number and email address so if you'd like it get back to me. (BS)

Larry Boudier who was in the Chatham field gun's crew in 1955 would like to know if anyone knows of others in that crew

Eleanor Ingalls Fochesato from New Jersey, USA would like to contact John Stevens, from the 1953 cruise to Maine, USA.

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Bob Butcher known to many as "Butch" & who served on Superb between Nov 1950 to July 1951 wonders if Curly Watson is still around. He would like to make contact.

Laura Kardo researching her grandfather, Charles Harris, who served around 1951 & 1952. would like to know more about him.

ARCHIVED CONTENT

Past Copies of the Magazine can be accessed on-line by clicking on the appropriate month

January 2020

Jeff , the son of Jim Stewart who was on board as a Telegraphist between 1947 & 1951, would be happy to receive any information re his dad. Jim was also on HMS Vidal in 1955

Click here to contact Brian Saunders by email