

# ANDY BRIERLEY'S BLOG

Was captivated by S.M. Harmer's picture in last month's issue; glad Brian didn't choose a B & Q frame, cheap and cheerful, Allan would have refused to speak to me again.

Demise of the newsletter is a cause for discussion amongst the 'non-scribbling' fraternity.

Could only say, if you are always in the super market, don't moan when the village shop closes - use it or lose it.

Call from 'Hon. Chairperson' to see if Jo had any spare tomato plants; alas, it has been a very queer Spring. Normally one could get prime examples in half a dozen places between here and Rainham. We may be a pack of sinners and J. C. is getting his own back.

Talk of J. C. - I include a snap taken at Mark Church during recent Fox and Goose jaunt to Somerset in remembrance of our old friend Shipmate Len Sturdy. Mobility for Pete Tasker is a major trial now so he opted to stay in the hotel. I had the camera so do not figure in the photo.



A man, possibly the vicar, and lady unlocked the church. She had a pole about 15 foot long with a feather duster thing on one end; she assured us it was to de-cobweb the windows. On a suggestion it looked like a mega version of Ken Dodd's tickling stick banter became irreverent. That place does not often get such laughter and mirth; the Bish. Of Cant. would not be amused.

As we all turned up for dinner on Friday night, bottles of wine were on the table; landlady informed us the 'sturdy girls' had provided for our arrival. Saturday night they turned up en mass, two boys, three girls with their husbands and spouses. The gathering was jolly in the extreme as we had travelled to celebrate lives - appreciated by all in different degrees - this family make parts of my own family look a little fractured, don't know how else to put it.

Talk of J. C. and church may make you assume I am a religious sort - not exactly - but I feel any chap attending a biblical wedding, that turns water into wine when the



booze runs out has got to have a place on ones horizon.

Models and such mentioned, are a recurring duty that comes up as "art projects" for the girls at school. My youngest granddaughter informed me yesterday, 'we' must depict the universe this term! Where do the festering teachers get these ideas? They must realize 'Dad' or 'Grandy' are lumbered - maybe observing parent use of tools and tool boxes is the motive.



Last term's subject for the youngest was "London Eye". I cheated with a 2 foot bike wheel; she did my maths to get 32 people pods correctly distanced. Have tried to teach them both to weld but fear of harmless sparks are yet to be overcome.

Will eventually put a picture in, 'barge and tug' on riverside are meant to give scale.

My contemporaries are 'princes of exact scale'; I'm in the primitive category.

Shipmate Turner's output of museum quality models, apart from his paintings, I find staggering. A recent model of *Attray*, the submarine, is a particular gem.

I know it's only domestic stuff, but a blessed relief from Merkel Fatigue.

I had stopped awhile and wondered why I burden you with mundane stuff of this nature; call it wedding escape therapy. The event was a splendid spectacle & I wish they live 'happily ever after'. Various media drives it well into the ground with interminable analysis, plus large dollops of conjecture, day on day, to the point of brain fatigue.

It interested me to see, in Brian's last news letter, disquiet over an order for three new fleet auxiliaries, at a cost of £1 billion, going out to international tender. Much hand-wringing from G.M.B. and other unions, the very organisations that oversaw the slow strangulation of U.K. shipbuilding with up to eight different unions being involved in negotiations to fit a porthole.

They claimed the recent two replenishment ships built in South Korea were 'sub-standard' in some way, needing immediate docking on arrival in the U.K.; a crude attempt to muddy the waters. Vessels docked for fitting of U.K. supplied 'radio and comms.' plus 'close in' weapon system. This is normal practice The two 'Heli-Carriers' built in Spain for Australia did exactly the same on reaching Sydney, Oz.; normal conduct! Our pair of vessels from Korea was **on time, on budget**.

Mention of Oz., would you wager on the U.K. getting the £20 billion order for her nine new A/S frigates? Our own order for new frigates will, according to the M.O.D. release, take 18 years to complete.

My last missive reported French/Italian FREMM frigate class were being launched, 'keel to truck' by both nations at one per year, ready for fitting out with national 'radio comms.', armaments etc.

The one U.K. yard building on time and budget, Appledore in North Devon just launched their fourth O.P.V of the '*Samuel Becket*' class for the Irish Navy; it tickled me to see it named *Le George Bernard Shaw* - he who wrote *Pygmalion* - *My Fair Lady*. These vessels of 2,250 tons, 23 knots, 6000 mile range, 76mm main gun, are, indeed, 'fair ladies'.

A published picture of her on a mud berth after launch show a 'large bow thruster', 'large bilge keel', stabilizers and twin screws.

Should Eire purchase a second hand 'bulker', paint it grey and call it a 'Super Carrier', their navy will have a surface fleet on par with ours.

It is a sad reflection on U.K. performance to know the 'Mighty Hood' (Admiralty P.R.) was laid down 1<sup>st</sup> September 1916, launched by Lady Hood on 22nd August, 1918, not a quick 'wire welding' job but 'riveted manually'. Much repeated views about it being a flawed design misses the point a bit. In that era, Battle Cruisers, by design, sacrificed 'armour for speed'.

Alas we know her fate, vanished from the surface after 30 minutes with only three survivors, thanks to the legendary 'optical range finding' of the *Kriegsmarine*.

Now, Mr. Putin is scaring the pants off the west. There is much clamour for the foreign aid allocation to be spent on the national defence (depending on one's peccadilloes). That is 0.7% of our G.D.P. or approx. £13.3 billion. Put another way it's £36 million per day, every day for about the last ten years. That figure is a third (1/3) of the nation's defence spend - or half (1/2) our spend on 'public order and safety', or half (1/2) that spent in support of 'industry, employment, agriculture'. The aforementioned aid is 'enshrined in law', by such political pygmies as Clegg - recently knighted for abject failure in all he touched, and Cameron.

Bite in the arse for our successors is the national debt interest payments, now at £39 billion a year. Some things do not seem properly joined up.

Am I down-hearted? - NAW - a brilliant spot in the 'seas and oceans' that surround the 'sceptered isle' is the pronouncement by a self-confessed non-politician; a confession verified by the world's 'proper politicians' - that he has decided to resurrect, re-activate the US Second Fleet.

This was reported also agreed to by a meeting of N.A.T.O. defence ministers; why they should be considered is a mystery. Not one of them meets the agreed commitment of 2% of their G.D.P. to N.A.T.O. defence; I include the U.K. who achieve their figure by liberal use of smoke and mirrors creative accounting.

The 'second fleet' was disbanded seven years ago to save costs, fallout from the, so called, peace dividend. Our well being now rests, squarely, in Norfolk -Virginia

HURRAH! M.O.D. joint services officers and their political masters in Whitehall, should have 'enshrined in law' that they perambulate around central London, and in their respective constituencies, with hands up in the air (surrender mode), allowed to lower them only when night falls and be back up at cock's crow on the morrow.

Relief is at hand comrades, I am about to cease!



And good day from him.

