

H.M.S. SUPERB (CRUISER) ASSOCIATION

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CHAIRMAN OF THE ASSOCIATION, BRIAN SAUNDERS

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Superb - Defending Britain Since 1710



ANDY BRIERLEY'S BLOG

Hello Shipmates,

I was visiting the sail maker on Gillingham pier, the side parallel with the dockyard. The paddler *Medway Queen* is still tied up there under long-term restoration. By the looks of things 'quality work' is the volunteer's hall mark; why this project has never been given a berth within the Historic Dockyard defeats reason.

I suspect the usual conditions prevail i.e. 'who has the power over what?' Dockyard hierarchy are on public purse, old *Queen Volunteers* attend most local functions with their begging bowls, to keep her afloat and alive.

Whilst down there I could not resist a walk to the pier's end looking left at the dockyard entrance locks towards basin No. 1.

The local paper says *Peel Ports*, the owners, are planning to abandon the entire yard now, for residential use. With no alternative jobs you may imagine a chill wind blows there.

What was the enormous boat shed with its lovely smell of high quality timber being worked in all conceivable ways is now replaced with a huge rectangular tower block up to level five already. Last time I got a look in there one of the old naval pinnaces was being rebuilt, the sort with a small upright, one-man wheel house on deck, snug cabin on rear, out of wind and rain.

The first example I saw was on the pier at Shotley, used to tow a string of cutters out past Felixstowe for the weekly 'pull a mile - sail a mile' race. It still had the small 'compound steam engine', stoker on his stool, visible when peeping down the centre hatch. It was nimble and those cutters no mean weight, to my eye appearance was just like a miniature tug boat.

Long back, a couple of the most memorable vessels; I went down the pier to see undock No. 1, *H.M.S. Triumph* in charge of two tugs en route to the breaker's yard, Turkey. She was my first proper ship, joined Med Fleet as it was Flag Officer Air, two carriers there at the time, the other being *Ocean*. In its later years *Triumph* was converted to a 'repair' ship, languished in basin No. 1 for a long, long time.



A close friend had a brother-in-law on board, a one-ring engineer - so I became the owner of a nice rectangular copper temperature recorder, clockwork - from close range pom-pom magazine; a fate more fitting than a Turkish scrapper's non-ferrous pot. Should you visit me at home it's in the conservatory, ready for you to wind up, whilst lamenting, our realms, old navy. Vessel No. 2, recalled so well, *Jeremiah O'Brian* Liberty ship saved from scrapping, as ever, preserved and returned to original by a band of old retired merchant mariners in San Francisco. It berths on south side of Golden Gate, Pacific side, smack alongside an arch. I first saw it tied up, as towed from a long line of derelicts miles up the bay in a marsh area.

With y'all, I first visited that place courtesy of H.M.Q. on *Superb*. Of course said *Liberty* was not in that latter location at that time. But fate took me back several times on a business visa plus workers ticket. I never resisted a drive down to view the progress. Empty gun tub's regained de-activated 5" mounts, as did all Oerlikan 20 mm tubs around the bridge structure.

Years elapsed and eventually a date of significance brought it back over the Atlantic for a D-Day. It spent a couple of days in Chatham dockyard for checks and 'tweaks', bunkering etc. before departing for Cherbourg en route back across the pond, via Panama and the Pacific, to her regular bridge berth.

Anyway, I was on the end of Gillingham pier with a camera as she undocked; a splendid sight, as if first built, the crew all old 'Merch' Mariners, happy to give a joyful 'thank you' shouted across the gap; half a dozen miles down Medway to pass their sister ship's remains still poking up off Sheerness, a crystal clear picture in the mind's eye. You all know sister ship is remains of the *Richard Montgomery*.

I was reading about the Frigate Factory, so called, being constructed in Rosyth dockyard; it is scheduled to build five (5) type 31 frigates. Main contractor, as ever, is B. A. Rosyth. A developed **cynic** from past observations of performance. I do not hold my breath. It took eight years and six billion sterling to construct two merchant pattern hulls, calling them 'Super Carriers'. It's pretty obvious no Henry Kaiser is within one thousand miles of the set up at Firth of Forth - that really would be expecting too much.

I am in awe of the energy and drive of the person who, by training, was a civil engineer. Getting the 'bit between his teeth' at the start of March 1941, he had the hull in water before even the tank tests of the hull were finished. Oregon Shipbuilders built 322 of them in three years from 65 - yup 65 - slipways, the last completed in February 1944. Oregon S.B employed 35,000 workers by then, and the archive states, with pride, 31% of them were female, their welding, generally, being of superior quality to the men.

That was put down to them being more attentive, excellent students and newly released from apron strings to the work place. In my view Henry K's ace-in-the-hole was paying the ladies exactly what men got, in like for like work; a most unusual thing at that time.

Get your magnifying glass out and view the car park.

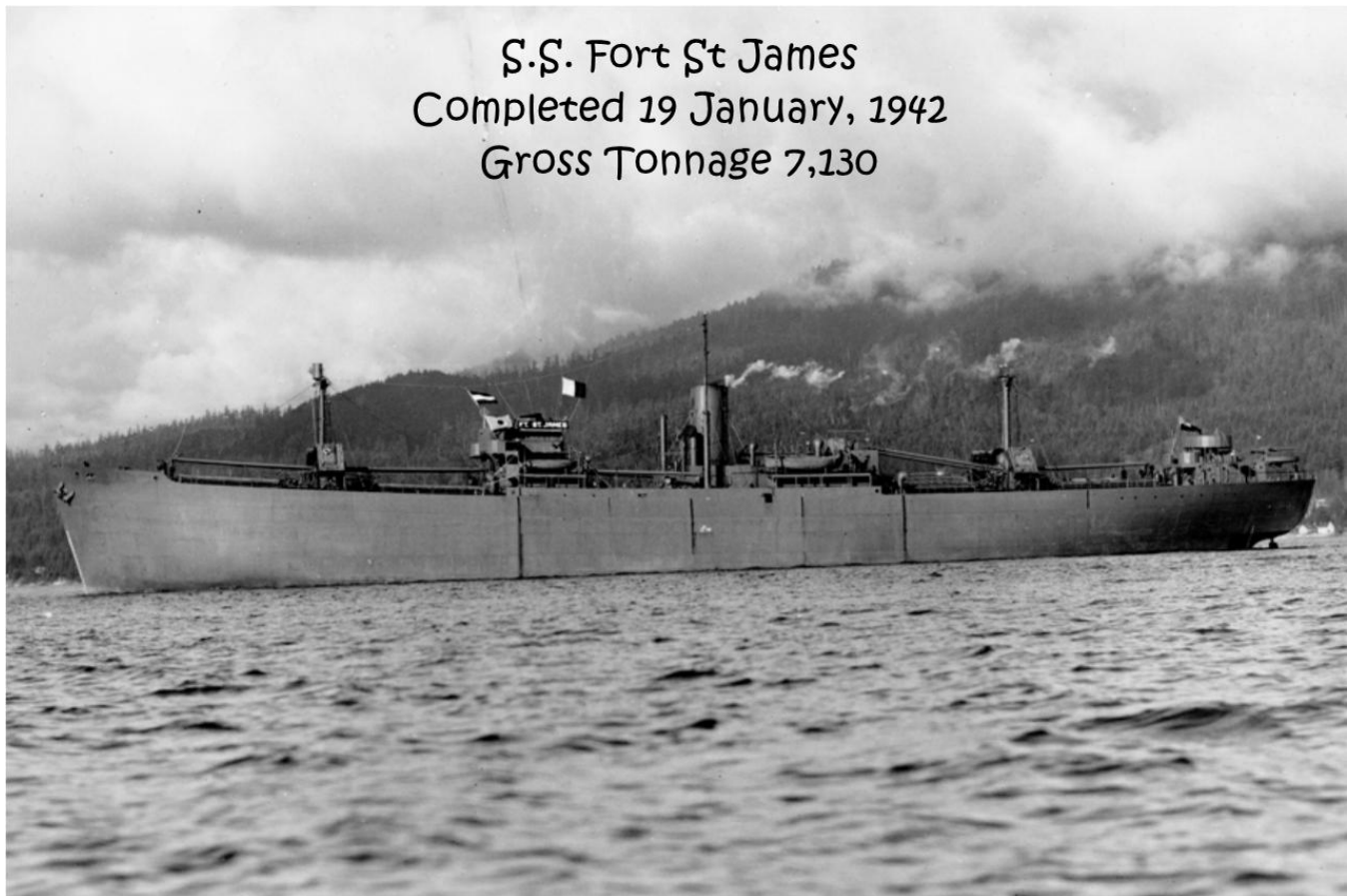


Many ground level pictures exist; this is the only one I've seen from the air and just 'a part' of the yard. I see pictures as saving me a page of blether, knowing your wandering eye will glean all I have to say.....

Next, a decent picture of what were called *Fort Boats*. Their build programme started in Canada, eventually funded by Roosevelt's lease lend. The drawings came from Thompson and Sons, Sunderland; their north sands yard.

The very basic difference between Canadian built *Forts* and American built *Oceans* type vessels is that *Forts* are all riveted; U.S. types used Welding method throughout. Scotch boilers fitted to both types meant coal or oil fuel could be used with both tanks and bunkers built in.

The first Fort off the slip way at Burrard dry dock of Vancouver was named *Fort St. James*; she survived the great struggle, following a host of name changes and owners, was broken up at Osaka, Japan in 1960. You may be familiar with the stories of *Liberties* unzipping along weld lines in rough seas; some resulting in total loss. Of initial order for 60 vessels of 10,000 DWT *Fort* type, none are recorded meeting the same fate; was it rivets, or suspect welding before the technique to build for excess stress was worked out properly?



Guess your eyes are glazed over by now, all these ships a-building... Try month's Sabbatical but keep your muzzle on.

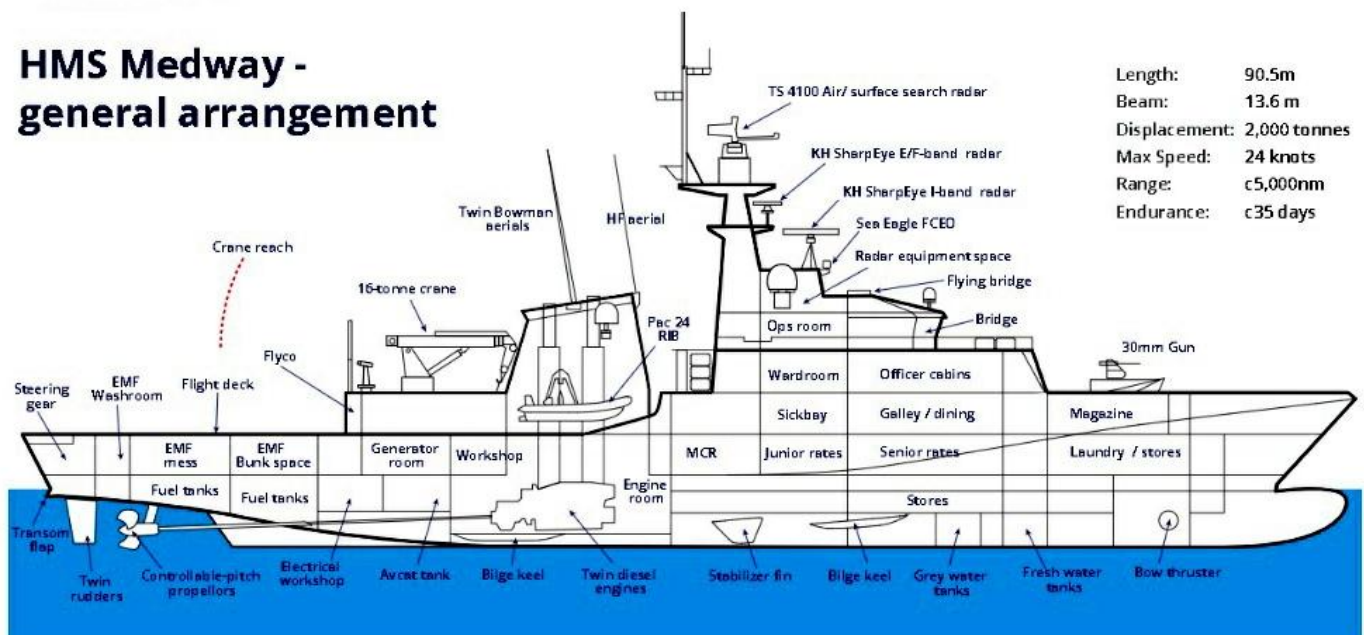
AND ANOTHER THING . . .

A report on recruitment published last week has the army in a perilous state. The Royal Navy is the next in line unable to adequately man its vessels; cited as prime reason for the sale of *Ocean* to Brazil. I claim to live less than a handful of miles from a garrison town - i.e. Chatham, current home of the Royal Engineering School. I traverse that urban utopia frequently but cannot recall what year it was I last saw a young chap in khaki, ironed and polished, out and about in town.



The last vessel to visit ex-Dockyard was *O.P.V. Medway*, brand new on a Show the Flag in basin No. 2. To see it up close was not possible, a wall of sea containers had been erected; I suspect to keep terrorists at bay. Those fellows need not have worried; the main attribute of class constructed by B.A.E. Clyde is they leak like granny's colander.

HMS Medway - general arrangement



I did not see a square rigged body come or go during my visit, or officer even. This was late Saturday morning on a very nice day; where were they? - still a-bed? - ashore?

The R.A.F. was noticeable in not getting a mention in any news print, an irrelevance, I guess, devoid of strategic purpose.

The promised Strategic Defence Review when present government was settled in has been deferred, now yet again held over till an indeterminate time in the future (Covid I guess).

The act by Westminster forbidding service personnel to venture forth from barracks - off ships, in the appropriate uniform I see as neutering the very best recruiting tool in the box. Shipmates ashore in No 1's, mood happy, attitude carefree, primed and preened, behaving like the world is their oyster, seen by local maidens - or otherwise - as the key to an exciting new gene pool, worth a flirt.

As a Jan 31st baby seeing my elder brother home, with contemporaries if lucky, was the reason for the need to rapidly complete education, then away with the R.N. to pastures new.

Instead we dole out countless millions to half hard public service companies and adopt a national policy, a gutless scared posture, hide away your prime asset and the bogey man won't get you. Name another state with such an attitude! Just one?

Would you agree the Submarine Service claim to be elite of the Royal Navy? When at sea on operations, 'being in harm's way' is their daily diet, most of their hours absent from public eye. It is a hard task master of family life deserving of all possible support. Our once magnificent Fleet Air Arm suffered its death knell under Prime Minister Cameron.

Our R.N. Admirals allowed R.A.F lobbying to emasculate it, then go on to bastardise it, twice, since WW1 ceased; it beggars belief.

Now, the R.A.F. has a future Air Superiority project underway. Surprise! Their interest in the F.A.A. is being side-lined; the reports, as ever, according to R.A.F. sources. I would enquire once more what the hell does R.N top braid do? Besides never fighting their own corner.

One thing the Submarine Service seems to excel at is cocaine use; a big case at King's Bay Georgia when a nuke boomer was collecting its compliment of Poseidon rockets gained lots of media mileage. Captains and female officers frequently in trouble for engaging more closely. A shocker reported at length in the Daily Mail in early February was: 'Seaman and his girlfriend, Seawoman, running their own porn site'. Seawoman's speciality; full-on shots of naughty bits, plus for 'real fare payers' inventive sexual gymnastics by the couple; both parties named and pictured in the paper (not whilst performing).

When the site became common knowledge a naval investigation enquiry checked it out. The lady was frank and honest, cooperated fully. The enquiry team judged it was all above board with no violations of K.I's and A.I's, so - carry on carrying on - unencumbered by what I can only surmise is their fan club at the M.O.D.

Scotland's desire to leave the union gains prominence by the day. First Minister Sturgeon makes all possible capital out of the Irish border problems following Brexit; it's what opposing politicians do of course. Representing the best interests of the masses an alien concept.

The proposed military review has the army reduced to 10,000 bodies. A major step to achieve it is disbanding The Black Watch; to me a step beyond the pale. I can imagine how the news will go down north of Hadrian's; do the powers that be expect Sturgeon to tolerate such an iniquity.

A newsprint report heaping praise on the R.N. during the slave trade period; very relevant with the Woke cult rampant, hell bent on the destruction of U.K. history. The report was by that, reviled by some and so called 'petrol head' Jeremy Clarkson; Farmer, long time fan of the Royal Navy and author, an outstanding article to my mind. It's shown at the end of this magazine for those interested. (Click [HERE](#) to read it.)

I will find our current governor of the village junior school and ask if it could be read out at story time. Should the school staff be of the current military mindset it will be straight into the waste paper basket.

Covid has played hell with village postage, both in and out over the longest period I can remember; the post always got through, but it's been bought and sold a couple of times leaving visible the dead hand of bean counters pervading that vaulted organisation. One card from Greenwich to here took a month.

I was called to Age Concern on last Saturday in January with Jo for a Covid jab. The crew, all volunteers, highly organised and cheerful; could tell they were not 'Men from the Ministry'.

I am going to lick and stick - see how long this takes to get to France for typing up. Be safe and observe the rules, I smell a possibility of reunion's booking space at King's Charlie.

See you there eh?



A SHILLING FOR A SPITFIRE

On a bright spring morning in 1940, the Royal Air Force pilot was in the fight of his life. Strapped into his brand new Supermarine Spitfire, he was locked in mortal combat with a Luftwaffe pilot over the English Channel in the opening days of the Battle of Britain. The Spitfire was behind the Messerschmitt and almost within range to unleash a deadly barrage of rounds from the four eight Browning machine guns in the leading edges of the elliptical wings. With the German plane just below the centre line of the gun sight's crosshairs, the British pilot pushed the Spit's lollipop stick forward to dive slightly and rake his rounds across the Bf-109. He felt the tug of the harness on his shoulders keeping him in his seat as the nimble fighter pulled a negative-g dive, and he lined up the fatal shot.

But the powerful V-12 Merlin engine sputtered, black smoke trailing along the fuselage as the engine cut out. Without power, the young pilot watched in horror as the three-bladed propeller wound to a stop. With the cold Channel waters looming in his windscreen, there was no time to restart the engine. The pilot bailed out in the nick of time, watching his beautiful plane cartwheel into the water as he floated down to join it, wondering what had just happened.

Although the story is made up, the engineering problem facing the RAF was all too real. Early in the Battle of Britain, the now-legendary Rolls-Royce Merlin engine, power plant for not only the Spitfire but also the Hawker Hurricane and the Lancaster bomber, was having a serious problem. RAF Spitfire pilots reported that the fighter would lose power during negative-G manoeuvres, meaning that a simple jinking move to line up a shot on an enemy pilot or a quick dive to get out of the line of fire could stall the engine. Sometimes the power loss was momentary, but too often, the engine would just die in flight and fail to restart.

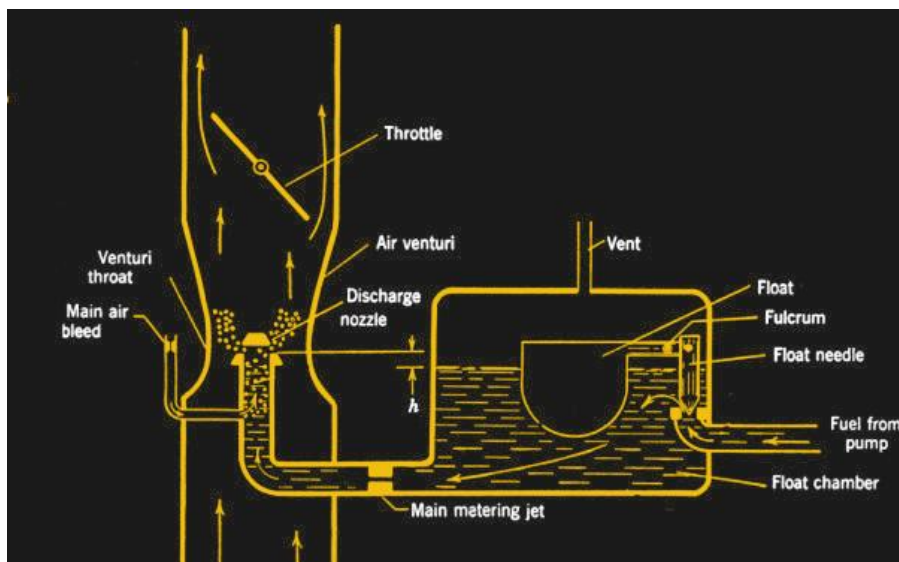
Like all good pilots, the young RAF flight officers quickly adapted to the shortcoming of their new fighters. They learned to do a half-roll before diving, to avoid a negative-G attitude and keep the Merlin running. It worked, but it was a stopgap at best, and a potentially deadly restriction on the ability to manoeuvre when it mattered most. What's worse, the Luftwaffe pilots were quick to notice the problem — it was hard not to notice the black smoke and loss of power, even in the midst of a dogfight — and they capitalized on the enemy fighter's weakness. Something had to be done, lest the tide of the Battle of Britain turn against the RAF.

FATAL FLOODING

In many ways, the Spitfire and the Hurricane were planes built around an engine. While the airframe of the Spitfire, with its beautifully elliptical wings and sleek lines, was certainly revolutionary, it was the mighty Merlin that made the plane what it was. The liquid-cooled,

supercharged engine was powerful, simple, and reliable, but the choice of carburetors over fuel injection would come back to haunt the engine's designers.

The carburetors used in the Merlin were much the same as any carb found on a lawnmower or older car today: fuel was metered into a bowl by a simple float valve before being sucked into the intake airstream under suction provided by the Venturi effect. In straight and level flight, the carbs worked fine. But in a negative-*G* situation, fuel was forced to the top of the float chamber away from the jet, cutting off the flow of fuel and causing the engine to lose power. Returning to a positive-*G* attitude, fuel sloshed back into the float chamber and flooded into the jets, providing an over-rich fuel mixture to the cylinders. Raw fuel entered the exhaust manifold, where it burned and produced the sooty black exhaust. In the "right" situations, enough fuel would enter the supercharger to flood it, stalling the engine altogether and preventing it from restarting.



Float-type carburettor, simplified. Source: Aircraft Engine Historical Society

The obvious solution was to replace the float-bowl carbs with pressure carbs. But with the Battle of Britain raging, taking planes out of service for engine overhauls was not sensible. The RAF needed a quick fix until a more permanent solution could be fielded.

MISS SHILLING SAVES THE DAY



Beatrice Shilling astride her supercharged Norton in 1935

The fix that eventually saved the Merlin came in the unlikely personage of Miss Beatrice Shilling. In a time of strict social conventions and well-defined roles, Beatrice, who was known as Tilly, broke all the rules. Fascinated by engineering since she was a teenage girl taking apart motorcycles and racing them, Tilly bucked convention, earning a degree in electrical engineering in 1932 as one of only two women in her class. She followed that up with an MSc in mechanical engineering the next year.

Beatrice Shilling OBE PhD MSc CEng was a British

aero-engineer and racing driver. As a young girl she developed a love of fast cars combined with a remarkable aptitude for mechanics and engineering. She bought her first motorbike aged just 14. At a time when it was extremely unusual for a woman, she worked as an apprentice at an electrical engineering company, before going to Manchester University to study engineering - one of only two women to do so. Aside from her trailblazing career, she was a successful motorbike racer, becoming the fastest ever woman racer at the famed Brooklands circuit.

While racing motorcycles competitively — she won awards and set records in 1934 on a 500cc Norton bike to which she had added a supercharger, clocking a 106 mph lap — she started working at the Royal Aircraft Establishment (RAE) in Farnborough. There, in the opening days of World War II, she specialized in aircraft carburettors.

While Rolls-Royce worked on new carburettor designs for the Merlin, Tilly came up with a fix for the RAF's woes, and like many such solutions, it was deceptively simple. She reasoned that restricting the fuel flow to the carburettor bowl would prevent flooding, so she designed a simple brass disc with a small hole in it. She calculated the dimensions of the disc to allow just enough fuel for maximum power. As a bonus, the device could be added to the planes quickly and easily, without removing the planes from service.

Officially, the device became known as the "RAE Restrictor," but as Tilly Shilling toured RAF bases to oversee the installation of the device, the rough and ready aircrews had other ideas. "Miss Shilling's Orifice" became the new name of the life-saving brass disc, which once installed in the fuel lines solved the problem. The Spitfires were back in the fight, and the RAF eventually pushed the Luftwaffe back across the Channel, thanks in no small part to Tilly Shilling.

TILLY'S LEGACY



Tilly did not rest on her laurels. With her workaround in place, she returned to the RAE and continued work on improved carburettor designs. She continued working for the RAE until she retired in 1969, making contributions to fields as diverse as rocket designs and braking aircraft on wet runways. Switching from motorcycles to cars of her own design, she also continued racing well into her 60s alongside her husband George Naylor, a fellow engineer and later RAF bomber pilot whom she married in 1938 on the condition that he first post a 100-MPH lap on a motorcycle.

Beatrice Shilling was a larger than life figure who deserved the many honours bestowed upon her, including the Order of the British Empire and a pub in Farnborough named after her. But being the engineer who fixed the Spitfire and turned the tide for the RAF was probably her proudest achievement.

8 March, 1909 - 18 November, 1990





NOZZERS GO WEST Part 22

By Ray Lambert

By Montevideo most of the boys mess deck had split themselves into small groups, and those groups, from pairs up to six strong, would head ashore early in the day as possible for what had become known as 'pendant runs', as their duty watch permitted.

Pendant runs helped to keep all but the hardest drinkers out of the bars for an hour or two, which also helped save them a bit of money for drinking sessions later in the day, before going back on board.

They stayed in Montevideo for five days and Ginger managed to get ashore on four of those days.

First thing on the agenda, which by now had become standard procedure, was to open the ship to visitors and around 3500 trooped aboard. The following day someone had the bright idea of inviting a group of Girl Guides aboard at 10 o'clock in the forenoon which made concentrating on work in hand very difficult. Ginger tried to keep out of the way as much as possible because their boys mess instructor, Chinnery, the PTI, was also involved in the 'meeting and greeting' business and was usually the first point of contact for people coming onboard. Rather than take the trouble to find someone suitable as escorts he would grab the nearest boys and detail them off for the task. Naturally, the boys had no say in the matter. Ginger found it prudent to keep out of his sight when such duties were afoot.

The afternoon was taken up by another gaggle of visitors. This time they only managed to muster 1000 pairs of feet to trample everywhere. The next day it was the turn of the children and 300 of them enjoyed an afternoon with the slides, roundabouts and pirates. The crew really got into the spirit of things for the children's parties with all manner of people from officers, artificers, chiefs and POs, seamen and Royal Marines all doing their bit in fancy dress. In the main the boys didn't get involved unless they were ordered to do so and the reason for that was simply that they were ordered to attend and that took the edge off being free to choose.

By this time Ginger had the job as quartermaster's mate or, to be more precise, quartermaster's mate's mate. He was the lowest of the pecking order and basically just a gangway messenger. Nevertheless he had to stand watches in his whites whilst in harbour in company with the rest of his 'crew' - officer-of-the-watch, midshipman, quartermaster, bosun's mate and a Royal Marine on the forward gangway. It was an easy number and far better than continually scrubbing the quarterdeck wooden decking and polishing brasswork. His main task, apart from running the occasional message, was to collect a jug of 'limers', a concentrated fruit juice, every watch he was on during the day. That, made up with cold water, made enough for a couple of glasses each for all the 'crew'.

It was on that particular afternoon watch that Ginger got some retaliation on the Royal Marine



corporal that had thrown his bottles over the side in Callao. He had been forward to collect the 'limers' from the stores chief and was on his way back aft with aluminium jug of neat juice and, at the forward gangway the corporal blocked his way demanding: 'Gis some of that there'. There was no time to explain it was not watered down as the bigheaded so-and-so grabbed the jug and took a deep swig. The look on his face was a picture as he realized he'd shot himself in the foot but the damage was done; the thick syrupy stuff stuck to his face and ran down his chin. Ginger would have brought him some after dilution, as was the custom, because he was part of the gangway team after all but he couldn't help feeling a great deal of smugness as he continued aft.

It worked out somehow that he only had one duty during their stay on Montevideo and that was during the children's party day. Although he was in the thick of things that afternoon with children clambering everywhere, it was still easy and his hardest job was keeping the visiting Uruguayans from making announcements over the Tannoy, from the little caboose that was right by the gangway.

At midday the next day his duties came to an end and after dinner he, in company with a couple of others, headed down the gangway into town once again. The date was Friday March 4 and it proved to be yet another historic occasion for the port of Montevideo.

During their previous runs ashore they found it was better to stay away from the bars and shops in the Plaza and they found a nice little bar up on the right hand side from the dockside and just out of sight of prying eyes from the ship. In previous visits Ginger had found that other crew members would come into that bar late in the afternoon, looking for someone to take their souvenirs and purchases back on board for them. As boys were on their 1830 curfew they made ideal carriers. Ginger had been pleased to help out. He had to be back on board early anyway and each time he had been ashore he had returned to deliver packages to various messes for people who were in a position to enjoy the nightlife until midnight or even 0800 the next morning.

Such was his lot: pennant runs, souvenir runs, rabbit runs, delivering other peoples purchases so they could enjoy themselves unencumbered - and return on board by 1800!

But this time they knew it would be their last run ashore and they were leaving harbour the following day. So it was a last look round the pennant and souvenir shops and a couple of farewell drinks in the Plaza bars and then down to their favourite little bar just down toward the dockside, to pass the remainder of their time and spend the last of their money before heading back to their home from home, waiting for them at the water's edge.

This time there were no packages to be delivered, not that Ginger would have been aware anyway. Someone had bought him a glass of something that tasted very nice in the last place they'd visited in the Plaza and by the time they reached their last port of call he was in a little world of his own, having had a wonderful time and not a care in the world.



With the addition of a couple more beers that good feeling stayed with him as he and his fellow travelling companions bade farewell to their hosts and headed down toward the ship to beat their deadline.

The ship was big enough to see and was in plain view as they navigated a course in her direction. None of them seemed to notice Ginger lagging behind and he was not aware of it himself until he found he'd missed the entrance gate that led to the dockside. The gate was big enough to see. It was a large, wide opening in a tall chain link wire fence and big enough to allow passage to any dockside traffic. Maybe being the same as the fencing was a bit confusing but nevertheless, should have caused no problem. It hadn't caused anyone else any problem.

Somehow Ginger had left the road that led through the gate and had drifted to the left until he was alongside the ship, but on the wrong side of the wire fence, only a matter of yards away. Calling out didn't attract anyone's attention although they must have seen him. Finally a couple of others returning on board and on the other side of the fence, pointed out where he had missed the gate. He thanked them and hurriedly raced round and up the gangway only to be met at the top by the officer of the watch - a horrible little ex-Ganges thin-ringer!

His excursion had made him a few minutes late. Just a few minutes, hardly anything at all really. He wasn't really late at all apart from that fence being in the way, he would have made it back on board at the designated time. Possibly with anyone else it would have been a bit of a telling off and a 'don't let it happen again' but not with a jumped up thin-ring nobody with a boy to rant and rave at. *Shades of Bachelor* from his *Ganges* days came flooding back.

Euphoria from a very good run ashore coupled with more than a touch of liquid bravado gave Ginger the courage to stand his ground. Although not over tall himself, he towered above the horrible squirt of a man. The thin-ringer was *Bachelor from Ganges* all over again. He was bright red in the face and shouting at the top of his voice, spitting as he did so. Most of what he said went unheard. Ginger wasn't interested in anything he had to say. The same thoughts kept going round in his head: *I'm not at Ganges any more. I don't have to listen to this rubbish any longer.*

He stepped right up close and every time the thin-ringer stepped back, he stepped up again, angling his head down far more than necessary, to emphasise the nasty little man's shortness.

Quite what he thought that would get him he hadn't thought but what it did get him he hadn't expected. Suddenly he was aware that a couple of Royal Marines were hovering close by and, completely ignoring the thin-ringer, he turned round to see why they were there. His action caused the officer to notice them as well.

'Take him away!' he snarled.

Ginger still hadn't put two and two together. However the truth came to him with a bang when he was unceremoniously shoved into a cell with a block of wood for a bed.

To be continued next month

MY PART IN THE DOWNFALL OF A DICTATOR

Part 1

By Ex Leading Seaman C Robinson

This story, written in 2005, was submitted to the People's War site.

In January 1939, 3 friends, all working in the steelworks at Scunthorpe, decided that wages of 4d (approx 1½ p) per hour was not good enough and decided that we would better ourselves by joining the Royal Navy. In early February, after passing 3 tests, intelligence and physical, I found myself on the way to Chatham Barracks. Sadly the other 2 failed the tests and I was on my own.

On February 15th 1939 I walked through the Barrack gates and became a new entrant in Duncan block. For 3 days we were treated like Royalty and had a rest room with settees and easy chairs. On the 4th day we signed on. Our life of ease was over, our training really began. About 30 of us became known as Class 30 in the care of Petty Officer Amos. We did the lot, seamanship, marching, gunnery, torpedoes, cooking, laundering, swimming, gym, rifle drill and last but not least, how to blanco belts and gaiters.

In mid August, we were marched to the dockyard where we had to ammunition *H.M.S. Kelly*. We knew then that it was for real and on September 3rd, war broke out. Shortly after, I was on my way to Thurso (North Scotland) in a train packed with new sailors. From Thurso to Scapa Flow on a ferry, my first time out of sight of land. We were deposited on the battleship *H.M.S. Iron Duke* to await our fate. The following day we drafted to the Tribal Class Destroyer *H.M.S. Ashanti*, which was to be my home till 1941. On that night we put to sea with the Home Fleet, searching for German surface raiders with no luck. The weather was atrocious and I was as sick as a dog for 7 days, but thankfully never again. We did many Atlantic convoys; dropped lots of depth charges but never saw a submarine although many merchant ships were sunk. One convoy I will always remember consisted of large passenger liners from the USA. There must have been thousands of servicemen on board. Thankfully they all arrived safely in the UK. We rescued a boatload of men in the Atlantic who had been adrift for a fortnight. They were starving, wet and cold, and no doubt pleased to see us.

We were in Scapa when a German submarine, which had penetrated the defences, sank *H.M.S. Royal Oak* and for 24 hours it was like hell let loose but the sub got away.

During my time on *Ashanti*, Germany invaded Norway. We did a few convoys to Norway, taking troops over and on one occasion at Andalsness. Our captain decided to put men ashore to boost the Norwegians and I found myself at the top of a mountain with a twin Lewis gun, guarding a



railway line below; this was in about 6ins of snow. We were told that if we heard a train on the line, it would be German because they had taken the town further south. We did hear a train while on our way down the mountain; the Marines had taken over. I gather they were given a rough time too. Another time we and 3 other *Tribals* had to contain 5 German destroyers in Trondheim Fjord. We patrolled up and down for a week and every morning without fail, the Luftwaffe would come over and bomb us, always high altitude and we couldn't reach them with our 4.7's or Pom Poms, but we got quite good at taking evasive action. Eventually we left with the Germans still there.

Early one morning we left Rosyth to intercept a German convoy, steaming north along the Norwegian coast. Again 4 destroyers were led by *H.M.S. Cossack*; the convoy consisted of 4 merchant ships and 7 escorts. We approached them in the dark, circled them once and sank them all, then arrived back at Rosyth with no casualties.

My final voyage on *Ashanti* was from somewhere on the south coast to Newcastle, to screen the new battleship *King George V* down to Portsmouth. We never made it. Our leader *H.M.S. Fame* mistook a buoy and the two of us finished up on the beach at Whitburn near Sunderland. The local Home Guard thought the invasion had started and turned out in force, but a few choice words redirected their rifles. Eventually we were all taken ashore by Breeches Buoy and billeted in an old army camp, two fields up from the beach. We stayed there for 3 weeks and then took the long trail back to *H.M.S. Pembroke*, Chatham by train.

During my time on *Ashanti*, I progressed from Ordinary Seaman to Able Seaman. I had various jobs, the first being Quarter Deck Messenger from where I had my first brush with the captain for saying, "Yes Sir" instead of "Aye Aye Sir". He was a dead ringer for Charles Laughton, Captain Bligh in *Mutiny on the Bounty*. A complete snob (in my opinion) but a good seaman. The 1st Lieutenant was a Viscount, Lieutenant Commander Viscount Jocelyn, later to become an Admiral. My action stations were Lookout and "B" Guns crew, both cold and wet more often than not. My first and only 'Jankers' was on board her, 7 days for being late off leave. My train was diverted because of bombing to Falmouth via Bristol instead of direct. My punishment, while at sea, was to run backwards and forwards on the iron prom deck, rucksack on my back with a cannon ball in it. With the ship rolling, it was quite interesting and tiring.

The only other foreign country visited was Iceland and they didn't like us at all, if caught talking to us the girls had all their hair cut off.

In *Pembroke* it was back to Duncan block but in the Barrack Guard, which meant no sleeping down the Tunnel, which was a bonus. I became a sentry at the mouth of the Admiral's tunnel, it was an all weather job doing the normal watches; very boring but with a bonus of occasional weekend leave.

Finally I got a draft to *H.M.S. Sikh* and re-commissioned her in South Shields on April 2nd 1941. She had been in dock for repairs after a collision with *H.M.S. Mashona*. After lots of activity, like storing and ammunitioning the ship, eventually, we went to sea, to that beautiful resort of Scapa Flow. We did many Atlantic convoys and Asdic sweeps. One of the convoys involved 35,000 troops on the way to Gibraltar. During this we heard that the *Bismarck* was out in the Denmark Strait, then that *Hood* had been sunk, the *Prince of Wales* was damaged and she was coming our way. The following day we sighted her on the horizon. Our gun layer reported that she was being bombed because he could see flashes; a minute later we knew he was wrong because her first salvo landed in our wake. Wonderful gunnery. For some reason, she did not continue the attack, but kept in close contact. There were 4 destroyers in the escort, *Cossack*, *Sikh*, *Maori* and *Piorun* (Polish). We were ordered to do a torpedo attack, which we did with anti personnel shells exploding above us all the time we were going in, fortunately we came out unscathed. The *Piorun* went in close enough to open up with machine guns, came out without damage and then had to return to the UK, she was short on fuel. That night, the BBC reported the attack but failed to mention *Sikh*, later it was found that they thought she had been sunk. Everyone knows the story of the final sinking and how the aircraft from the *Ark Royal* had damaged her steering gear, but we like to think it was us. We had a grandstand seat at the sinking; we saw many of her crew in the water but daren't stop to pick them up because of the presence of U Boats. This was true but it transpired they were returning to Brest and had no torpedoes left. After all that, we carried on to Gibraltar and became part of Admiral Sommervilles Force H. That is when my war really began.

From Gibraltar, we did convoys into the Atlantic and the Med. We also escorted the carriers *Ark Royal*, *Eagle* and *Argus* into the Med to fly off aircraft to Malta. On one of these operations, the *Ark Royal* was torpedoed 25 miles from Gibraltar. While sinking, aircraft were still landing on her, with difficulty of course. We went alongside and took off the Admiral, then full speed ahead to Gibraltar, put the Admiral ashore then back to the scene. At first we thought she would get back under her own steam, but for some reason, she increased speed and her bulkheads collapsed, resulting in her sinking. Later we had to take her survivors home to the UK, along with 3 other destroyers and the battleship *H.M.S. Rodney*. When we left Gibraltar, the sea was flat calm and slate grey and we knew it was going to be a difficult journey. The weather got worse and worse and by the time we got well into the Bay of Biscay, we couldn't make headway with waves 40-50 ft high. *Rodney* being much bigger and more powerful, signalled "Up Yours," then he left, and arrived home safely. Meanwhile we wallowed in the storm and lost everything on the upper deck, including boats, guard rails etc. How the chefs managed I don't know, but we did get hot food. This lasted for 3 days. Eventually we got under way again arriving in Falmouth 3 days later. We were flying our pennants, which were a bit tattered, and shore base enquired about the signal we were flying and the reply was that it was



seaweed, not a signal.

After repairs and replacement of lost equipment, we proceeded to Londonderry where all the ammunition except that on the upper deck was taken off and the magazines were then topped up with potatoes. From there on the future was viewed with some trepidation and we had an idea that Malta might be our destination. Fortunately we were not attacked on the way to Gibraltar; we couldn't have spared the ammunition. At Gibraltar we re-fuelled and as previously thought, set off for Malta, along with 4 destroyers: *Sikh*, *Maori*, *Legion* and *Isaac Sweers* (Dutch). On our way we were informed that two 8ins Italian cruisers were in our way in the Pantelleria area. It was assumed that the two cruisers *Alberico da Barbiano* and *Alberto da Guissano* would reach Tripoli long before we arrived in the area. We were the lead ship with Commander Stokes in command, a brilliant tactician, but unfortunately, not in the best of health.

On arrival at Pantelleria we found that the cruisers had not gone on to Tripoli, but for some reason were now in our path. When we finally met up, it was dark but they were openly using their signal lamps. Commander Stokes took us into the lee of the land, albeit into a minefield, but although we could see them, they couldn't see us. We got to within 1 mile of them. We torpedoed the first one, the *Maori* and *Legion* the second, sinking them both. We later found they were carrying troops and aviation fuel on the upper deck. In total 14 torpedoes were fired and they lost 920 men. Then it was full speed to Malta where all the ships and *St Angelo* had cleared lower decks to cheer us in and for 2 days, we could do no wrong. *Sikh's* name was to be seen on all the walls of Sliema and Valetta. All 4 destroyers were allowed to *Splice the Mainbrace* and for once we were recognised by the bigger ships and were invited to a film show on one of them. Big Deal! After this we were based at Malta for some time, doing escort duties, Asdic sweeps and bombardments.

Every day we, along with the Maltese, were bombed, every day and all day. On one of these attacks, we lost H.M.S. *Maori*, a bomb landed on her quarterdeck while she was secured to a buoy. About this time, Commander Stokes had to leave us because of his continuing ill health. He did recover later on and was promoted deservedly to Admiral. Captain St John Micklethwaite, ex captain of *Eskimo* arrived on board with his staff and became Captain "D", which meant more red tape for us. On *Sikh*, my home was S Mess with Leading Seaman RC Foster, known as Arsy, in charge. There was always mess savings at the end of the month, there had to be because such things as fish and chips was herrings in tomato sauce to him. He later passed for P.O. and had to leave the ship. Many of my future friends were from S Mess, but sadly, now they have all crossed the Bar. I was later detailed to become a Quartermaster, there were two 1-badgers and two 3-badgers, lots of battles but a reasonably comfortable life, no getting soaked at sea, no scrubbing decks, chipping paint or painting etc. My action station was tray operator on Y gun, hydraulic but hard work. While in Malta the shortage of food



affected us too and the staple diet was Corned Beef and Rice, with a small prize for the best concoction, but a good meal was always available down the Gut and we always said that what they served up was what they rescued from under our gash chutes.

Came the day we were transferred to Alexandria. On our arrival, Italian 2 man torpedoes crept in under us when the boom was opened; they put the battleships *Valiant* and *Queen Elizabeth* on the bottom and did untold damage to tankers and other ships. They didn't bother with the French ships because they never went to sea. This action transferred sea dominance to the Italians; we were left with 2 or 3 cruisers and a few destroyers, on paper, no match for the powerful Italian Fleet. While based at Alex, we carried out bombardments of Libyan ports and Rhodes and 6 or 7 Malta convoys always with fast merchant ships carrying fuel and supplies. Always the bombing started as soon as we left harbour, we never had air protection.

Invariably we lost most of the merchant ships on the way but if one got through it was a bonus. Then, after 2 or 3 days in Malta, and the continual bombing, it was back to Alex also with continual bombing, always high level never Stukas. On one of these convoys the old battleship *Centurion* (now a target ship) sailed with us to attract the bombers; funnily they never went near her, I think their intelligence was better than ours. On another convoy, there were 2 cruisers (*Arethusa* was one of them) and 4 merchant ships in the centre, and 8 destroyers surrounding them as escorts. Near Malta we were attacked by torpedo bombers. One came in from astern and was repeatedly hit by shells and bullets, it eventually caught fire and tried to land on *Arethusa's* foc'sle, but just failed. During this action I was hit in the small of the back with a primer from one of our own shells. The overlap on my rubber lifebelt saved me from any fractures etc., but it certainly took my breath away and I was excused all duties for 48 hours. Unbounded generosity!! I was inside the gun shield at the time and saw the primer coming, but it was faster than I was. After all this forced excitement we were occasionally sent to Cyprus for a 3-day rest. When there, we hadn't time to rest with such things as brandy at 1 shilling (5p) a bottle and stacks of very salty peanuts to go with it. Also free transport in a pickup back to the ship when we hit the fresh air and fell over in a drunken stupor. It was a change from the bombs anyway, internal instead of external. Sometimes, during the day we drank neat orange juice. After the liquid fire it was beautiful. We could also buy a kitbag full of oranges for 5p; sadly they started to go rotten before I got to the bottom.

Part 2 continues next month

~ Harrison Ford...

Wood burns faster when you have to cut and chop it yourself.



BACK IN 1956

By Lt. Cdr. E. H. Chittleburgh

Part 15

SAILING

Blue waters and blue skies, little bays and waterways, steady breezes and a good boat - a sailing enthusiast's paradise.

It was a far cry from this paradise when Superb's enthusiasts were called upon to meet the first challenge of the season, for on the 27th March 1956 Umm Said Sailing Club invited us to race in gale force winds and rough seas. The race did not take place, but in a 'blow' around the harbour later, one of their boats was dismasted and another suffered damage to the rigging before we were all recalled to the Club. So, like many other races, the result was decided by rounding whisky glass buoys in the shallow spillage waters in Bartop Bay, the barman acting as Starter, Sailing Officer of the Day, Judge and Race committee by keeping any elbows from becoming 'obstructions to the sea room' and seeing that the helmsmen and crew did not retire until the required of laps, sips or gulps were completed.

Four days later we sailed against the Dolphin Yacht Club at Kuwait, but after a good start by all the boats the race was abandoned owing to adverse weather conditions. Where were those blue waters and blue skies? Even some of the enthusiasts were beginning to find other sports and pastimes not so dependent on the weather. So it was that on the 3rd April when we visited the Cumberland Yacht Club at Shuwaikh we were under strength in sailing experience and technique, but retaining a certain amount of enthusiasm, we managed, after a very closely contested race, to win by the bare margin of the extra half point allocated to the first boat over the finishing line. This then was our introduction to the Sailing Season 1956/57.

Our next meeting with a Yacht Club came during our stay in Colombo; here, with a good breeze and among some of the great liners of the world, we enjoyed a fine afternoon's sailing organised by the Royal Colombo Yacht Club. Although we had the first and third boats over the line, our tail-enders were, perhaps, sabotaged by their pretty crews, and finished by losing by two points.

On the East African Cruise we enjoyed the fine hospitality and sailing facilities of the Royal East African Navy, Mombasa Yacht Club, Zanzibar Yacht Club and the Dar-es-Salaam Yacht Club. At each of these Clubs we acquitted ourselves favourably with the racing results, and gained valuable experience in the many types of boats and rigs that we sailed. In addition to the racing and the hospitality shown to our Cruising Members, the Dar-es-Salaam Club also arranged a sailing picnic to Honeymoon Island to round off our Regatta.



On Superb's return to Trincomalee and "Jet" we had the Combined Fleet Sailing Races on Sunday afternoon to take part in, and also the Saturday Points Race run by the Royal Naval Sailing Club. On the whole our helmsmen did extremely well in these races, not always winning but often 'placed'. Superb was asked to conduct the Fleet Races, and many thanks are here accorded to all the willing helpers in making those races the success they undoubtedly were. These Fleet Races were rounded off by a Fleet Obstacle Whaler Race, and many thanks are here recorded to all of many guard-rail critics as we did have the first two boats over the finishing line. The "Olduns" having a clear win, and proving that veteran experience can still outshine more modern techniques.

During the whole of the season we have, as the opportunity had afforded itself, organised 'Novice' Races.

These races could not have been so successful had we not been able to borrow dinghies from the R.N. Sailing club at Trincomalee, so, whilst giving ourselves a pat on the back, we must also thank the Committee and Members of that Club for not only allowing us the use of their dinghies whilst at Trincomalee, but also allowing us to take at least three boats with us on our cruises.

I am sure all those who have taken part in races and cruises in various Yacht clubs, have appreciated the opportunity to race with them, and their unstinted hospitality, afloat and ashore. The fine organisation behind those Regattas is reflected in the outstanding success they were.

We look forward now to new waters to sail over wherever the future may take us, whether those waters be as blue as those we have already sailed together does not matter, as long as the sportsmanship shown is maintained at its present high standard. During the past year only one of our helmsmen has had a protest lodged against him, and this was not upheld. May I then wish all fellow helmsmen and crews the very best of wishes for the future and may we have many more battles under the R.N.S.A. or other burgees, and may we often have to ask each other for "water at the marks".

BOXING



Back: A.B. Arthur O.D. Rothwell A.B. Lang
Middle P.O. Cole M.E. Pierce E.M. Goddard Lt. Leach A.B. Barnes L.M.B. Such
Front: A.B. Arnold A.B. Fawcner O.D. Stephen-Jones O.D. Jowett Musician Churchill

DO YOU HAVE A BETTER PHOTO?

It's very pleasant to write about an unbeaten record, for such is the achievement of the Superb Boxing Team.

After leaving Chatham last year, Cdr. Napper created the interest and the ship was fortunate in having an experienced boxer, P.O.M (E) Cole, who gave up a great deal of his time to coach and train our boxers.

The first match was in Dar-es-Salaam on the 2nd July 1956 against a club of African and Indian boxers, who had drawn with H.M.S Gambia a year earlier. Our team of O.S Arnold, O.S Arthur, O.S Stephen-Jones, O.S. Faulkner, A.B Boorman, M (E) Sweeney, M (E) Warman, LM (E) Such and Marine. Gooderson were highly successful, winning by nine bouts to one, having at very short notice brought in Captain Tucker and Marine. Fraser both of whom won their bouts.

With this encouraging start, training began in earnest and the sweating, grunting and skipping figures were to be a familiar sight on the Quarterdeck.

On the 19th October, Superb's team was chosen to represent the Royal Navy in the Inter-Service Boxing Championships at Colombo. We were unfortunate in losing both O.S Arnold and LM (E) just a week before the preliminary bouts and so each of our team had to 'step up' one weight. Nevertheless, E.M. Goddard, O.S. Steven-Jones, O.S. Barnes, A.B. Boorman and O.S. Faulkner qualified for the finals and Superb won the Inter-Services Cup with O.S. Stephen-Jones being presented with the cup for the most scientific boxer of the meeting.

The King's Shropshire Light Infantry rather fancied themselves as boxers, so on the 23rd November, in Bahrein, a match was arranged at Jufair Cinema. It was an excellent night's entertainment and the band of the Commander-In-Chief was in attendance. Our boxers swept all before them and won nine bouts to four. New boxers being Leading Seamen Hide, Musen & Churchill and Leading Clerk Green.

A lot of credit is due to the boxers who trained and fought with success in such trying weather, and to P.O.M (E) willows and M.(E) Pierce who assisted so ably in the corners. A special vote of thanks is due to P.O.M. (E) Cole who was always there, encouraging, advising and keeping the team really 'on their toes'.

THE SHIP'S RUGBY XV



HMS SUPERB 1956-57

Back: Lt. Anderson L.E.M. McNeill Cpl. Cox Mid. Patrick Lt. Wilson O.S. Thornton Lt. Leach
Mech. Lowe O.S. Millington Musn Kean L.E.M. Cooke
Front: Mne. Baldwin L.S. Tonks E.R.A. Southorn R.E.M Hutchinton

DO YOU HAVE A BETTER PHOTO?

The rugby Team had its biggest battles against seasons, hard grounds and being in the wrong place. Our first game against the Kuwait Club, played at Mina, was very encouraging, for although we had lost in a close finish of 8-3, they had just finished a full season, and this was the first time we'd been together on a rugby ground.

Hard ground and late rains in Trincomalee precluded us playing anything but touch rugby,. But we did manage to hold two trial matches in May before going off on our East African Cruise.

The spirit and hospitality of the clubs in east Africa was really an eye opener and our teams were feted in great style, due largely to the help of Mr. D. Dye of Dar-es-Salaam. We had two hard games in Mombasa, winning once against the Sports Club 10-6 and losing to the Kenya Regiment 11-6. After their game the Kenya Regiment presented the ship with a very handsome Massai shield and two spears. In Dar-es-Salaam we played two games and Dar-es-Salaam won the McMichael Cup, an annual match between the flagship and the local team. The 2nd XV had a weekend up country with the Kilosa Rugby Club and from all accounts would have liked to spend longer there.

Rugby in the Seychelles was just starting and we found the club full of enthusiasm, though their play was a trifle unorthodox. We finished the cruise on a high note, winning both our games, and receiving lavish praise in the local press.

On our return to Trincomalee we were up against our old enemy of concrete-hard grounds. The rains were just coming when we left for the Persian Gulf Cruise and quick trials were held for our return game against Kuwait. This was not to be however, for the Suez crisis But that's another story.

We've had some good games on the rugger field and a lot of good times after them, and we look forward to ending what is left of the season in England.

SOCCER

As with other sports, we suffered from lack of trials at the beginning of the commission. Our first competitive games in the Gulf were used mainly as try-outs and indifferent results were only to be expected. The 1st X1 soon began to pick itself however, and it became apparent that the team was well above average. There were, in fact, five players of "Command" standard and the remainder of the team played up to them. Our main lack was of experienced inside forwards and if we had had those as well, we would have been a very good team instead of just a good one.

Our main strength was, undoubtedly, the defence, with then half-back line of Such, Senior and Forsyth outstanding. It soon became necessary to move Senior into the forward line and McCullum took over as the centre half and this formation was kept to the end of the

commission. Sayce and Skillin, at times, played a first class game at goal-keeper and left back respectively, and Smith on the left wing was always a driving force of the forward line. Tosney made the right wing position his own with some determined displays, but the inside left and centre forward positions remained a problem that was never completely solved.

The team reached the peak of its form on the East African Cruise where the locals pronounced us the best ship's team to visit the coast for six years. There is no doubt in our minds that all those members of the ship's company, who were lucky enough to watch the match at Zanzibar, will remember it for years to come.

During "Exercise J.E.T", the Royal Navy team carried off the soccer trophy for the first time in four years. Superb supplied six members of the team and could well have supplied them all.

The 2nd X1 was constantly changing but put up some very good displays and always enjoyed their football.

We would like to express our thanks to Chief (E) Taylor, C.P.O. French, C.P.O. Wignall, P.O. Biddle, Ldg. Airman Miles, M.(E) Thompson, A.B. Dunwell, ORD Bayliss and all others who refereed and organised our games.

Football Results				
First Eleven	Played	Won	Lost	Drawn
	50	27	12	11
Second Eleven				
	34	16	10	8

HOCKEY

Hockey Results			
Played	Won	Lost	Drawn
38	11	21	6

In general the Ship's 1st and 2nd Hockey Teams had not too successful a commission, due mainly to the loss of the shakedown period, for three weeks in Malta would have allowed all the trials



necessary for the forming of a ship's team, as well as giving the Ship's Company an appetite for the game.

As it was, the first hockey played was a match against the R.N Base at Jufair, Bahrein, on March 23rd, which we lost, but from this game emerged the stalwarts that formed the main part of the Ship's team for the remainder of the commission. During our first period in the Gulf, we played and lost four games, and it wasn't until we met naval opposition that we had our first heart-warming win. This was against Highflyer in Trincomalee on April 20th. It is interesting to note at this point that against other Service teams we invariably won, against European teams we either lost by a very small margin or drew, but against the Indian teams we always lost. One noticeable exception was when we beat the Sikh Combined Schools in Mombasa.

During the East African cruise the opposition encountered was always of the very highest standard, usually all or part Indian, and we did very well in winning one, having two even and losing only three.

With the start of J.E.T on August 14th, we saw the Indian, Pakistan and Ceylonese ships arrive at Trinco and knew we were due for some wonderful hockey, to play and the watch. The R.N. Team, in which Superb was well represented, was drawn against the R. C .N. for its first match, and was winning 6-0 when the game was abandoned twenty minutes from the final whistle because of rain. Six goals seemed to be a favourite number, for the I.N. and the P.N. beat the R.N. by that score, with no goals for the R.N. and in the final the I.N. beat the P.N. by 6-0. To Superb was accorded the honour of umpiring this magnificent game and it was conducted with great success by Lieut. Hackett and Shipt. Lt. Dowell.

Although during J. E. T., the R.N. suffered severe defeats on the hockey field and the hands and sticks of the I.N. and the P.N. The games afforded great spectator material, for they were by no means all one way, it just happened that the R.N. was afflicted with the same trouble as had dogged Superb all the time-they were unable to get the ball into the net.

Mention should be made here of the players who always formed the nucleus of the Ship's teams: E.R.A Short in goal, Major Morrison R.M. and Lieut. Anderson as backs, M.E Robinson and O.S. Lapidge as halves, A.B. Abdi, E.R.A Leathley and Lieut. Hackett as forwards, for they, and all the other players with them, always gave their best. Thanks are also due to Lieut. Hackett for his work as Hon. Sec. For the hockey and to Shipt. Lieut. Dowell for his umpiring of all the ship's games.

Hockey is a great game, and one of the few remaining in the world that is wholly amateur, and its spirit was upheld in a fine and worthy manner by the 1st and 2nd Elevens of H.M.S Superb's 1956 Commission.



SHOOTING

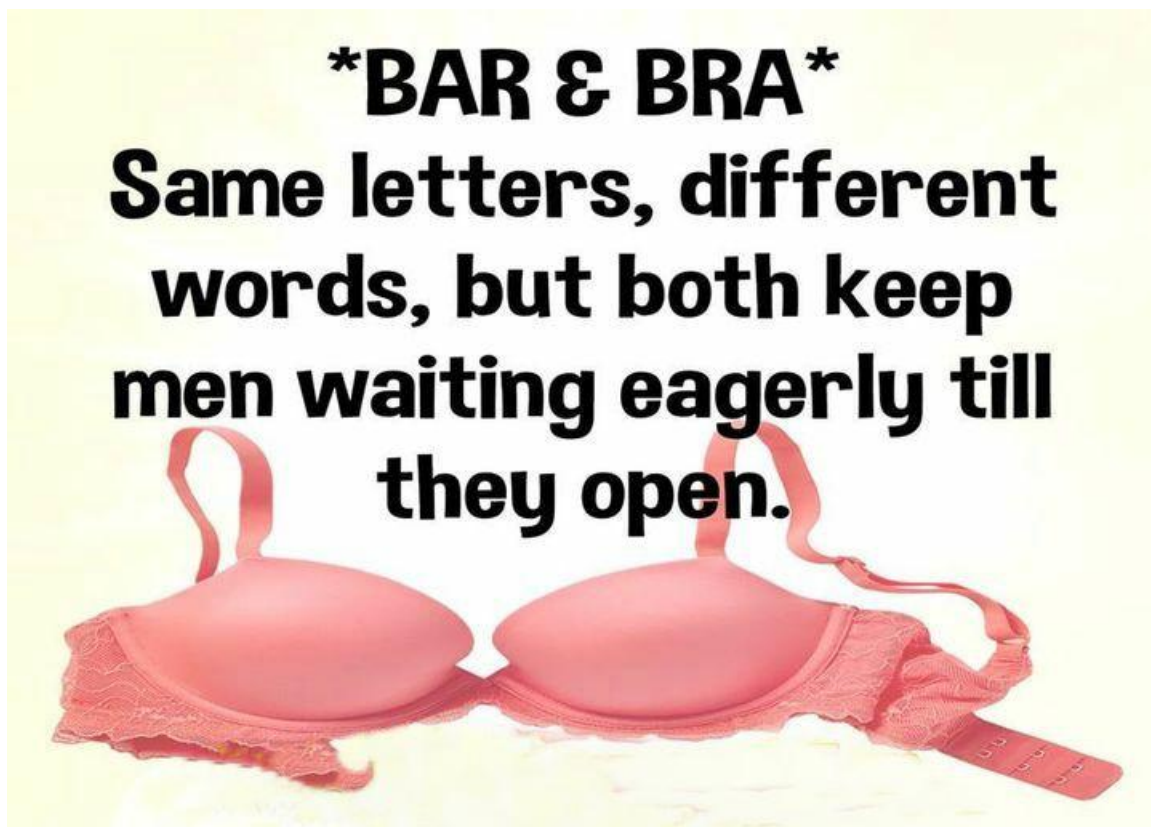
Match Results: Won 9. Lost 3.

Recreational and competitive shooting has played its part amongst the sporting activities of this commission. In the recreational field we have had .22 team tile competitions, .22 target shooting, revolver shooting and, perhaps the most successful, .303 balloon shoots. Most members of the ship's company have taken part in one or other of these competitions.

On the competitive side we called for a list of volunteers to form the ship's team, and from these names and others who showed their skill at .22 shooting, we were able to select some very competent teams.

The standard of shooting has been very high in all these matches, and our teams have performed most creditably. Undoubtedly the best match of the cruise was the "Four-sided" one held at Dar-es-Salaam. The hospitality shown us was almost too good; however, we held our own both in 'capacity' and in our shooting. Members of Superb's "A" team were awarded a silver spoon each for the best performance of the day, Lt. Catchpole being the top scorer. Leading Seaman Skillin heads the team average with 83/100.

The Nore Command Rifle meeting is being held 8th-12th April and we shall be able to enter an experienced team, and have every hope of success.



THE FORGOTTEN FLEET.

At the end of WW1 over 200 U-Boats and support vessels surrendered to the British. The U-Boats started coming in on the 21st November 1918. Subject to the terms of the Armistice, the entire U-boat fleet was to be surrendered to the Allies. They were met by a small flotilla of British warships led by Rear Admiral Sir Reginald Tyrwhitt, commanding officer of the Harwich fleet. The first 20 began arriving at 10am on November 20th 1918. Personnel from the Royal Navy received the vessels at the specified coordinates 20 miles from British land.



The U-boats were then boarded, at which point the Germans were asked to show their British counterparts the boats controls and to confirm that no infernal machines or booby traps of any sort are on board. Guided in by Royal Navy warships, the U-boats then laid anchor in the River Stour. Rear Admiral Tyrwhitt ruled there should be "no communication whatsoever" with the Germans, who were packed on to transport ships and sent home without being allowed to set foot on British soil. The fleet stretched for two miles (3km) down the river outside Parkeston Quay, Harwich.

Damhead Creek on the north bank of the Medway in the mud. 23 were brought to Chatham, in 1918 1919. They were cannibalised. The conning towers taken off to get under Rochester Bridge, so they could be floated down to Aylesford and Maidstone, the diesel engines were taken out to power the paper mills along the river. In the early 1920s the scrap value of metal crashed and it was not worth breaking up the remaining U Boats so they were literally dumped in the mud of the Medway Estuary. If you check Google maps one U boat is marked at Damhead Creek.

PHOTO ALBUM



Soviet sailors cleaning main turret on the cruiser Kalinin - date unknown. The guns were 180 mm (7.1 inch) and the barrels had to be elevated together, This was at the cost of lower accuracy. The trade-off for having 7 inch instead of 6 inch



HMS Superb
December 1976





Stokers - 24 Mess
25th December, 1956

Looking for more faces!

George Scurfield was in this mess but where is he?

Len Baker is in the front row 2nd from right

If you know anyone else please let me know



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Photograph of Cricket team in last month's issue

Hi Brian,

I wasn't on the 1956 cruise having got married when we arrived back from the Indies and wishing to stay with my new bride, but looking at the cricket photo I think I know two of the team. If I am right they were part of the team that we had! The photo's not very good but looking at it straight on the one extreme right back row looks very much like CERA Barnes. Funny thing is he is standing in the same position as he was in the 1954/1955 magazine photo.

The other one I feel sure is ERA3 Kevin Doyle and he is the one seated on the ground extreme right. I knew Kevin really well and my son is named after him. As I have said it's not a good photo but I do know they stayed on board for the next cruise. Hope this helps a little!

Frank Nunn

Concerning Membership Newsletter about Robin standing down as Chairman

Dearies Rob & Brian,

Thank you for the combined comprehensive newsletter I think a further 'C' for Concise would also fit my thoughts. How fortunate we became when Rob put his plate up for chairman's office; a quantum jump in the tenor of things. That the Sisterhood developed in one season and became right-hand women has proved inspired. That Denise and Caroline wished to continue in any capacity is an unexpected bolt from the blue. My own presumptuous view is we should immediately contact the naval tailors for two number three cornered hats with gold braid and rosettes. Parade guard and band for official inauguration as joint Grand Masters - ooops! - Mistresses.

Meanwhile back at the Chateau spreading Superb's word 'good and bad' is in the most capable hands of Monsewer) Brian and Mizz Libby. I have seen several odd newsletters from other associations over the last few years and most seemed only overly concerned about their elected managements 'Our old ships history', photo albums and Manning lists etc.

We are head and shoulders above that with a growing band of contributors, interesting stories to tell plus comments of some value. I see 'Messrs Saunders' sat round a guttering candle at 2:30 in the mists of morning bashing away at computer keys to keep our monthly news topical and informative. The vital glory of communication as ever. I realise you sought suggestions - and somewhere in this in this attack of verbal diarrhoea is my vote for the future.

Personally I will hold myself available to clean shoes, dance socks and iron lanyards. The Sisterhood can rely on my selection of lurid lipsticks for the grand inauguration. Well a decent member has to Hold it! Our Yeoman has just sent a signal to Numéro Uno - 'Splice the Mainbrace' - again!

Thanks Brian I should be able to fill the other half of this page.

Andy Brierley

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)

None reported this month

ARCHIVED CONTENT

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British slave rescues we never hear about

By Jeremy Clarkson

Until last year no one had really heard of Edward Colston. But then, all of a sudden, every muddle-headed leftie decided that he was the bronzed embodiment of Saddam Hussein, so they raced into the centre of Bristol and, having hit his statue with their shoes, tore it down and threw it into the harbour.

Soon, other muddle-headed lefties from other towns and cities were rampaging around looking for other statues to hit with their shoes. At one point they even considered Nelson, wondering whether the possibly press-ganged sailors on his ships were technically slaves, but before coming to a conclusion they decided that none of their snowflake members knew how to use a ladder, and that toppling the admiral without one might well be a health and safety issue. So they descended on Winston Churchill instead.

Meanwhile, some Jeremy Corbyn enthusiasts at Oxford University had become consumed by a small stone man called Cecil Rhodes and decided he had to go in the Cherwell, while others wanted to do the same to Ted Hughes, for some reason. However, after it emerged Hughes was from an end-of-terrace house in Yorkshire and not a cotton plantation in Louisiana, the witch-hunt began to run out of steam and universities went back to getting the Chinese to sponsor various fellowships. Because of course China has never had any kind of human rights issue.

Then, last week, the whole cancel-culture movement reared up out of the bath again, like Glenn Close, when something called Historic England said it had identified a list of villages in the UK that had links to the slave trade.

Brockenhurst, in Hampshire, has been outed because a very old pub there is named after a family who may have once bought some Trinidadian sugar, and Nunnington in North Yorkshire was put on the naughty step because there's concern about how its school was built. And where the money came from.

Right. Good. This was excellent research, and I'm sure the people who live in these places are now burning their houses and pubs and schools down and moving, with their heads bowed in shame, to an area that was never involved in slavery. Spain, perhaps, or Portugal.

In the meantime, I've been doing some research of my own about the Royal Navy's West Africa Squadron, which was formed in 1808; just a year after Britain abolished the slave trade. It was stationed at first in Portsmouth and equipped with two warships, and its job was to patrol the west coast of Africa, apprehending anyone who was ignoring the new law.

To begin with, things were tricky because it could only stop ships flying the British flag. But



after the Napoleonic Wars were over, a chap called Viscount Castlereagh, the 2nd Marquess of Londonderry, ensured that France, Spain and Portugal would stop slaving as well, and, as a result, the Royal Navy was then allowed to stop and search their ships too. If you're from Northern Ireland, you can be proud of that.

And people from London can be proud of the squadron's commander, Sir George Collier. He massively increased the number of ships in the squadron and was told: "You are to use every means in your power to prevent a continuance of the traffic in slaves." He pursued this order with vigour.

Britannia claimed that it ruled the waves, and Britannia was going to damn well prove the point.

The slavers responded by building faster ships that could outrun the navy's powerful warhorses, but our top brass was quick to come up with a solution. A captured and very fast Brazilian slave ship was renamed *HMS Black Joke*, and in just two years it freed thousands of slaves. Weirdly, today, British schoolchildren are not taught about the vessel, or the bravery of its crew.

In one engagement it spent 31 hours chasing a Spanish brig called *El Almirante* that was en route to Havana. When the British finally caught up, they realised that their two tiny guns were no match for the 14 monsters that the Spaniards could muster. But after little more than an hour, 15 of the *El Almirante's* crew, including the captain, were dead, and the remainder had surrendered. In the hold, the captain of the *Black Joke* — a man called Lieutenant Henry Downes — found 466 slaves, who were later landed and freed.

This sounds like the sort of exciting story that would enliven a history lesson, but I'm afraid no one really knows anything about Downes. I suppose his story doesn't tally with current thinking.

Before the West Africa Squadron was disbanded in the 1860s, 2,000 Royal Navy sailors had given their lives while capturing 1,600 slave ships and freeing 150,000 slaves. It had been a huge operation — swallowing up 13 per cent of the navy's manpower — and it's reckoned that it cost far more than Britain earned from its earlier slaving enterprises. Again, that's not something you'll hear in many classrooms.

Nor do you hear much about the navy's east Africa operation, which was still going in the 20th century and at one time included apprehending slavers out of Zanzibar. And you certainly don't hear anything about the brave men who served on these ships. Most were from ordinary villages such as Brockenhurst and Nunnington, but for some reason Historic England has chosen to ignore them completely.

I guess that muddle-headed lefties really don't like the idea that for nearly a hundred years, and at vast expense, the country that they hate waged easily the most morally just war of all time.



These, then, are the sort of people who'd look at the life and times of Nelson Mandela and say: "Yeah, but let's ignore all that post-Robben Island stuff and focus instead on the fact that he once blew up a railway line."

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THE END