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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ANDY BRIERLEY'S BLOG

Hello Shipmates,

In my last news letter I recall a brief something about the Norway debacle. Since then the Battle of Britain programmes, and the R.A.F. being the nation's "saviour against invasion", flourished on TV. I was prompted to see exactly how the Royal Navy contributed to prevent a channel crossing by 'Evil Adolph' and 'Fat Herman'.

April 7th 1940: Heavy cruiser *Hipper*, 14 destroyers plus battleships *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* sailed for Narvik with merchant vessels; between them were 3700 troops.

U.K. Air Recon, tasked with the cover of British R.N. units mining Norway's coast, detected all those enemy vessels. By the 22nd of May the *Kriegsmarine* had lost 18 war ships, including 3 cruisers and 10 destroyers. The Luftwaffe lost 242 aircraft.

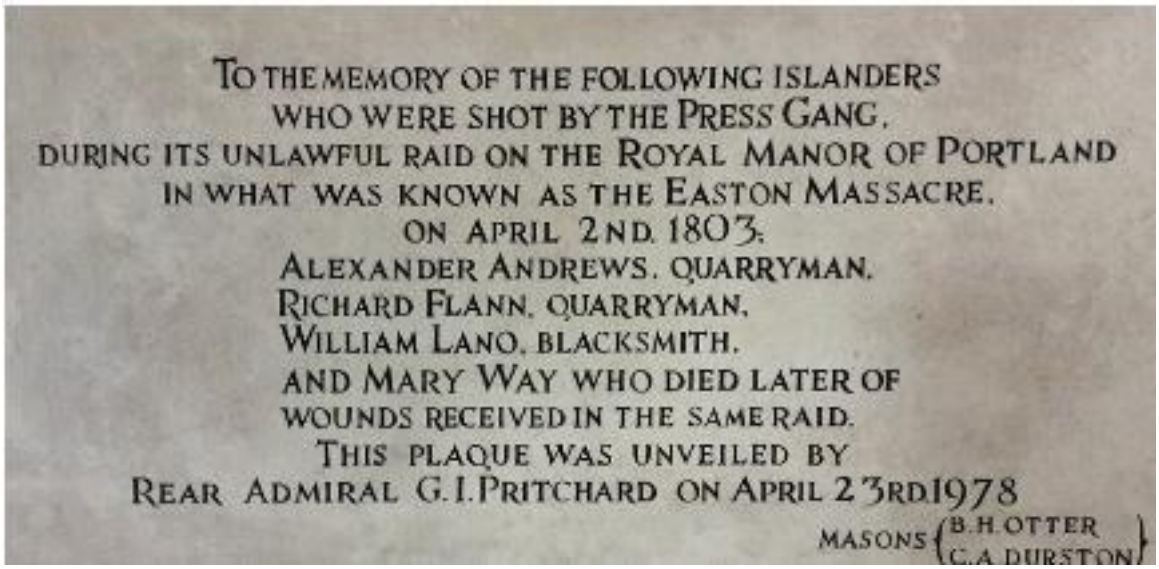
Knowing what the R.N. had, in home waters, to deter further *Kriegsmarine* assets from adventures in the channel it must have been easy for Adolph's advisers to dissuade him with numbers… The upside to his problem was that all ports and airfields of Norway had been successfully occupied.

At the end of December, start of January 'an upheaval' was planned and executed here at home; first part secret from me, second part I had a feeling of being press ganged into something I did not want; that's just to explain how pressgangs came to mind.

Historical lurid depictions of who did that job, and the poor victims, in cinema, on TV etc. made one dread such an event.

Impressment was a time-honoured 'legal right of the U.K. Crown, to the labour of its seafaring population' in war time; the alternative being conscription, as practised by France, Spain and Denmark. Evidently the R.N. rarely impressed lands men. Tales of press gangs sweeping up non-seafarers from towns were largely a myth created by political oppositions to back their campaign for abolishment in 1830 - 40s of impressment. In reality men were picked out who could handle 'sails and yards' of large

warships, it being taken as an operational hazard of deep water sailors, most of whom volunteered to accept the decent bounty paid.



So long as war lasted in 1793/1814 the R.N's need of men was endless as she fought most of the world's navies. Disease and shipwreck decimated crews; 'battles' were the least cost by a large margin!

Approximately 150,000 were needed to man our fleet, a reported 24000 lost to disease in the West Indies alone; methods of manning the fleet reads as being complicated, complex and costly.

Napoleon's conscription laws, to man his vast land army, denuded the countryside of those who produced her food, the farmers; severe food shortage wrecked the state.

France and Spain doubled their fleets by 1790 thus leaving the once dominant R.N. outnumbered. Critically so in the larger classes; that's when their policy of 'fighting to capture' took off, eventually resulting in a rough parity of fleets.

The subject is not the simple tale I once thought, convoluted to a point dates and occurrences have my feeble mind in a muddle

Should pressing hold your interest try the book by J Ross Dancy entitled 'The Myth of Press Gang'; volunteers impressment and naval man power problems late eighteenth century; by Boydell press, Suffolk.

During that time the 'capture policy' put considerable cash into the lower deck for seamen, many wardroom members became quite rich – a prime incentive for 'aggressive boarding', 'engaging the enemy more closely'.

Talk of riches in the marine sector; I can only wonder why a struggling out-sourcing company Capita is awarded, by the M.O.D., a 1 billion pound contract to train all personnel in both the Royal Navy and Royal Marines in all 16 R.N. shore establishments.

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You have, no doubt, read in newsprint how Capita already perform miserably on some current government contracts. I forgot to mention it is for 12 years.

I view the best training for the young to get the service ethos and 'character spirit' would come from retired officers and men, out of service and looking for a decent pensionable job of importance to the nation.

I cannot imagine my Shotley Gunnery or Seamanship instructor replaced by a civilian of 'civil service' mentality; a staunch union member no doubt.

I have consulted the village Shaman; he is adamant all you Association men are due a superb '21; you only have to lay back and enjoy it – execute immediately!!!

Honest Abe.

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JOE PEARSON USN

His memories of working out of the United Kingdom during World War 2

I worked mostly below deck as a ships radio operator. One time we came into Plymouth, England for a mail run. We tied up the dingy collected the mail and went for a few beers. When we went back to the dingy - tide was out — no water — so back to the pub. There was plenty of trouble when we finally arrived on board.

NORTH AFRICA

During the North African campaign I was on a LST306 (Landing Ship Tank) supporting the war effort in Tunisia. In particular the port of Bizerte, Tunisia.

We were preparing for the landings in Sicily, the harbour was full of invasion craft and a certain young man by the name of Bob Hope and a lady by the name of Francis Langford came out to do a show for the G I's.

For the previous few weeks it had become routine for German Bombers to fly over at sunset, and this night was no exception, Bob Hope had just walked out on stage when Jerry came over sealing the end of the show, and caused 100's of small boats to rush their crews to their ships thus ended the USO show.

Bob Hope later wrote that this event was the reason he never left the old U.S. again.

SICILY

The landings in 1943 in Sicily were actually our first amphibious invasion which we learned what can happen in bad weather and high seas. It was very nearly a disaster but we did prevail. The sea was full of capsized small craft and dead bodies.

This was also our first time of misjudging the length of our retracting stern anchor and the distance to the beach from our drop off point. Consequently we beached high and dry had to wait for help to get off the beach.

Some of the crew had never seen the ship out of the water before and got off and walked around it. We did get successfully off the beach after several hours.

SALERNO, ITALY

Following the landing in 1943 in Sicily we returned to Bizerte and refitted our ship for Salerno. On this trip we carried British troops.

When we arrived most of the beaches were under very heavy fire most of the time. In my confined radio room I could hear the bombardments and feel the vibration of the bombing. We were in a fortunate position that the Germans could not fire directly at us. We completed our landings.

Much to our surprise we found ourselves acting as a field hospital receiving British casualties in great numbers. It was a sad situation because we only had two first aid medics on board and no doctor. Every man on board who could be spared came to give a hand to do what we could to help the wounded troops. To this day I still feel bad that the guy I tried to help died. I was 21 and most of the casualties were in their 20's.

FRANCE

On 'D' Day my ship LST 306 (USS Bernalillo County) was a large slow target. I was in the first wave that went in at low tide. Approaching the beach we released our stern anchor too soon and lost our only means of retraction from the beach. We unloaded our cargo of tanks and landing stock and spent a long time attempting to get off the beach, which was under heavy fire. We were successful and had no casualties.

PRISONERS OF WAR

We were transporting German Prisoners of War one time, and although we weren't supposed to talk to them at all, I asked one why the Germans supported someone like Hitler. He replied that Hitler to the Germans was just like Roosevelt was to us Americans.

Joe joined the US navy in 1942 and crossed the bar in May, 2009 aged 85. After the war he lived in Bedford, England with his wife.

UNITED ARTISTS

By Allan Harmer

On a particular day around twelve years ago when settling down with my local weekend Newspaper, 'The Chester Chronicle', I was surprised to come across a half page featured article covering a model warship, and a further surprise when reading the caption and looking at the photo which I found it to be a ship on which I had served, the 'HMS Superb'. The modeller was a Mr Brian Turner, someone I had heard of but never met. I soon made contact with Mr Turner to explain my connection with the ship and was invited to go and see the model which was on display at his house. What I was to see was a true work of art, I was speechless. Some other members have also visited Frodsham to see the model and, I'm sure, would certainly second my sentiments.

Brian's model
17 years in the making !

This meeting with Brian was the start of a long friendship. He soon discovered that I was keen to take up oil painting and he wondered if I would like him to help me with some tuition. This, from such an accomplished painter was a hope realised. Wednesdays' became lesson day, and Brian would arrive at our house - on the dot - at 14.00 hrs; this was followed by a one hour chat and then two hours of painting. I soon learnt of Brian's captivation with the Navy and his disappointment when he was unable to enlist. His knowledge of the Royal Navy, whether ancient or modern is exceptional. So, not only was I getting valuable oil painting tuition, but also being educated in many obscure details concerning the 'Andrew'

During one of the Wednesday painting sessions Brian must have overheard a conversation where an upcoming local stage musical in which two of my grand children were involved was being discussed. This

Allan & Brian
discuss the project
on the barn floor

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undertaking was apparently getting strapped for cash and a big musical number in the show was in need of a backcloth, one that represented a spooky grave yard. A large canvas was obtained from somewhere along with a short lease of a friendly farmer's empty barn. The floor space in the barn was big enough to allow the canvas to be laid down flat to work on.

There now was an urgency to get the image transferred to the canvas and in desperation two (reluctant) volunteers, a lady paper crafter and me - a trainee oil painter, were persuaded to take on this difficult painting job. On our first day all we managed was to decide where to position the moon and paint it in. The second day a couple of gravestones were added and later discarded. Brian in the meantime had asked me how it was going and from my answer he would have gathered things were not progressing that well.

Nevertheless the show must go on and by now we had secured a cut-out picture that would help us to produce a rough sketch on the canvas. That day as we stood scratching our heads in contemplation the Cavalry suddenly appeared.

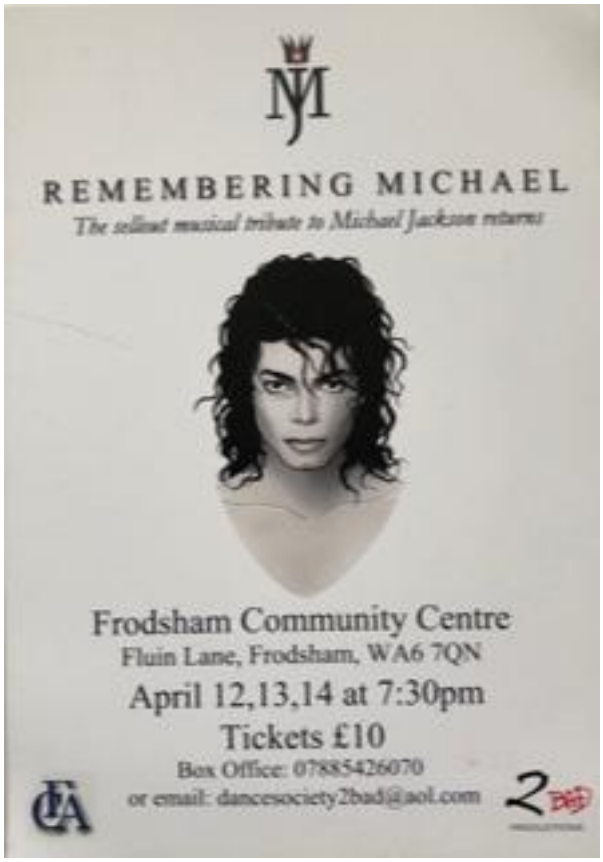
This was in the shape of Brian, our prized Association's artist who came into the barn carrying a stick with a paint brush fixed to its end; then with an inpatient "Right! What we doing?" He glanced at the photo being worked from and quickly sized up the canvas before choosing a patch to start on.

This left the two (reluctant) volunteers standing aside feeling a bit useless but also very

relieved that a' professional' had taken over the reins. The above photo shows the finished backcloth.

This profile of our Superb Associate's artist gives further evidence of Brian's generosity and his willingness to help.

I might just mention that the show was a sell-out each night. The night that I attended the local vicar was in with his family. Can't see us veterans being fans of Michael, but I quite enjoyed the show.



NOZZERS GO WEST Part 20

By Ray Lambert

But maybe all was not to be doom and gloom when, on Sunday as the church service ended, the ship stopped. The climate had changed quite a lot over the past couple of days and another day would have helped the temperature rise even more. Maybe he had a heart after all, or a twinge of conscience and was about to allow them a Sunday swim over the side. But no such luck was forthcoming. His injection of religion hadn't reached the humanity level, as almost at once the Tannoy crackled into life.

'Both watches of seamen turn to. Wash off the ship's side'.

For those in peril on the sea, never was more apt.

The next morning at 0930 and looking as if she'd just come straight from the builder's yard, all gleaming and shining brightly, HMS Superb entered Montevideo.

Another port. Another country. Montevideo had become a famous name in maritime history and was regarded as an historic port, although Ginger had no idea. He had never heard of the place. They had been told a bit on the way and that was his introduction. His schooling had been conspicuously lax on naval history; he had been introduced to Raleigh, Drake and even Columbus but maybe it was thought the more up to date stuff was a bit too modern, bearing in mind that it was still in the making when he was receiving his learning.

But they now knew that Montevideo was the setting for the last chapter in the Battle of the Atlantic. A naval sea battle that had taken place in the North Atlantic about fifteen years previously and where HMS Hood had been blown up by the German battleship Bismarck, who then hightailed it south east until it was caught and sunk. Meanwhile the pocket battleship Graf Spee had been chased all the way south to Montevideo by English cruisers Ajax, Exeter and New Zealand's Achilles.

They were told Graf Spee had been forced to leave harbour soon after arriving and had been scuttled just outside. Parts of her could be seen above the water as they entered harbour. Unfortunately Ginger's entering harbour station was on the other side of the ship and he didn't get to see the pride of Hitler's navy in its watery grave.

However, once securely tied up alongside and the penguin passengers from the Falklands delivered ashore for transporting to a zoo in Florida, Ginger had other things on his mind, and the Battle of the River Plate, serious as it was with all those people being killed on both sides, was put to one side in his eagerness to be getting ashore. His eyes were opened wide. This was

Peru all over again. Only this time there was no bus ride to the town centre. The ship slid alongside the dock wall right on the edge of the town. The only thing in-between them and the streets of Montevideo was the busy dock area and that was absolutely flat with nothing to obscure the view.

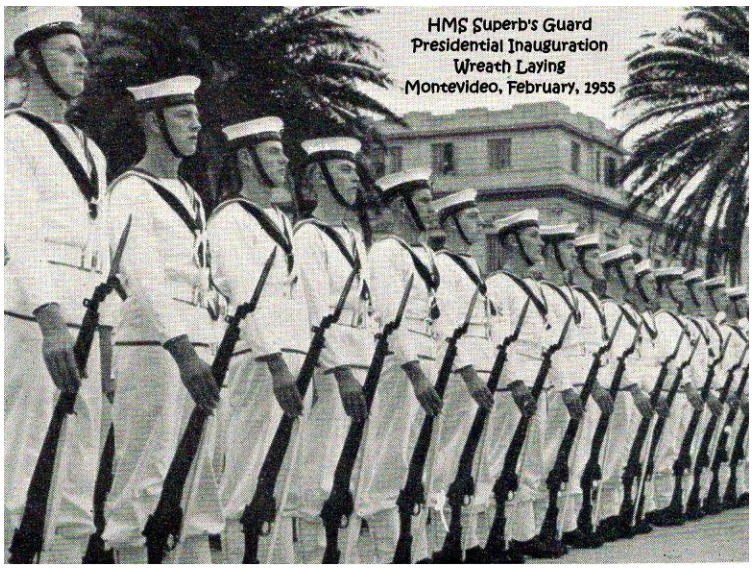
HMS Superb's Guard
Avenida 18 Julio, Montevideo
February, 1955

In keeping with most countries they had visited, Montevideo had a lot of British residents who never appeared of tiring to tell them how pleased they were to have them in 'their' country and how welcome the British were. Even the Uruguayans seemed to think a lot of the Inglesas.

Whether by design or by coincidence, the entire commission had acquired the name of 'the showing the flag cruise' and nowhere was that more apt than in the Uruguayan port town. Their visit came at the same time as a new president was being installed and naturally the ship's guard was turned out for the occasion, along with the Royal Marine Band. They had changed back into whites again.

Somehow Ginger had not recruited for the guard; the guard that had been pounding up and down the Bermuda dockyard for hours and days on end in practice for such an occasion, even though Ganges boys would have made ideal recruits needing very little training. It was never put into words but it appeared that they wanted a mix of people, some young and some not so young for reasons best know only to themselves. But on the day of the Presidential Inauguration he couldn't feeling a moment of pride on their behalf as, with the Royal Marine Band in front, the Superb guard led the entire parade in front of fifteen thousand wildly cheering Uruguayans

Maybe they were expecting and American guard or at least something in the American style but when the Superb guard and band snaked into the Avenida 18 Julio not even the most critical could have found fault. They didn't go in for the American antics and acrobatics and twirling rifles about but rather just marched in columns of three, in their whites, with white belts and gaiters and rifles at the slope. They were a picture to behold and the crowd absolutely loved them.


HMS Superb's Guard
Presidential Inauguration
Wreath Laying
Montevideo, February, 1955

Naturally, Ginger and a couple of others that were not in the guard got ashore to watch the proceedings whenever there was a parade and, in Montevideo, it didn't take

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long for them to cotton on to a very nice by-product. They were wearing the same clothes as those in the guard and, apart from the belt and gaiter of course, and that made them part of things by association. They were able to wallow in reflected glory. As the crowds couldn't speak to those in the guard as they marched along, Ginger and his mates made a great substitute and they were quite happy to accept free booze on behalf of those otherwise engaged.

In addition to the British contingent that were resident in Montevideo and other parts of Uruguay for that matter, the indigenous population also appeared to love the 'Los Marinos Inglesas' and they demonstrated that fact on the day of the Presidential Inauguration over and over again.

But despite the overwhelming, at times stifling, friendliness Ginger couldn't help but notice that there were pictures of the Graf Spee in almost every bar and many of the shops as well. He mentioned this fact to his run-ashore companions, although they would have had to be blind not to have

Seen for themselves. They agreed. There were Graf Spee pictures everywhere and an occasional German flag or pendant, now looking a bit worse for wear and collecting dust, but none of them could recall seeing a single picture or any evidence whatsoever of the allied navy or any ships that had taken part in the historic Battle of the River Plate. Although the friendliness and affection shown to the visiting Marinos Inglesas was genuine as far as could be ascertained. It appeared that the German navy were the blued-eyed boys in that part of the world although there were none to be seen, which was probably just as well. If there were any based locally, it was likely that they had been told to keep away from the town for the duration of the Superb's visit.

The word was out that the Plaza Independencia was the place to be, particularly for the night life with a multitude of bars, eating houses and entertainment joints but as the boys were still on their 1830 curfew, the nightlife was one thing they would not be indulging in. Payday had come around again while they were en route, so they had a little money in their pockets as they raced ashore to see the sights at the earliest opportunity.

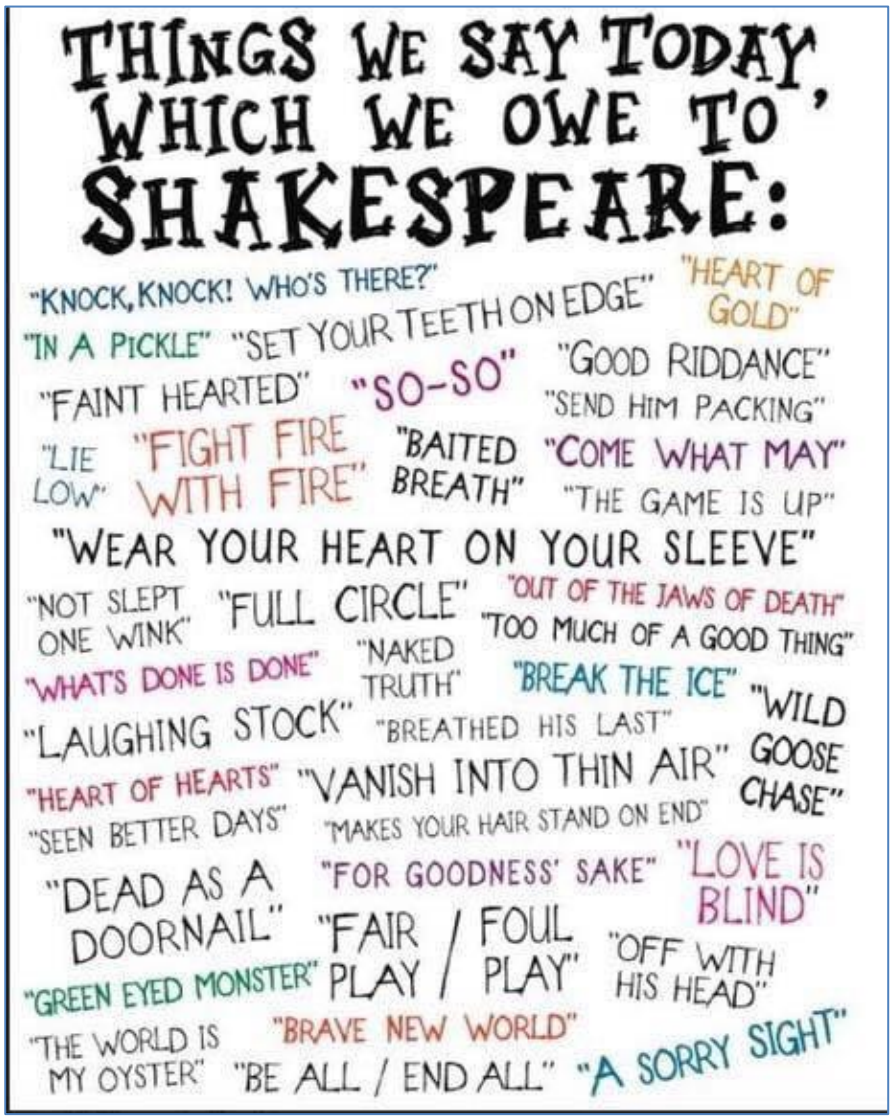
Most of Ginger's companions were not too impressed with the Plaza area. They had headed up to that part of town simply because it was where everybody else was going but it came to life mainly after dark and there was not much, other than a bit of sightseeing, to grab their attention during the day. They were only too well aware that by the time the place came alive and everyone was having a grand old time, they would be back on board and in all probability, asleep in their hammocks.

If only they had had a bit more information on the town, or any town they visited for that matter, they may have enjoyed the sights a lot more. After all, the places they had visited and the places they still had to visit were top class tourist attractions in the main and would cost a fortune to visit privately; they were getting the whole caboodle for free and a bit of spending money thrown in as well.

Most of the places they had been to had coloured pendants for sale. These pendants, a silk or felt triangle, had the name of the town, or sometimes the country plus a palm tree or two printed on them. They made very nice colourful souvenirs and were something within their price range. Ginger felt they were a better idea than picture postcards and he had amassed quite a collection already. Many others also bought souvenir pendants. 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.



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HMS HOOD was affectionately known as 'The Might Hood' and was the final battlecruiser built by the navy. Battlecruisers were similar to battleships in terms of armament and cost, but had slightly thinner armour and a lighter main gun battery.

During World War II HMS Hood was stationed in the North Atlantic but in May 1941 she was sunk by the German battleship Bismarck. **Only three people onboard survived** and were collected about two hours after the ship was destroyed.

The ship was struck by shells near its ammunition magazines which exploded, and caused Hood to sink. The wreckage was discovered in 2001.

Until the commissioning of HMS Queen Elizabeth and HMS Prince of Wales, HMS Hood was the biggest ship ever built by the navy.

Aerial photograph of HMS Hood entering Vancouver Harbour, most likely during her Empire Cruise of 1923 1924.

Looking clean and comfortable with an operating theatre to the rear the sick bay on the 1893 commissioned HMS Hood.

The Naval Chronicle

HOW NAVY AVENGED SINKING OF H.M.S. HOOD

BISMARCK CHASED AND DESTROYED

Atlantic Action

FLEET AIR ARM CO-OPERATION

SMALLER M.T.B.'s NEEDED

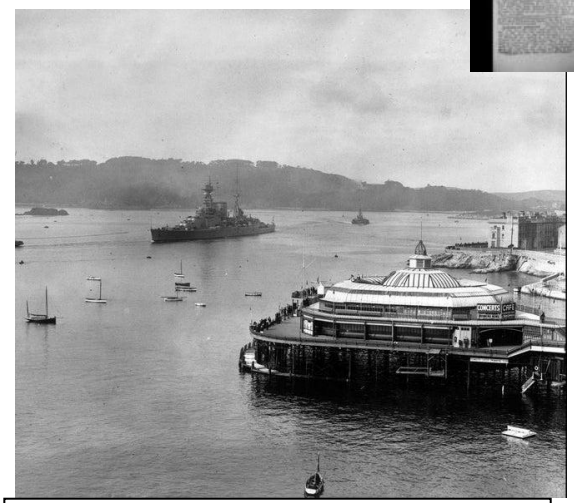
Carried On Board Large Warships

SHAVEX

NO SOAP—NO BRUSH

WHY DOES THE NAVY PREFER SHAVEX?

SHAVEX



August 1922 Battleship HMS Hood leaving Plymouth passes the pier.

September 1928 A group of sailors trying to squeeze out of a small door aboard HMS Hood during naval manoeuvres

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Laying in an Ambush, just above Wadi Taym, Radfan

By Malcolm Milham

Night of 6/7th July 1965

I was serving with 3 Platoon 'A' Company, The Royal Sussex Regiment, as a Section Commander. We were attached to 45 Commando RM and operating on the edge of the Danaba Basin in the Radfan Mountains, South Arabia.

On this evening we had left our Patrol Base around 1900 hrs, it is dark by then, with me being the patrol's second in command and leading the Cover Group. We were fairly close to our base only some 600 yards away and very close to the location an SAS patrol had been given a rough time some 14 months before, they lost 2 killed and almost all the rest wounded.

The first indication we had of there being trade about, were the village dogs starting to bark. Dogs in an Arab village do not bark at night, unless there are strangers about, otherwise they get a kicking, for disturbing their owners sleep. It was a beautiful early part of the night, with a good half moon and thousands of stars, giving us over two hundred yards of visibility. We were lying on a hillside, some twenty five feet above a track junction, coming up from our right was a track in a gulley, climbing up from the Wadi Taym, this was to be our planned killing ground.

THE KILLING GROUND

Our ambush was set covering the track itself, an open area, that had been cleared of all loose rocks so it could be used as an helicopter pad and several other tracks that radiated from this cleared area. With the dogs barking everybody became more alert than they had been just before, each one of us straining our ears to catch any sound from those out there, our eyes searching the tracks and hillside away to our front. Not long after the dogs barking, we had a donkey braying, slightly left of the direction the dogs were in, there was no village in that area, so what was the donkey doing?

Every member of the patrol instinctively felt to make sure his safety catch on the weapon he was holding was in the off position, nobody wanted a click from their weapon going out into the absolute silence of a desert night, fingers were down the trigger guard, ready to curl inwards at the correct time. Suddenly falling rocks were heard, still further round to the left and up on the hillside directly to my half sections front. With this sound, very slowly all the members of the killer group eased their weapons away from covering the gulley and now pointed towards the open area.

Slight movement up on the hillside caught our attention and immediately, from that direction came the noise of a tin can being kicked and a bollocking in Arabic.

CONFIRMATION.

Now they were in view, at the limit of the distance we could see, but they were facing down to our left and looked as if making for one of the tracks that either came towards us or went directly away. If it was away from us we had an Artillery option, as that would take them into one of our DF locations, if it was towards us, then it was going to be onto the cleared area or near it. The lead man got to the bottom of the hill and turned, left, towards us. The adrenaline really kicked in at this point.

I was about to get the answer to a question I had often asked myself, since I had grown up during WW2, how would I react if I had ever found myself facing an enemy with a rifle in my hand? All the action I had seen prior to this moment had been Naval, long range stuff, although the beach at Port Said had been pretty close. Also I had not been holding a weapon; my task had been to pass information. Admittedly when I had been an IO's Assistant we moved the fighter aircraft into an attacking position, but still it was an information situation, now MY target was approaching. It was going to be whites of the eyes stuff, totally different from all the shoot outs we had been engaged in since we had arrived in the Radfan.

They came on at a fairly brisk pace, not being that careful; this was a familiar route as we had guessed. Nearer and nearer, nobody make a mistake please, no noise, no moving, do Not cough, things were now happening in what appeared to be slow motion, but in fact were swiftly coming to the decisive point. My heart was pounding but the mind was clear and sharp.

Suddenly they were about 80 yards away on the edge of the track junction that we had chosen as our Killing Ground, turned to their right and there was the target, side on to us, my mind was as clear as can be, MY target clear in the foresight, then the signal, the LMG in the Killer group opened up, all hell broke loose.

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BACK IN 1956

THE SPORTING SIDE

In the field of sport Superb has played a full and varied part. During the twelve months since leaving Chatham we have played over 200 ship games, 210 inter part of ship games and 90 deck games, including deck hockey, deck cricket, tug-o'-war and deck tennis tournaments. The ship had fielded teams in soccer, cricket, hockey, swimming, water polo, rugby, boxing, tennis, and squash and even challenged the U. S. N. at basketball, with disastrous results.

Superb arrived in the Persian Gulf on March 22nd, after our dash from Malta, with the sports team untried and our players unknown, and it took us a little while to find our feet against the strong Gulf competitors. While in the Gulf this first time we had a ship's inter part and championship Swimming Gala, and E.R.A. Antcliff showed his prowess in the individual events and the Royal Marines won the inter part competition. After our stay in Trincomalee, where we held inter part of ship competitions in soccer (winners M. (E)'s port); hockey (winners E.R.As) and cricket (winners E.R.A.s) the talent started to emerge and we started our East African cruise in a much stronger position.

In East Africa we played teams from Mombasa, Dar-es-Salaam, Zanzibar and the Seychelles, and the highlights were splendid performances by the soccer team; winning the swimming match in Mombasa, and the boxing match, ten bouts to one in Dar-es-Salaam. We were the first ship to win the darts trophy at Mombasa, and we were even successful against the ladies of Dar-es-Salaam at netball.

On our return from Trincomalee on the 24th July, we once again availed ourselves of the excellent sporting facilities there and we held our inter part and championships athletics meeting. Lieutenant Wilson was open champion with Shipwright Phillips as close runner up, and the Communications and Central Division inter part winners. Superb players were in the majority in the Royal Navy team selected for J.E.T and we succeeded in winning the soccer cup, for the first time in three years, and the Royal Marines swamped all in the tug-o'-war.

Just before leaving for the Persian Gulf at the end of October our boxing team won the Inter Service Boxing in Colombo by defeating teams from the R.A.F., R.C.Y.N. and R.C.Y.A.F., and while in the Persian Gulf gained further laurels by twice defeating teams from the King's Shropshire Light Infantry, nine bouts to four and eight bouts to two. Our swimming team also did well to come a close third in a swimming competition against Army teams held at Jufair pool.

Superb hasn't a brilliant sporting record measured in games won; in fact we've broken about even. Our teams have, however, met every challenge and have always played a good, hard

sporting game and have made good friends wherever we've been. We look forward to our time in Home Fleet to carry on the good work, and to carry off the cups!

CRICKET

During the twelve months overseas, matches were played in the Persian Gulf, Ceylon, Tanganyika and South Africa, besides the islands of Zanzibar and Seychelles. This was a greater variety of countries than the touring teams of more distinguished patronage usually undertake while on tour.

NO NAMES AVAILABLE – CAN YOU HELP? HAVE YOU A BETTER PHOTO?

The first match was at Umm Said vs. the oil company. The contrast between a ground in England and ground we were to play on was most noticeable. A small area of desert surrounded by a boundary of whitened stones, the outfield watered with crude oil, and a matting wicket. None the less, a keenly fought game produced a creditable draw in which the batting predominated. The less said about the bowler's toils the better.

The short interlude in Colombo gave the team a chance to enjoy a match in rather more civilised surroundings before we found ourselves back in Bahrein. The return to the Gulf did enable us to complete the double over "Loch Insh2 and play the first match vs. B.A.P.C.O. at Awali. The ship

lost this game after a collapse of our batting, scoring too few runs to give our bowlers a real chance. The opposing skipper's undefeated half-century clinching the match.

Arrival at Trincomalee saw the start of the Inter-Part competition. Several keenly contested matches took place before the E.R.A.s beat the R.M.s (Star'd) by nine wickets in the final. The victors had a good fielding side, but one which relied heavily on a few for runs and wickets. They were led by Perrin, a shrewd skipper.

Probably the best losers were the M.E.s (Port) X1; a team of fighters all the way. And so to East Africa, where we were determined to give a good account of ourselves.

Our arrival in Mombasa was the signal for the start of the most concentrated cricket programme of the twelve months abroad, and opposition proved to be of a higher standard than previously encountered. In some matches we met players who represented either of the two territories. Nevertheless we scored some notable victories and always played hard right to the end, even in the face of defeat.

In Mombasa the two highlights were the matches vs. Stragglers C.C. and the Mombasa Sports Club. The match against Stragglers we won after some of the best cricket yet played by the ship. The batting was vigorous on both sides, with good bowling and fielding to complete a perfect day's sport. Superb scored 160 and won by 32 runs just before 'stumps' were drawn. Lt. Cdr. Chittleburgh scored a fast 21 and took 5 for 23.

At Dar-es-Salaam the principle match was against the Gymkhana Club. In a game dominated by batsmen we declared our innings closed at 167 for 6 wickets down, and thought ourselves safe from defeat. Gymkhana had other ideas on that point and proceeded to launch a violent attack on our bowling. Scoring very fast they passed our total with the loss of only four wickets, with 5 minutes to spare.

The match against Shell C.C. an Indian team produced further high scores. For Shell, one batsman recorded the only individual century scored against Superb and in reply Warrington and Searies made our only century opening stand. This virtually won the match for the ship. The result was, Superb won by eight wickets.

Moving to the Seychelles, our arrival provided some change of opposition for the local players, who run only two teams. We were made very welcome, however, and nearly 'lost' our first match over lunch, when our opponents kept filling our glasses so quickly we hardly had time to eat the enormous curry! Everybody who played in either of the two games really enjoyed themselves.

The opportunity must be taken to comment on the batting of Warrington. During the cruise he rarely failed, passing his half century three times without ever quite making it a century.

Trincomalee again, and back to our 'home' ground.

With the Inter-part completed we started on a series of trials for the East Indies Fleet X1 in preparation for J.E.T. The result of the trials was that most of the ship's regular players played in at least one of the matches, but not, evidently, to much effect, for Ceylon won the competition by defeating all opposition, including a Rest of the Fleet X1. East Indies Fleet won only one match vs. Pakistan. In that match two Superb players, Single and Series, opened with a hundred partnership. Winning that game enabled East Indies Fleet to share second place with India, Pakistan losing all their games.

Near the end of the stay in Trincomalee the traditional Wardroom vs. Lower Deck match was played. The scoring rate by both sides was very low, with the Wardroom being on top at 'stumps' and the match left drawn. The Lower Deck batted first and crawled to a total of 95 for 7 wickets before declaring. Lt. Cdr. Mason bowled well to take five wickets for twenty-six runs. Against the bowling of Stevens and Smith. Lt. Anderson and Mid. Lewis batted well, taking the Wardroom score to 69 for two wickets.

Once more at the Gulf; and we enjoyed several matches at Bahrein. An early set back was losing to H.M.S. Loch Killisport but within a week two heartening events took place. In rapid succession, two bowling hat-tricks! The first was in a 2nd X1 match vs. Jufair Base, Smith being the deserving bowler. Next day, in the return match with B.A.P.C.O. Stevens bowling magnificently, hit the stumps with three consecutive balls. This match was spoilt by a sudden re-call just as we seemed poised to take our revenge for the previous defeat at their hands.

The final matches in the Gulf were against Army teams. The two matches against the 'Gloucesters' both being drawn, but that did not mean uninteresting. On the contrary, both proved full of surprises for both teams. In both games the performance of a few stood out. For Superb, Perrin and Short just missed deserved fifties; Searies performing well with the ball. In the Gloucesters team their skipper was undefeated in both innings for around forty.

The last match of the period abroad was at Simonstown, vs. H.M.S Afrikander. This was the long awaited return to turf wickets for the rest of the commission. The ground we played on must take pride of place as the most beautiful, with its view over False Bay. The match itself; well, we scraped home by the narrowest of all margins, four runs!

For some reason or other Superb never managed to field its strongest team and rarely the same twice running. But it is fair to say that had our full strength been always available, we should have made a formidable side.

THE SECRET TUNNELS OF SOUTH HEIGHTON

by Geoffrey Ellis

This story, written by Geoffrey Ellis, Secretary of Friends of HMS Forward, is about the abandoned and little-known tunnels of ***HMS Forward*** *at Newhaven, East Sussex, which, between 1939 and 1945, was a Royal Navy headquarters. The account that follows has been compiled from what he told Peter Mason.*

A DESIRABLE PRIZE

Newhaven was originally a casualty clearing station for the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) in France. Twelve fully equipped hospital boats transported the sick and wounded to the east Sussex port from Dieppe, with special trains to carry them further inland on arrival. Medical supplies were loaded on to the boats for the return journey.

Newhaven, lying roughly midway between Dover and Portsmouth, features the only river in the area navigable at all states of the tide. Its harbour had marine workshops and facilities for maintaining cross-channel steamers and vessels with tail shafts of up to six metres (19 feet). There were ample berthing facilities and a marine passenger terminal with its own dedicated railway terminus. During the war, all of these benefits made the town a desirable prize for the enemy.

MY FIRST VISIT

In 1941, when I was a seven-year-old lad, I used to walk to and from school along the B2109 Newhaven-to-Beddingham road. One day, in May 1941, the army arrived and started digging a tunnel into the bank at the side of the road by Heighton Hill, just north of Newhaven.

Some months after the tunnel was completed, I frequently used to stop to chat with the sentries that guarded its entrance. They could never be persuaded, however, to let me take a peep around the bend that turned away enticingly, just inside the entrance.

When the tunnel was abandoned at the end of 1945, I finally had my chance to take a proper look. Accompanied by a friend and with the aid of a couple of torches, I inched into its depths. The complex interior was swallowed up by the seemingly impenetrable darkness.

AN INDELIBLE IMPRESSION

I remember vividly the mixed emotions of exploring the apparently endless labyrinth of corridors, galleries, rooms and stairways. Was there anybody else in there with us? Could we get lost? What if our torches failed? Would we ever find our way out again?

That initial visit remains indelibly etched in my memory. Large quantities of naval message pads and rolls of teleprinter paper littered the floor. There was a myriad wooden stairways and complex air-conditioning trunking with fish-eye louvers. Numerous lengths of cable were neatly secured to endless Braby cable tray.

The tunnels had been ransacked by looters, who'd wrought carnage in their attempt to liberate anything they thought might be of value. Much of what I saw then no longer exists or remains accessible.

AN EXTRAORDINARY SECRET

Unbeknown to me at the time, this visit was to mark the start of a lifetime's fascination with what I later discovered was a once vibrant naval intelligence centre built deep beneath Heighton Hill.

During World War Two, it remained undetected by the foe. After the war's end, it was destined to remain equally unknown in the country in which it was built. Upon its abandonment, the labyrinth passed into the ownership of the original landowner(s), although, technically, it remained a secret place for some 30 years. Just how secret it was, and how vital its contribution to the war effort, I had yet to realise.

DECIDING TO INVESTIGATE

In 1991, I took early so-called voluntary retirement from British Telecom. With some 40 years' experience in all contemporary forms of communication, I decided to investigate what lay beneath Heighton Hill, largely to satisfy my continuing curiosity.

What I discovered was that few official records survived the Royal Navy's withdrawal from the complex. Indeed, no national body had ever attempted to record or publicise its extraordinary history, to the extent that, in 1996, even the Imperial War Museum in London, initially, denied its existence.
My early enquiries of the Imperial War Museum and the Public Record Office produced no tangible results. I appealed for further information through local newspapers, 'Service Pals' teletext pages, Charlie Chester's Sunday Soapbox show, Yours magazine and the newsletters of a plethora of military-veterans' associations including the Association of Wrens.

RESPONSE TO MY APPEALS

I received a wealth of information, from carefully preserved autograph books, photograph albums and other paraphernalia, all of which had been retained by the veterans who responded to my appeals. As a result, I learnt almost everything there was to know about the naval headquarters' intelligence hub. I discovered the exact purpose of the various tunnel rooms. I found out exactly what equipment was installed there and even learnt the names of many of the crew.

None of this grass-roots detail had been available from any other source.

I'm pleased to relate that my research had other, unexpected consequences, in that it rekindled many lapsed WRNS friendships. On a personal level, too, I was encouraged by the ways in which I was welcomed as a friend into the homes of many of my correspondents. What follows is a résumé of my research.

ORIGIN OF THE NAVAL HEADQUARTERS

Newhaven Royal Naval Headquarters originated during the tumultuous early years of the war, when invasion seemed a likely sequel to the fall of France. There had been some earlier discussion about whether the town might be demilitarised and declared open under the Red Cross Geneva Convention. With the fall of Dunkirk, however, military defence quickly thwarted any consideration of open-town status.

The army arrived and evicted the navy from their quarters at the Sheffield Arms Hotel. The Senior Service, in turn, requisitioned the highly suitable Guinness Trust Holiday Home from 20 June 1940. There they remained for the duration of the war.

The Guinness Trust property was an architecturally pleasing building. Built in 1938, it stood majestically on Heighton Hill, looking down on the lush, green meadows of the Ouse Valley, with views to Newhaven Harbour, Seaford Bay and the English Channel.

It was used as holiday accommodation for city-based tenants of the Guinness Trust estates and had 16 dormitory apartments with a communal dining room and sun lounge. Most apartments had access to a large sun terrace and lawn, and a private suite on the first floor housed a resident caretaker.

REQUISTIONING GRACIE FIELDS'S HOUSE

Under the sterner title of HMS Forward, the Guinness Trust house became a Royal Naval headquarters. As such, it was responsible for HMS Marlborough at Eastbourne, HMS Aggressive and HMS Newt at Newhaven, HMS Vernon at Roedean, HMS Lizard and HMS King Alfred at Hove and the two resident naval officers at Shoreham and Littlehampton.

Naval-stores depots were established at Lewes and Burgess Hill to supply permanent, consumable and after-action stores. A naval-canteen service was organised for the area. Gracie Field's former home, later known as Dorothy House, at 127, Dorothy Avenue, Peacehaven, was requisitioned to provide a special, fully staffed and fully equipped, sick quarters.

Numerous other large residential establishments were also requisitioned, both locally and at Seaford, to accommodate the WRNS (Women's Royal Naval Service). There were, eventually, over 10,000 naval staff on HMS Forward's ledgers.

PROTECTING THE SUSSEX COASTLINE

The naval headquarters was always commanded by a captain (often an admiral serving in the rank of captain), who occupied the conveniently appointed caretaker's suite. In 1940, his immediate responsibilities included the reorganisation of the sub-command as well as provision of maritime protection for the Sussex coastline and harbours with minefields and blockships.

In March 1941, an Admiralty directive required specified ports to establish and maintain naval plots in conjunction with a coastal-radar chain, giving surface coverage from the Dover area. This coverage soon spread to Newhaven.

Adequate security was necessary for the communications equipment required for intelligence-gathering, interpretation and dissemination. A decision was made to accommodate the equipment in a shelter more than 20 metres (some 60 feet) below ground, deep beneath Heighton Hill.

For this purpose, under the Emergency Powers Act (EPA) for the defence of the realm, and, as such, not recorded with the Land Registry, a tunnel was dug into the hillside.

PREPARED FOR ANY EMERGENCY

The principal, operational entrance to the underground shelter was situated in room 16 of the Guinness Trust house. Via 122 steps, it gave access to an impenetrable fortress, one that contained the most sophisticated and contemporary communications devices then available.

There were two telephone exchanges, ten teleprinters, two Typex machines, a WT or wireless telegraphy office with 11 radios and a VF-line (voice-frequency) telegraph terminal for 36 channels. The tunnels housed a stand-by generator, an air-conditioning system with gas filters, a galley, toilets, cabins for split shifts and the recently invented phenomenon of 'daylight' fluorescent lighting.

No expense was spared. The complex was equipped for every contingency, from failure of the public utilities to direct enemy action.

DESIGNED AND BUILT BY THE ROYAL ENGINEERS

The complex was designed and built by the Royal Engineers. The 172nd Tunnelling Company dug it, and 577th Army Field Company fitted it out. Excavation of the tunnel commenced in May 1941, and some 550 metres (1,800 feet) of tunnel was dug in the chalk over 13 weeks. It was commissioned later that year and used, until decommissioned, on 31 August 1945. The Canadian Corps Coastal Artillery shared the underground complex and maintained a headquarters there.

Ten coastal-radar stations between Fairlight and Bognor Regis reported directly to HMS Forward every 20 minutes, more often if necessary. All their information was filtered and plotted, before being relayed by teleprinter to similar plots in Dover and Portsmouth.

HMS Forward plot maintained a comprehensive maritime surveillance of everything that moved on, under or over the English Channel from Dungeness to Selsey Bill. Further intelligence was obtained from military airfields by private telephone lines. For operational-security reasons, each plot understudied its neighbour, with HMS Forward standing in for Fort Southwick at Portsmouth and vice versa.

MORSE KEYS NOT MACHINE GUNS

Initially, WRNS personnel staffed the WT office, teleprinters, cipher office, telephone switchboards, signals-distribution office and naval plot on a continuous three-watch rota. They were supplemented by Royal Naval (RN) ratings for special occasions. On D-Day, they were joined by members of the Royal Air Force (RAF), WAAF (Women's Auxiliary Air Force) and ATS (Auxiliary Territorial Service).

The crew wore headphones, not helmets; brandished Morse keys, rather than machine guns; dispatched bulletins, not bullets and carefully contemplated the courses of clandestine convoys.

HMS Forward was heavily involved in the saga of German battle cruisers Scharnhorst, Gneisenau and Prinz Eugen on 11 February 1942. It played a major part in the raid on Dieppe of 19 August 1942. Its role was crucial in the nightly naval motor-torpedo-boat (MTB) harassment raids on enemy-controlled harbours and waters, frequent SAS commando 'snoops' on the occupied French coast, the D-Day landings and, ultimately, the liberation of France. For a while, it also co-ordinated air—sea rescue.

EVERYTHING WAS OBLITERATED

After the war, the centre was abandoned, then neglected and ignored. In 1964, I learnt of the proposed redevelopment of the Heighton hillside and took the only photographs now known to exist. They show details of the derelict and disguised observation post and hillside pillboxes.

During the 1970s, the hillside was redeveloped. All five internally accessed hillside pillboxes (including one cunningly disguised as a chicken shed, complete with hens) were demolished. Cable and ventilation shafts were also obliterated, leaving only the bricked-up western entrance as evidence of what lay beneath.

A DETAILED SURVEY

News of the proposed and partial demolition of Denton House (formerly the Guinness Trust holiday home) inspired members of Newhaven Historical Society to approach the Guinness Trust with a view to reopening the former principal (east) entrance in the floor of room 16.

The idea was to conduct a detailed survey of the labyrinth below. They kindly consented, on

condition that there was no publicity that might draw attention to their vacant property and thereby increase the likelihood of vandalism.

A COMPLETE INVENTORY

Over the ensuing months, every passage was measured, every step and stair counted, every room plotted and every remaining artefact recorded. The entire complex was photographed using prints, transparencies and professional-quality video photography.

The data obtained has enabled detailed, scale drawings to be produced. A model of the complex is displayed at the near-by Newhaven Local and Maritime Museum, Paradise Park, Avis Road, Newhaven, BN9 0DH. Unfortunately, the partial demolition of Denton House in 1996 precludes further use of the principal entrance of the former maritime-intelligence centre. The western wing of the house, containing room 16, was razed to the ground to make way for new homes.

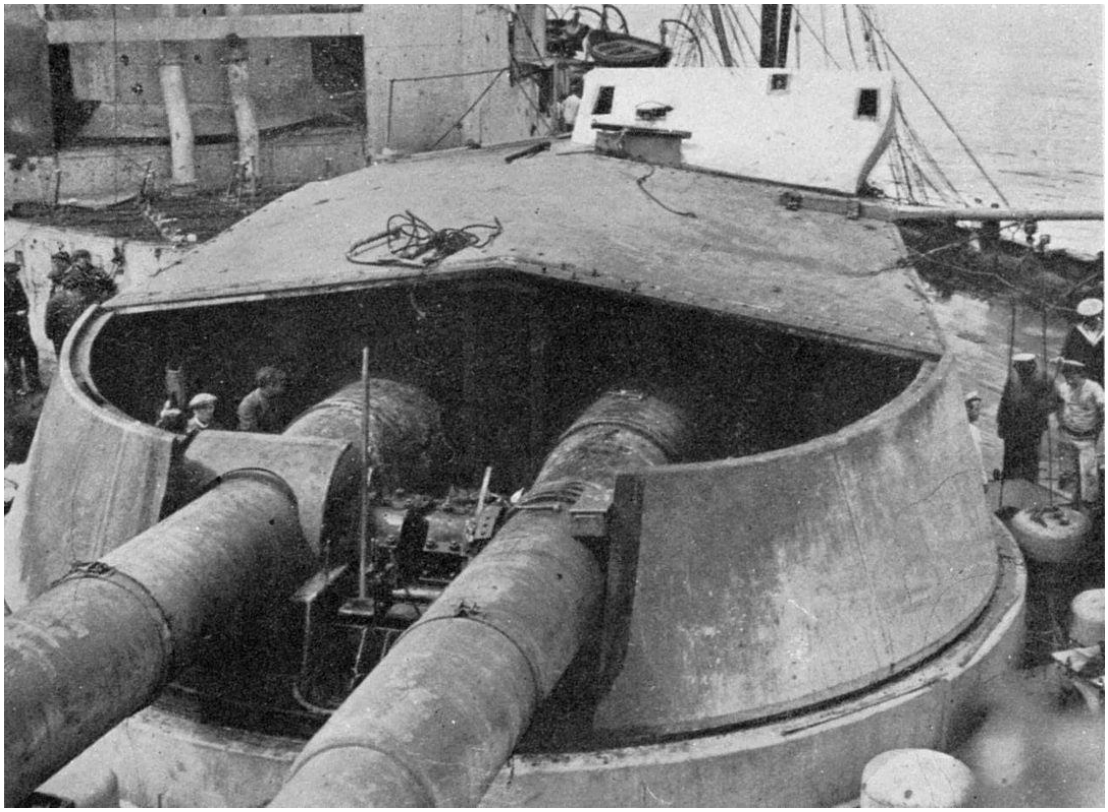
The only visible sign of past military activity at the house is a granite commemorative plaque above the fireplace in the main hall. On it, carved in relief, is a crown, flanked by the dates 20 June 1940 and 31 August 1945. The words Royal Naval Headquarters appear beneath.

One other date was recorded covertly by the bricklayer who built the solid wall that sealed the principal, operational entrance to the tunnel. This reads 21 November 1945 and is a certain indicator that the property was still in the hands of the Ministry of Works at that time.

For more photos and history please click HERE to visit the website

PHOTO ALBUM

Is this the Superb Leaving New York Navy Yard circa 1953?



Q turret on HMS Lion with armour removed after a hit from a 305mm shell from *Lutzow* in 1916.

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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)

Sad news received from the son of Clive Godley is that Clive crossed the bar in July last year. Clive also known as 'Godders' was a Stoker Petty Officer on the 1956 cruise

THE END