

# ANDY BRIERLEY'S BLOG

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Hello Shipmates,

S.M. Jim Copus came by to see us a couple of weeks ago. We spoke of where our mates ended up on leaving the 'Andrew'. It threw up some really successful careers of a most unlikely nature. Late shipmate Len Sturdy set out as a London Transport bus driver, graduated to a large articulated lorry-mounted exhibition for the Hoover Company.

Part of his itinerary was the Kent County Show, about 4 miles up the road from my home. When packing up to move to his next venue all surplus items in the truck would come to my place. To have enough Persil to last the next twelve months dumped on the door step could be an embarrassment in my small cul-de-sac.

Jo loved the displays of potted silk flowers and shrubs. Later Len moved from Dagenham to Mark, in Somerset. He moved his meagre home furnishings and Joan from one place to the other, by several round trips, in his Reliant Robin (yes, Del-boy's van). Prior to the motorway being built that must have been a gruelling round trip - he was no quitter!

By happenstance he did a service for a friend by drawing a simple kitchen extension, then presented it to the 'planning office' in person. To shorten this tale I can tell you that from that he became the local architect of choice. As buildings got larger and more sophisticated he was the man to guide your project through the planning 'minefield'. His stature became such that at his funeral it really was standing room only in the church at Mark.

His friendly, easy-going manner must have been the major tool in his box, his ingredient for success.

Shipmate Copus started in the London Docks (Port of London authority). He said entry did follow the traditional pattern, eased because several family members work there. To get on the tugs he says one had to be ex. R.N. or M.N. Seamen. He got that dream job on the London river, and did not look back, to become Master of his own boat. I suspect everyone knows T.I.D. Tugs - Ministry of War transport built 182- small, dumpy and coal fired. I told him a couple had come to a breakers' yard of my acquaintance when time expired. One still had a bell hung on the

bridge front, cast into it the name *Dollar Bay*.



As I stood, looking down with feelings of felonious intent, a colleague crept up behind and said, 'I know what you are thinking Andy; which of us is first going to make that disappear!'. Alas, neither of us got it.

Jim Copus then said he had crewed that tug many times before its disposal for scrap. He told of a time easing a vessel out of dock, looking up he saw on board another ex. Super

Bee, Tom Clayton. I also met Tom, years later, when working for B.P.. Tom was a contract rigger. We were also in the same Chatham field gun crew, in days of yore. Some things just go round and round.

To the picture of S.M. Copus and Jo, hard to believe he is that much taller than she. I think he is standing on her purse. I tried to paint a T.I.D. and offered it to Jim, who graciously did accept it, complaining the chimney was too short - he said it would suffice to block a spy hole in his lavatory door at the top of the garden.

To our proper painters, hand on heart, I claim no artistic merit, can only say your arty eye will discern, at once, it to be in the style of Mike Angelo, well known dhiso driver of Malta.

Local boys, like our esteemed chairman, was a technical worker for B.A.E. at Rochester avionics site. Prior to retirement he became a schoolmaster at their apprentice block. How satisfying to encourage the young, open mind.

Have met Ray Lambert only on one occasion, a couple of years ago at the King Charles.

We know him as the author of a couple of books that give an insight into Ganges during his tenure. Robin once mentioned Ray had been a journalist. I cannot say for whom, or what his subjects were, sounds interesting. Should he join us this year I hope to ask.

I am not, really, a Nosey Parker, more curious to know none of us fell by the wayside, proud of the get up and go demonstrated by the lower deckers.

Initially I set off to mention a tug story. A small picture sparked the interest; a solitary large tug with an aircraft carrier in tow, it had set off from Bremerton U.S. naval base in the Seattle



The decommissioned aircraft carrier  
USS Independence  
departed Washington  
bound for Brownsville, Texas.

areas of the Pacific north. The carrier was one of the conventional powered named *Independence*, of the Midway class, I think. Tow was 16,000 miles, down the entire Americas, through the Magellan Straits - a confident tug master must be needed for that! Then due north up the Atlantic to breakers' yard in Brownville, Texas. I feel anyone who did that tow has earned the right for some vigorous lamp

swinging.

This could be a record, I drank only tea during the writing of this missive, it could well therefore, be illegible.