

Dear Shipmates,

The pace at which the year is already galloping on surprises me; the terminal part of 2021 was rather a bumpy ride that meant I failed to feel the jolt as mankind lurched into 2022. I am not moaning my lot as ever I subscribe to the notion that 'life springs eternal'. One of the girls read my horoscope which advised 'now is the time to get out more and socialise, attend parties' etc. From reports on the wireless I will certainly have to get out more, to a doorway in the shopping precinct with a begging bowl to meet the newly inflated cost of heating the homestead.

It brings forth the milk of human kindness from passersby with remarks like; 'Get a job you lazy bugger'. Such heartfelt comments from the lower class were absent from Bishop Welby's Christmas message, exhorting us to kindness and generosity to illegal channel crossers. Meanwhile his Lambeth Palace residence echoes empty whenever a servant coughs. He knows their wallets are thin after paying truck drivers three K for a ride over or purchase of a rubber dingy.

Dedicated  
To  
WILLIAM GASTON WALKLEY

And very often have we heard  
How men are killed and undone  
By accidents in carriages,  
By thieves, or fires in London;  
We know what risks all landsmen run,  
From noblemen to tailors:  
Then, Bill, let us thank Providence  
That you and I are sailors.

By Charles Dibdin

I got a couple of interesting books from little brother, published in 1961, which was meant to be a trilogy, but he failed to get the first which was entitled *Sail Ho*. They are the sea faring life of Sir James Bisset. That first was his life in sailing ships 1898/1904; the second volume titled *Tramps and Ladies*, his early years in steam 1905-1912. 3rd title *War, Peace and Big Ships*. He was Commodore of the Cunard Line at the end of his career, having captained the *Queen Mary* and the *Queen Elizabeth* as troop ships and luxury liners; a truly wonderful life story. The last volume has a dedication to a fellow officer William Walkley who had been his friend over all those years that plucked my G-string.

During Captain Bisset's climb up Cunard's promotional ladder he had been master of the four-funnelled *Mauritania*, holder of the Atlantic Blue Ribbon, for many years. It had two guises, one as a coal burner then converted to oil burning in 1921.

I had written a previous newsletter of the nuke sub sent at short notice to the Falklands (28 knots at 500 feet for 8000 miles); only the crew's need to eat and sleep would prevent her doing that a dozen time over, with no shortage of breath; the contrast with *Mauretania* who burnt 1000 tons of coal per day when crossing the Atlantic in her 192 fires that heated 25

boilers. The 'Black Gang' of 324 firemen and trimmers being very much the losers when oil became the economic saviour of many shipping lines; all just paid off into a depressed labour market. Allied to that was the 'Dust Lung Disease' that was such an affliction to coal shifters of the time; short lives terminating in much pain, really on the horns of a dilemma of 'Job for Life'.

France and Germany also had *Blue Ribbon* contenders on the lucrative luxury Atlantic run to the U.S.A. and back, so I feel conversion to oil must have saved many hundreds of lives from a miserable end.

Before we move on may I confuse the issue by harking back to nuke sub *Conqueror* once more. The Captain chose to use Mk 8 torpedoes on his target the *Belgrano* knowing them more reliable than his wire-guided alternative. His spread of Mk 8's had two certain hits, as logic would expect, the third went belong the *Belgrano* and hit one of the destroyer escorts, did not explode but left a substantial dent in her plates. Mark 8's are driven by a radial engine on rape seed oil. Developed in WW 1 there was real value for money.

**I was amazed by a story of a lad who told his 'Mam' he had asked God for a bike for Christmas. She told him at length, God does not work that way ----- so he stole a bike and asked God for forgiveness.**

A look at the New Year's Honours list in the *Times*; six close typed pages with hardly any borders does make one wonder about this antiquated charade. More than ever I am anti this public waste of time and money on the 'back scratching game' played out before our very eyes. One tabloid today, Monday, claims a petition has soared above 400,000 names demanding Tony Blair's knighthood be rescinded as he is a war criminal who cost U.K. families in excess of 700 sons and daughters; none of Tony's of course, his son of prime military age was becoming a rapid multi millionaire on the back of despots 'Tone' knows.

Daughter shoe-horned into mother's law firm that specialises in 'human rights', none of which are 'Tone's' clients. Puts one in mind of Nero in ancient times; i.e. Westminster fiddles (literally) as Britain burns. Such a blanket of unkindness does not fit all honour's recipients I will hasten to make clear, the number of remarkable females is no surprise. The lady who nailed Covid 19 vaccination in an astonishingly quick time, and her team, are beyond praise; a large dung heap of Blairs not being worthy of a place in the same field. A smart stroke was pulled by ex P.M. May who made her husband a knight, it carried the automatic title of Lady for his wife.

The depths to which politicians will go to denigrate each other seemed quite bottomless when reading, last week, of attacks on Mrs. Macron, the French president's wife, accusing her of being a 'transman' (whatever that is) and demanding proof of otherwise. It is near certain, following a long marriage, such information would be common knowledge years ago. Had the

'first lady' lived in the U.K. seduction of one of her 15 year old school boys would have seen her in the courts for sure; that's the law, but it still takes two to tango.

There sat I feeling fireproof, jabs x 3 plus flu, what could possibly go amiss? Answer, mixing with the kids! My every day asbestosis was the wrongest possible companion when I tested Covid positive. On a couple of occasions I struggled for breath - or fought for it. I see how the aged, with existing problems, so easily succumbed.

I had not been flippant about mask wearing, or distance keeping etc. and do not have any sympathy for anti-vaxers who rapidly expire. I don't think I got anywhere near 'The Bar' section of Brian's news round-up, was smug enough to feel immune, then got a salutary kick up the fundamental. I have a budget date to live till 97 years old; should the aforementioned take place before that time my remains are left to the school at Guy's for educational dissection; that took a bit of persuasion I can tell you. The thought of being useful for a couple of years extra really appeals as a 'thanks for life that ever seemed to offer me something new and challenging'.

Another body tale is the change to my prostate medication; telling of its side effects the Doc said it blocks testosterone, the anti aging drug, and kills the libido. At my currant vintage I confess the question purely academic, the mad monkey of procreation got off my back some considerable time ago, I will become a eunuch (castrated man employable in a harem); wonder what the pay rate is, or the fringe benefits, may even have a pension.

All that seems dependant on the precarious talks U.S. President Biden is to have with Putin on the Kazakhstan and Ukraine threats.

A comment by one spiteful reporter said 'Things may be looking up as Pres. Jo. had been observed in Washington walking and chewing gum at the same time'. Come what may he has my hopes for a successful conversation; communication is the vital ingredient in such tense times.

This effort has been a fits and starts affair and may well read like a dog's dinner.

#### A PRAYER

Give me a good digestion, Lord,  
And also something to digest;  
But when and how that something comes  
I leave to Thee, Who knowest best.

Give me a healthy body, Lord;  
Give me the sense to keep it so;  
Also a heart that is not bored  
Whatever work I have to do.

Give me a healthy mind, Good Lord,  
That finds the good that dodges sight;  
And seeing sin, is not appalled,  
But seeks a way to put it right.

Give me a point of view, Good Lord,  
Let me know what is, and why.  
Don't let me worry overmuch  
About the thing that's known as 'I'.

Give me a sense of humour, Lord,  
Give me the power to see a joke,  
To get some happiness from life  
And pass it on to other folk.

**Before I go I would like to wish a stalwart member of the Association a lovely spring outcome of her chemo. Janet Ward always swells numbers at reunion by bringing her sister and brother-in-law along; hope to see them all in May at King Charlie's place.**

Cannot resist another wee verse (produced above) to end the 3rd of Captain Bisset's books. Rations, particularly on sailing ships, could be meagre and tough to stomach. It is by Thomas Webb, a young officer in the Welsh Guards, killed in action during the 1914-18 war.

It's fare thee all well - hope it pans out to your satisfaction in'22 and do not sweat the small stuff.