

Hello Shipmates,

My taste for Flower Class corvettes came about from being the first R.N. owned vessel seen at close quarters. Joining Ganges in late '46, long trots awaiting a turn at breakers had several 'Flowers', some actually on the mud at low water off 'bloody point'. You may imagine those wartime school boys were more like primates than Homo sapiens, a scramble up moorings to gain access seemed natural activity to the curious, embarking on what seemed like the rest of their lives.

Flowers were the 'first war emergency construction vessels' built in the U.K. Based on a pre-war 'whale catcher' any small yard at that time who could build a decent trawler was capable; initially with a short fo'csl.

As a 4" was added, then an 'Asdic shack' hanging off front of bridge, then a radar at the back of bridge, a close-range 'bin over engine room', 2" depth charge racks at stern, then 2'D.C. throwers either side of the galley, living conditions became dire.

To remedy that the fo'csl was extended from its original break before the bridge to aft funnel, mast also moved from front to back of bridge; notorious wet ships, said to roll on wet grass. A look at the hull profile shows to good effect the lack of the fore foot design, little to lift the bow in a sea way. A staggering 171 were built in the U.K., plus 105 in Canada.

Multiple escorts on all convoys; Commodores in charge referred to them as their 'herbaceous border'. Certainly never meant to operate in North Atlantic gales or Russian convoys. Anyone who crewed these, H.O's and R.N.V.R. officers, certainly earned their meagre stipend. Population at large could not imagine what a hard grind in miserable conditions they endured.



HMS Jonquil (K68)
British Flower Class corvette
circa 1943-1944



A life-time later was able to board the R.C.N.'s preserved flower H.M.C.C. Sackville, berthed in Halifax, Nova Scotia; it still steams on rare occasions and no restrictions anywhere for visitors.

Alongside on promenade is their little museum, fronted by a magnificent monumental bronze, twice life-size of the sort of Cannuk (slang for Canadian) who crewed her; as a lover of monumental sculpture I judge it finest of the subject

anywhere in the world.

Was fortunate being able to take the sea route to Murmansk during the thaw in relations. Had read that the wreck of Bluebell was visible on the east side of Kola Inlet; I got as high as possible and looked long and hard with my binos, alas did not get a glimpse.

Last Flower I saw was at a long distance aground on southern end of Cherbourg harbour; was I mistaken, is it still there, what was its name?



Was prompted to write this when Brian Saunders thought he would like to do a piece on members' hobbies after seeing my attempt to paint a Flower. Preamble to that is in a personal letter to Libby and 'he'.

Allan Harmer and I are regular correspondents; I see his efforts by photograph and am sure you would love his railway pictures. I have a special rendition of a locally built barge he did.

Allen and Brian Turner used to be close-ish neighbours; Allan says he profits greatly from Mr. T's advice and critiques; alas Mr. T moved up to Whitehaven. I feel they miss each other's contact - it was purely platonic - honest!

The hobbyist for star prize, I feel, goes to Mr. Turner; his museum-quality model of a flower corvette is a miniature master-class in modelling.

So, Shipmates, how about a photo of your hobby for inclusion? It could be knitted night shirts or rattle snake rearing; am certain your prize marrows are worth a photo.

Tatty bye,



Some more views of HMCC Sackville