

ANDY BRIERLEY'S BLOG

Shipmates,

My fellow travellers of the 54 pleasure cruise will recall how nice was a run ashore at Montego Bay (Jamaica). Small, clean and matelot friendly.

Can anyone put the facts to a story in a dark corner of my grey matter? The 'hotel bar' in that place was declared 'off limits' to the 'lower deck'. If true it must have come from the ship. This, on becoming known to the hotel, suffered immediate rebuttal: one would hope, as a result the 'bar taking graph' enjoyed a healthy spike. Do you know if this tale is fact or myth?

Montego Bay came to mind on seeing a report of it hard hit by 'gang violence'. In 2017 a staggering 335 murders took place in the area. How sad that 60 years of progress, since our visit, has such a result.

I was captivated, at the time, by the sight of large dumb barges loaded with banana branches in plastic sheaths, propelled by a couple of chaps on long sweeps, out to a waiting 'reefer'. I assume they were GEEST boats.

Interesting news, to me, this month, Geest are leaving their normal off-load berth at Portsmouth, shifting the business down here to Dover docks. Middle-size vessel, normally white with self-loading cranes fore and aft of the holds, to do cheap loading at anchor round the islands.

Dover docks are in the throes of major change, many millions of pounds being spent on large new marina, housing, filling in area of old Hovercraft dock. Filling granite lined docks seems madness to me: the mega dredging from Goodwin Sands has locals up in arms. The Goodwin's are seen as a very large cemetery of countless vessels and their crews; hundreds over history, plus, of course, countless WW2 aircraft and crews.

Another stamping ground - Bermuda, figured in an article about extinct species. How pleasant it was in the 'shut down' dockyard all to ourselves; now a massive marina and accommodation area, plus museum. The species hunted to extinction for food, a bird called a Cahow. Their fate sealed when early ship-wrecked crews found them prime tucker. Alas, it sealed their fate, being the only breeding ground. Should you decide to return to that idyllic place to build a straw hut, it is reported a scrubby awkward acre will cost \$1 million.

Another docks that had my attention for a while was Liverpool, not in its heyday; the overhead tramway was scrapped, removed. Dereliction for miles, end to end, it extended at least two streets back. Only boat visiting was the ferry from Birkenhead each half hour at the rear of Liver Building. A large, engraved sandstone block inserted into the wall of a nearby office recorded its use as 'Naval HQ Atlantic' in WW2.

The splendid bronze of Captain Walker was not yet cast, so I did not get to see it. From pictures, it is a bit over life-size, on a plinth, dressed in sweater and warmer, binos on chest, hatless as he was on standing above Starling's Bridge, conducting a hunt.



Captain Walker

Money is now being collected for a 'Battle of Atlantic' sculpture to be located at pier head. At a reported 91 foot long, weighing $12\frac{1}{2}$ tons, Captain Walker's statue is to be incorporated into it. Will I see it one day when completed? My taste for 'monumental art' salivates at the prospect.

It is possible no one will be disappointed; the sculptor Paul Day has a glowing pedigree. If you have seen the Battle of Britain casting on Thames embankment his work will be familiar to you.

Just when another cold snap is forecast Comrade Putin threatens to 'cut off our gas'. Oh! The thought of going without a cuppa! I am certain we will muddle by somehow. And, if that be the case, it's our own fault for allowing green fanatics to impede fracking in our own back yard.

Technology and technique carried out at U.S. drillers' expense had taken care of perceived drawbacks. Localities, up north, sit on countless jobs and cash bonanzas. As a youngster in Yorkshire I am familiar with the saying 'Strong in the arm weak in the head, Yorkshire born, Yorkshire bred'.

Are we to stay in thrall to foreign murderers who come here at will to 'launder' their billions and poison any dissenting voice? And how sad to see our N.A.T.O ally Mr Macron of France failing to understand the position taken by our Mrs. May.

Another truism I have heard all my life is, 'If you want a despot to prosper good women/men just need to keep their mouth shut'. The capitalist opinion of, 'Don't buy the despot's goods' is our ace in the hole (a drilled hole for U.S gas).

Those despots crave cash, it fuels all aggressive moves and threats, builds his Kalashnikovs. If we ain't buying Comrade Putin is plucked, I refer to his tail feathers. The largest oil deposits in the world are as dross if you cannot sell it; look at the squirming of OPEC and Saudi at this time.

The Institute of Petroleum says end of next year the U.S. will be energy self-sufficient, and, a net exporter. To shut the valve at this end of Russia's pipeline would be sweet indeed.

It is astounding to read in West Texas - Permian Basin, 'smart' bits linked to computers, multi-pad sites and longer lateral bores can drill and recover at a viable \$25 a barrel. To OPEC and Russia that is a nightmare. Take heart Shipmates, capitalist markets will do what politician, of some hue, are scared to do - 'in your interest'.

So! No! I do not hold shares or stocks in the oil industry, though I confess to once working for B.P. for about nine years. I enjoyed the education, the job and the salary, but, best of all, as I have a bit of paper left, I can tell you it helped get my school-leaver son into their Instrumental Technical Apprentice School.

If I might sing his praises, his last job was commissioning drill ships at OKPO South Korea - not many short miles from the pristine cemetery for the 29th Brigade dead (British) from that late

war. Korean school children are its greatest guardians, enough to melt the most stony hearted! They seem to feel a real debt of gratitude to 'Tommy Atkins', pushing up their national flowers.

I will cease, with the hope no one has abandoned us, and your dues for 2018 are in the post.

I love you all, especially my 'editorial staff', honest! We are bit like a bar of Cadbury's - may contain nuts!!

