H.M.S. SUPERB (CRUISER) ASSOCIATION

A MAGAZINE FOR THE MEMBERSHIP

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CHAIRMAN OF THE ASSOCIATION, ROBIN SMITH

CONTENTS

Andy's Musings	Click Here to Go There
Navy Matters	Click Here to Go There
Naval Guns	Click Here to Go There
Letters to the Editor	Click Here to Go There
And all Because ...	Click Here to Go There
Nozzers Go West	Click Here to Go There
Life in the Navy in 1940	Click Here to Go There
Photo Album	Click Here to Go There
Slops	Click Here to Go There
Crossed the Bar	Click Here to Go There
Reunion Photos	Click Here to Go There
People Searching for People	Click Here to Go There

Superb - Defending Britain Since 1710

ANDY BRIERLEY'S BLOG

Hello Shipmates,

Reading through August's newsletter I was taken aback at the mention of sexual harassment in Ganges; had not heard those words before associated with that place. It lays emphasis on me, being a naive yokel, who forgot that in any bunch of Homo sapiens there is, invariably by nature, an aberration who looks like all the rest.

Could I suggest, apart from the deviant, another type who has authority?; would closer examination of your 'bits' in an undignified posture just to establish superiority and grind home what the 'pecking order' is, by humiliation, a psychological ploy for a different motive.

Whilst in that place myself, I never heard of an improper approach being made to anyone. I see, with hindsight, an adolescent straight from school, parachuted into that alien environment in that era, silenced by embarrassment – phew, that's a heavy homespun view. I confess looking back there with a degree of affection. Did not expect it to be easy, a couple of uncles had been through the system, one from each side of the family, pre-war, but it, equally, did not reach my definition of 'hard'.

Came across an N print from 35 mm film camera, three in fact, all of Shotley; how they survived this long is magic. The scene is one I mentioned in a newsletter not long ago.

Endless trot of redundant R.N. vessels laid up, several deep, awaiting 'the torch' on the river Stour; a couple of cutters at water's edge disgorged their compliment of boys for swimming and frolic for the afternoon, unsupervised. Freedom was amazing, suppose 'health and safety' had yet to rear its head. The faces are etched in one's memory; no amount of brain squeezing can dredge up the names. Cannot help wondering; where did they go? What did they do? Are any still up and running?

Was very close to one real character, Roger Berry who joined from the Channel Isles, spent his youth there under German occupation, and would tell me tales from home, later all verified by a book published on the period. He was an absolute squib of a kid, reporting life as 'a major exercise in out-witting authority', with the constant rumble of hunger in the belly. When he drifts into my memory I see his finger nails, unlike any other, all

INDEX

chewed right back to the quicks; am told a sure sign of high strung nervous energy. Our Shipmate Brian Hill, a member of Ganges Association once tried a search for him, alas, without success.

A couple of years ago I was told 'the mast' is about to collapse from sheer neglect; anyone know if it's still standing? 'The Button' should be rescued, if Ganges bell resides in a naval collection somewhere that 'Button' deserves a place alongside. It does not stretch the point much to suggest it saw as much to build the R.N. Story as *Victory* itself. Recently I saw a report on *Peking*, a.k.a. *Arethusa*, our one-time co-producer of Boy Seamen. I am at a loss, knowing its prominence locally, that no pictures appeared in the local press or TV of its journey back east across the Atlantic from Sea Port, New York to Germany on its 'piggy back heavy lift ship'. Funds for the restoration are from 'Public and Government'; work proceeds a apace, high class workmanship is a priority over completion date.

Recently had a rant about Iran's 'plastic outboards' capturing tankers in Hormuz Straits with no appropriate response from the U.K. R.N. – like with like and 50 cal. in bows!

If reports are to be believed a far better tool is now available called Martlet, an ultra lightweight missile for use in multiple situations, initially for the upgrade helicopter. A man-portable tube-fired version suitable for small boats etc. rides a laser beam out to six kilometres, a measure superior to 30mm Phalanx A.A mounts. Not vigorous enough to fly off into the 'wide blue yonder', doing unplanned and unforeseen damage.

The warhead of 3 kgs. will execute any small scale task with splendid efficiency; its strong suit, plastic deniability. Oh dear, the matelot-marine in our bow slipped and inadvertently touched the trigger. He will be disciplined on return home (a weekend in Savoy, with spouse). The Napoleonic maxim 'Never fight unless 75% sure of success'; the 3 kg head on Martlet will see to that, the 25% left to chance can be passed to our ambassador, to earn his corn, talking a way out of the hit.

The sermon from all R.N. Holy Joes', delivered with lots of 'fire and brimstone', 'Let us go forth brethren and bite our tormentors in the arse'!

In the same report of above mentioned was a reference to a direct energy weapon having highly successful trials; further explanation was not offered, leaving one speculating what on earth it is. My understanding of *directed energy* is a laser beam.

Still on weaponry – we are informed type 23 frigates will donate their Sea Sceptre missile systems, the 4.5 main gun and Artisan radar, to new build type 31 frigates, when scrapped. Grand new names for the new builds are already chosen, honest!

INDEX

Is that a cart before the horse situation? How many seminars, conferences and think tanks on Lake Geneva or Hotel Splendid in Miami did it take a plethora of Admirals to settle on a choice?

Meanwhile at M.O.D. the fixed price for type 31 frigates at £250 million a copy, is now abandoned and revised slightly upwards to £330 million. Time to sigh in resignation knowing the 'six pees' are a foreign concept in that place; sometimes it makes you wish Noah has missed the boat.

Am minded to write to the M.O.D. and suggest first class type 31 should follow naval tradition and be named after a flower – Second Hand Rose.

Tribute: The memorial sculpture

Here is a wee picture of that group being cast for centre piece of new Normandy monument. Do you think it worthy?

Keep the home fires burning.

INDEX

NAVY MATTERS

Three SEALs Kill Three Pirates with Three Headshots

The story of the Maersk Alabama hijacking reads like a video game special mission. "Location: 240 miles southeast of Eyl, Somalia. Mission Background: Pirates have seized the cargo ship Maersk Alabama, the first American-flagged ship to be captured by pirates since the Second Barbary War of 1815. The hijacking has failed due to the actions of the crew, but they're attempting to escape in a lifeboat with Captain Richard Phillips as a hostage. Objectives: Take out the pirates as quickly as possible to prevent retaliation, and secure Captain Phillips's freedom."

The lifeboat had been taken into tow by the U.S. Destroyer Bainbridge, which seems pretty endgame for the pirates. However, they were keeping Captain Phillips very close, with weapons constantly trained on him and fingers on the triggers. They felt fairly safe, all things considered. But the pirates were evidently unaware that those three gentlemen standing on the

INDEX

Bainbridge's fantail were expert marksmen. Marksmen from a certain, now very well-known SEAL team.

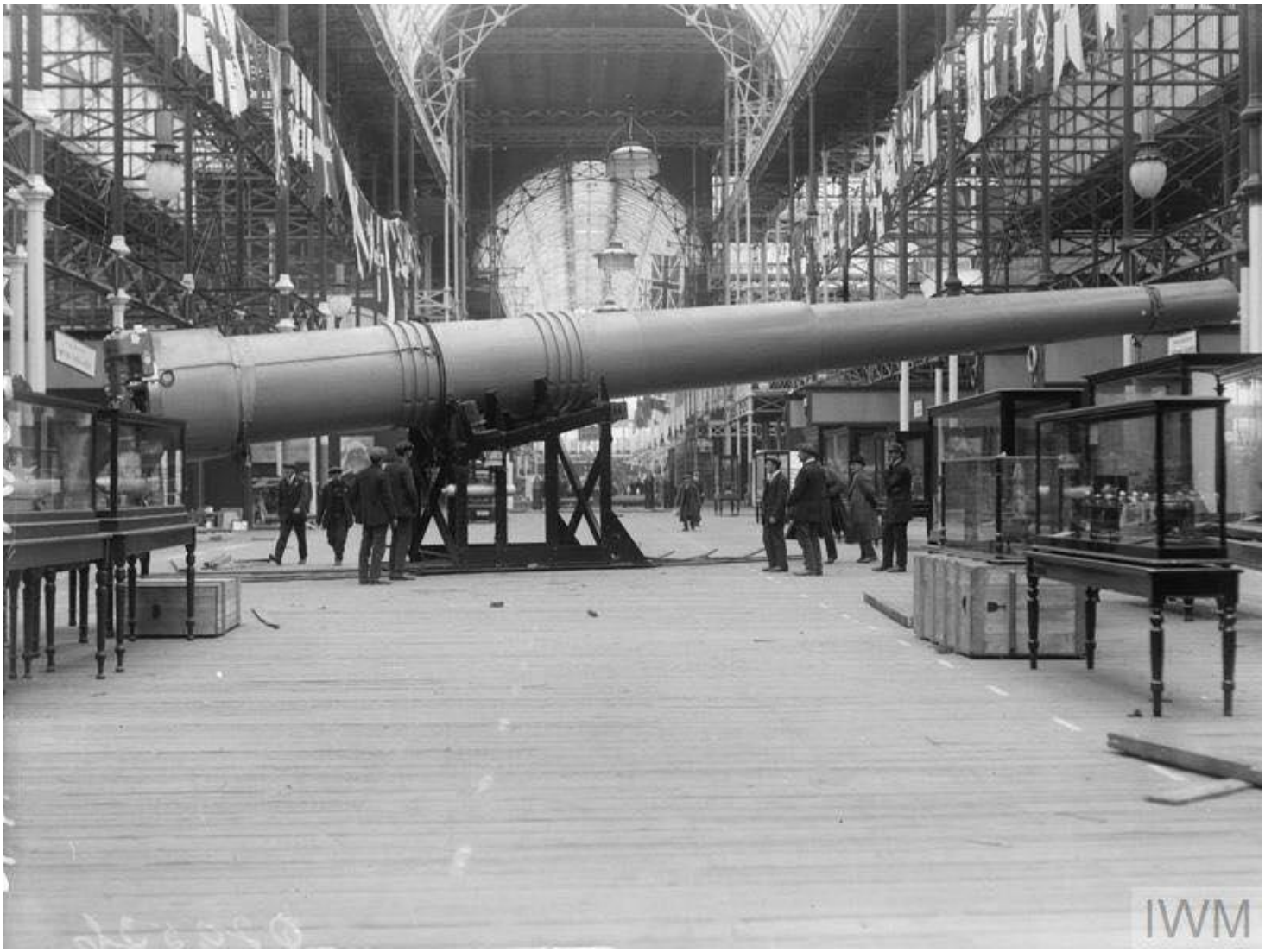
Under normal circumstances, a 40-yard sniper shot would be nothing for a SEAL. Except that these were far from normal circumstances. The Bainbridge slowly rose and sank in the sea, the lifeboat bobbed like a toy on the waves, and a constant wind blew in between them. Hitting a tiny moving target, from another moving platform, with mere inches to spare between the pirates and Phillips. The SEALs fired - and "whapwhapWHAP." Three Somali pirates dropped to the lifeboat deck, wordless as sacks of dead fish. The fourth pirate, watching his compatriots' last thoughts disperse as puffs of red mist, wisely surrendered.

It wouldn't be the last time Seal Team Six made headlines, nor was it the only time their actions inspired a feature film - in this case, Captain Phillips, starring Tom Hanks in the titular role.

"That meal was delicious, what went wrong with it?"

NAVAL GUNS

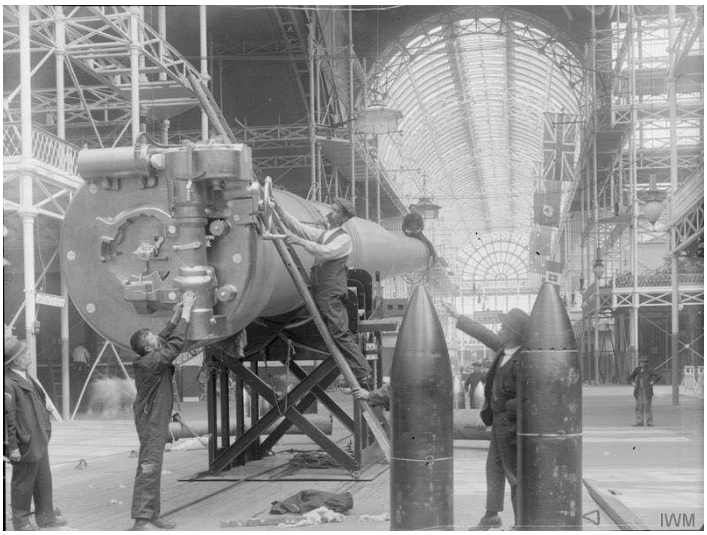
The arrival of a BL 18"/L39 Mk 1 naval gun being installed for display at the 'Imperial War Museum and Great Victory Exhibition' at the Crystal Palace, London, circa. 1920.



With a calibre of 18.0 inches, a barrel length of 39 calibres, and firing projectiles weighing in at over 3,320 lbs (1.5 long tons), this remains the largest and heaviest naval gun ever manufactured by the Royal Navy, and the second largest ever used in naval warfare*.

The only installation in single mount was aboard HMS Furious and the Monitors' HMS General Wolfe (1915), HMS Lord Clive, with HMS Prince Eugene being also modified but not used due to the end of war in 1918. In total 85 shells would be fired in anger during WWI.

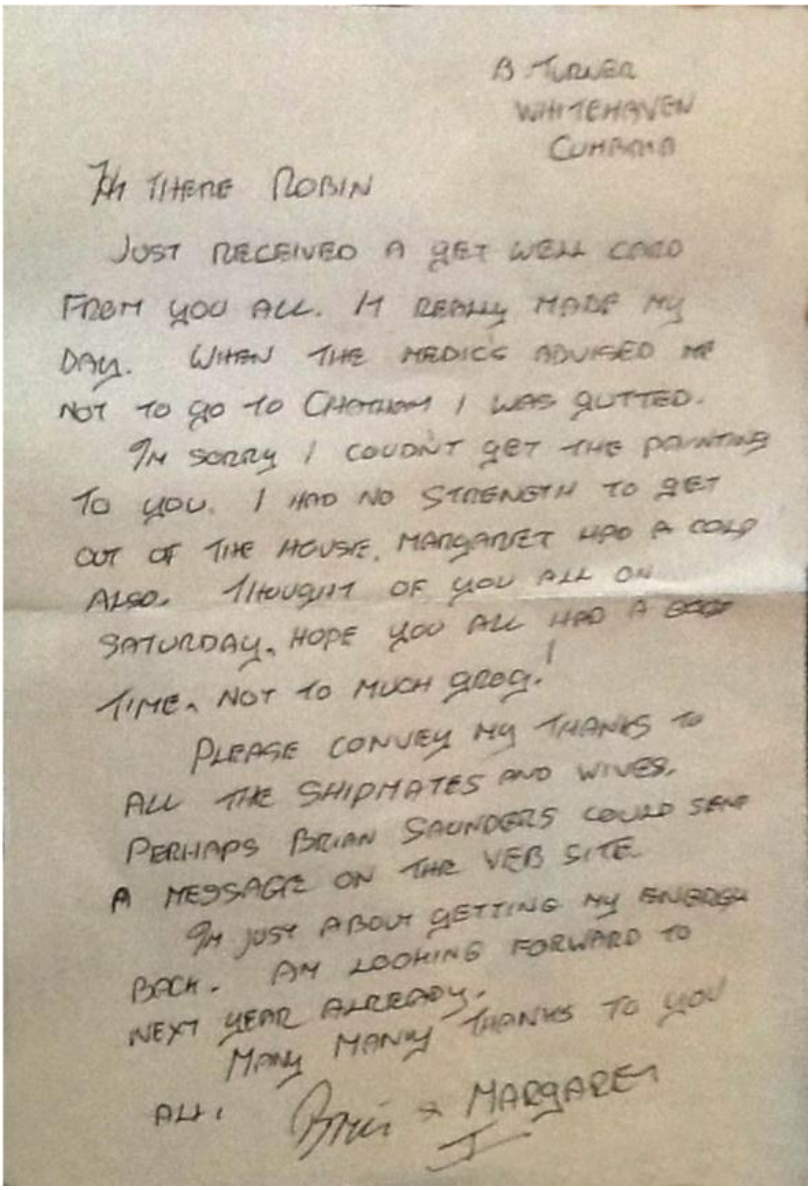
None of the 18"/L39 gun barrels or mounts built would survive past 1947, with the last barrel and turret being used separately during WWII. One of the shells is on public display today, at the Explosion Museum of Naval Firepower in



Gosport.

*The Imperial Japanese Navy's Type-94 naval guns of WWII had a larger calibre of 18.1 inches and saw longer service, though had a lighter shell than the British weapon

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



B Turner
Whitehaven
Cumbria

Hi There Robin

Just received a get well card from you all. It really made my day. When the medics advised me not to go to Chatham I was gutted.

I'm sorry I couldn't get the painting to you. I had no strength to get out of the house. Margaret had a cold also. I thought of you all on Saturday. Hope you all had a good time. Not to much grog!

Please convey my thanks to all the shipmates and wives. Perhaps Brian Saunders could send a message on the web site.

I'm just about getting my energy back. Am looking forward to next year already.

Many many thanks to you all.

Brian & Margaret

INDEX

AND ALL BECAUSE

A French King accidentally had a feather in his backside !

By Brian Saunders

I translated the following story from the book "Histoires d'humour de l'histoire de France" by Guy Breton. I would take a guess that it might make a few members drop their glasses of port and snort in derision – but it is submitted with a tongue firmly clenched and clenched in the teeth (to mix metaphors)

Some time ago an old manuscript came to the French auction rooms with an interesting history. The documents contained the words of old French songs amongst which was one entitled **"Manuscrit d'un cantique chanté par les demoiselles de St-Cyr pour la guérison du roi Louis XIV"**

It all started in January 1686 when, during the reign of Louis 14th, the King became suddenly and seriously unwell and his illness confounded his medical team.

He was a big man and it is a matter of recorded history that he liked to eat well.

At Versailles, on one evening alone, he consumed four bowls of soup, a whole pheasant, a partridge stuffed with cabbage, a cucumber & fromage blanc salad, two enormous slices of ham, a leg of lamb and a whole plate of assorted pâtisseries.

For desert he had some fruit, some crème and a few hard boiled eggs. His gargantuan appetite was evident by the amount of skin eruptions in various places on his body.

Louis, a heavy man, would sit on huge feather-stuffed cushions for comfort and one day travelling in his coach, being discomforted, he removed, from the seat of his "pantalons", a stray feather that had escaped from the upholstery and the quill of which had, painfully, entered his "derrière".

Subsequently his discomfort was exacerbated whenever he sat down and, as it was protocol in those times, not to lay a hand on the monarch's bottom, the doctors merely deduced that another feather had entered "l'endroit le plus secret".

Because of the fact that the skin eruptions they then considered to be abscesses were connected with the anal pains, a Lady of the Court suggested, as a cure, hot poultices concocted from her own secret recipe.

These, she said must be applied only by her. That posed another problem because only the royal doctors were allowed to see the King naked.

The King, by now in some agony, demanded to see the woman and commanded that she applied her treatment to the royal bottom. Not only did this do no good at all to His Majesty (we don't know if it delighted the Lady) – it made matters worse!

The decision was finally made by *M. Felix* the Senior Royal Surgeon, to operate but he was uncertain as to the best process to ensure success and to be sure that they got it right this time. As the process was untried and because they felt it unwise to use the King as a guinea-pig they managed to incarcerate several unfortunates who possibly had the same problem and tried their experimental surgery on them.

For some time they practised and eventually felt that they were able to proceed with the royal operation. It was considered unthinkable that an ordinary surgical instrument was to be used on the royal body especially where it needed to be inserted in the royal bottom – so a special one was commissioned.

A suitable gold cutting instrument with a silver plated blade, designed and made by a jeweller, took a further 5 months to complete during which time, it is recorded, Louis had to sit on a huge cushion (hopefully not made of feathers) - *tantôt sur une fesse, tantôt sur l'autre* - constantly resting on one cheek, then the other!

At last the operation took place. National prayers were said and the Ladies of St-Cyr decided to compose some verses to help him to make a full recovery

The Mother Superior, *Mme de Brinon*, wrote a verse which she put to a tune written by a Court Musician named *Signor Lully*. This short song, sung at the time, was also subsequently sung by the demoiselles of St-Cyr each time the King visited their school after his recovery

Grand Dieu sauve le roi,	*Lord God save our King,*
Longs jours à notre roi,	*Long days to our King,*
Vive le roi.	*Long live the King,*
A lui victoire,	*Give him victory,*
Bonheur et gloire,	*Good luck and glory,*
Qu'il ait un règne heureux,	*May he have a happy reign,*
Et l'appui des cieux	*And the support of heaven*

Some years later, in 1714, the composer *Handel* visited Versailles and heard the incumbents singing "le cantique" and noted the words and music. Returning to London, he asked a bilingual clergyman named *Carrey* to translate *Mme de Brinon's* couplet into English. Handel (at that

time unencumbered and unworried by copyright or plagiarism) went immediately to see his friend King George 1st and, flattered at Handel's attention; the British Monarch declared that in future **"God Save The King" must be sung at all official ceremonies.**

Thus, it is suggested, the profoundly British National Anthem was a collaboration of a French woman (**Mme de Brinon**), An Italian musician (**Lully**), a German composer (**Handel**) and an Englishman (**Carrey**).

AND ALL BECAUSE A FRENCH KING ACCIDENTALLY HAD A FEATHER IN HIS BACKSIDE !

The Lost Wife

A man approached a very beautiful, busty woman in a large supermarket and said, "I've lost my wife here in the supermarket. Can you talk to me for a couple of minutes?"

The woman looked puzzled. "Why talk to me?" she asked.

He replied, "Because every time I talk to a woman with a figure like yours, my wife appears out of nowhere."

NOZZERS GO WEST
Part 5

Fresh out of Ganges, and now finding their way around Chatham naval station HMS Pembroke, Ginger and his happy band are rudely jolted from their leisurely lifestyle of lounging around watching television in their first experience of privacy they had experienced since joining Her Majesty's navy.

They had not been issued with their tropical kit at Ganges. Some classes had. It seemed to be potluck which draft classes were and which were not; no doubt those that were going abroad straight from Ganges had theirs issued straight away. They were a little envious of other classes that were issued with their whites at Ganges but, on the bright side, they didn't have all that extra sewing over of names in red silk to contend with. Now that didn't matter anymore. With their newly acquired white suits and extra white fronts under their arms, they headed for the kit muster room where a pad of black paint had been prepared for them to mark their names on their new whites. Then it was just a case of waiting for the paint to dry and keeping out of everyone's way.

It was pretty certain as to what their next move was likely to be, it was doubted if they had been issued with tropical kit "just in case" but so far nothing, apart from speculation, abounded. Then about a week or so later and after they had been in Pembroke for around four weeks, they were told to pack up everything and stand by to move out on the following day. They had been drafted.

It was a certainty that they were not the first boys to have set foot in Chatham barracks but they had had an exceedingly easy time of it. It was as if nobody knew what to do with them and nobody wanted to assume responsibility for them. They must have been registered somewhere, after all they had been paid at the pay parade in the Drill Shed, which was alongside the Parade Ground, a couple of times and that wouldn't have happened without the correct paperwork being in place.

They had lived "*The Life of Riley*". Maybe it was down as beginners luck or maybe someone on high was smiling down upon them. Whatever the reason and without doing anything to help the situation, they had had the easiest of times in what was regarded as one of the strictest barracks in the navy.

INDEX

They had secured from work at 1600 each day and had gone for tea. Then there was a picture show most days at 1615, in the NAAFI canteen building and then, straight after the pictures it was suppertime. After that it was time for a bath and then into the television room for as long as the mood took them. They found life on the ***Implacable*** really comfortable after the regimented regime of ***Ganges*** but this was something else, things couldn't be better.

They were half expecting to be told pack to their kit almost daily and after the issue of tropical kit, that order became inevitable. When it came, as it did one morning, there was excitement in the air and no sign of trepidation. They were going on draft; they didn't know where to and that didn't matter. They were going on draft.

Chief Bumble, their first instructor at Ganges, had shown them how to pack a kitbag: boots and suits in the bottom, overcoat and oilskin next with the remainder in succession, followed by a small attaché case, hat box and tin hat on the very top. Bumble's advice had carried them through that same routine a few times since that day and, with the expectation of a ship becoming their new home in the near future; it took no time at all to complete the operation once again.

The last task was their leaving routine. That was just a duplicate of the joining routine they had been put through only about a month earlier but, nevertheless, it had to be done. – including another kit inspection in the kit muster room. What they thought would happen to kit in the space of a few weeks was never explained but it had to be completed, along with all the other stamps required to allow them out of the place.

This time there was no lorry to transport their kit to its new destination and they were obliged to make two journeys, first with their bag then their hammock, from Hawke Block, across the road, down the steps and across the parade ground to the Drill Shed where, they were told, it would be delivered for them to their ship which was waiting just next door in the dockyard basin. There would be no sightseeing trip and no train journey on this occasion. Their ship was waiting for them just down the road and, this time, they would make the journey on foot.

Even at this late stage they hadn't been told the name of their new ship, what it was or where it was. Then, as they reached the dockyard water's edge, all three questions were answered at once.

H.M.S. Superb lay with her starboard side against the wall of No. 3 basin; the nearside wall, the one nearest to Pembroke. She was a cruiser and she looked absolutely marvellous, all the way from her gunnery director above and behind the bridge, to her two forward triple six-inch gun turrets, past the boat deck with

INDEX

two double four-inch mountings on either side, past the torpedo tubes that were tucked into a hole in the ship's side and all the way to another triple six-inch turret on the quarterdeck.

There was too much for them to take in, although one thing was uppermost in their minds: she was about to become their new home. As far as first impressions went, they loved it and couldn't wait to get aboard.

Their desire soon became a reality when someone came down the gangway to meet them and ordered: 'Bring your kitbags and follow me'.

Ginger couldn't quite place him although he seemed familiar. Maybe he had been a month or two ahead of them on Ganges. They obediently followed him up the forward gangway and along the walkway and into a screen door about half way along. Those thoughts niggled as they progressed and Ginger tried to put them out of his mind. Who was that man or where he had come from was not in the least important, as time progressed they were bound to run into people they had seen before. After all, the people staggering along with their kitbags behind him were all familiar to him - and they had been together for the past eighteen months.

Inside the superstructure door they trooped and down a ladder to a lower level almost immediately. That level opened into a big open space with the sickbay on the starboard side. It was a bit of a struggle to negotiate ladders with a kitbag in tow and, with those pressing forward from behind; it didn't leave much time to take in their surroundings as they shuffled along. Then, a little further forward, and before they reached the NAAFI canteen flat, their guide stopped and, indicating a hatch to their left, enlightened them: 'There ye go. That's it. Down there!'

They were not sure what lay below them and there was a bit of hesitancy so, once again, their guide did their thinking for them.

'On second thoughts, a couple of you should go down below and the rest of you pass your bags down. Then I suggest you go back and collect your hammocks, now that you know the way'.

He wasn't the most friendly of people nor was he instantly likeable, but his advice was good advice, whether he intended it to be or not. With an orderly chain passing kitbags down through the hatch it saved a lot of getting in each other's way and pretty soon all bags and hammocks were safely aboard.

TO BE CONTINUED

LIFE IN THE NAVY IN THE 1940s

By Colin Wilkinson

This article which was found on the World Wide Web
was written in January 2000 and published by the BBC in July 2004

I am writing this account in case any of my descendants, e.g. great grandchildren as yet unborn, become interested in what it was like to be at sea during the Second World War. There is, however, nothing heroic in what I have to describe.

When I was young I knew that my father had served as a Telegraphist on a minesweeper in the North Sea during World War 1. At that time I did not think to ask him more about his experiences but in later life I wished I had. As he was born in September 1899 he could not have been in the navy very long as he would have been barely 19 when the war ended.

In my 76th year it is time for me to record my memories if I am ever to do so, so here goes.

When war broke out on 3rd September 1939 I was 14 and I left the boy scouts to join the school's OTC (Officers Training Corps). I was promoted to the lofty rank of lance- corporal before I left school in 1941 and took a clerical job in the Civil Service until I was old enough to join up. I also applied for a UND (University Naval Division) course and was accepted after interview. This course was being introduced in order to find suitable candidates for a naval commission and mine was to be at Liverpool, the nearest university to my home near Blackpool. Similar courses were to be held at several other Universities including Oxford and Cambridge.

Until my course began in January 1943, and whilst working in the Civil Service, I joined the Home Guard and spent evenings and weekends on various activities such as sentry duty in case of an invasion. Our weapons were Lee Enfield rifles dating from World War 1 but I also became proficient at stripping and reassembling our one Sten machine gun, in case it jammed in action. This must have worried Hitler, who decided against an invasion.
Before I left for my naval training, one of my concerns was passing the medical examination. I have worn spectacles ever since I was found at age 7 to be suffering from what was called "weak" eyesight. After a relatively short time my vision deteriorated each day and the spectacles corrected this and resulted in good vision. But naval officers did not wear spectacles and I did not disclose at my medical exam that I used them. I was able to read the eyesight charts well enough not to raise questions and of course I removed my glasses before any parades. Fortunately I do not suffer from colour blindness; it is vital to distinguish a ship's starboard (green) light from her port (red) light. When I eventually took up my first long-term ship assignment (*HMS Narbrough*) no one questioned my use of glasses.

INDEX

At Liverpool University half the time was spent on naval training, where my OTC parade ground experience proved useful, and half on academic studies which we were told would be accepted as the first year of a degree course if we chose to return to academic life after the war, though the UND course was to last only six months and we had to pass exams at the end of it.

I managed to pass the course and became an Ordinary Seaman in the Royal Navy in July 1943, earmarked as a commission candidate. My first posting was to *HMS Ganges*, a shore establishment near Ipswich, Suffolk. There, as well as parades and more naval lectures, we had to pass a number of physical tests such as running a mile in, I think, six minutes and completing a cross country course in a specified time. The test I remember best was climbing a very high mast — terrifying for someone like me with no head for heights. There were safety nets supported by a number of thick concrete posts but if any unfortunate faller happened to land on a post he would not be in good shape!

I felt — and still feel - that this test was more suitable for the navy in Napoleonic times. During this course, and indeed all the courses we had to pass before gaining a commission, several candidates failed and had to return to sea duties, retaining the rank of Ordinary Seaman. Some of the failures were chaps we expected to pass easily. I found a sailor's bell-bottom trousers and jerkin were made of a coarse material which was quite itchy and that was another incentive to pass the training stage.

After *HMS Ganges* I was sent to serve a few weeks in each of two ships in Scapa Flow in the Orkney Islands, the main base for the larger units of the Home Fleet.

The first ship was a World War 1 battleship, *HMS Queen Elizabeth;* the second was a battle cruiser, *HMS Renown*, which earlier had taken Winston Churchill across the Atlantic to meet President Roosevelt and agree war strategy. I was given various tasks such as helping to supply huge shells to one of the big 15-inch guns when it was being fired during exercises at sea. I also had a turn at steering the ship, altering course and keeping a steady course under the direction of the officer of the watch.

This was the time when I learnt it was quite unpleasant sleeping in a hammock amongst many other tightly packed sailors. Another incentive to do well! After the weeks at sea, the last but most important course was at *HMS King Alfred*, a base near Brighton. That was the last chance to weed us out and in January 1944 I was commissioned as a Midshipman RNVR (in common parlance a "snotty").

I was sent to Londonderry to join a newly commissioned frigate, *HMS Narbrough* of some 1600 tons, which had been loaned to us by the USA for the duration of the war. Unlike the elderly destroyers which had been loaned earlier in the war, *Narbrough* was brand new and quite well equipped, so that I had a cabin to myself and a bunk instead of a hammock. *Narbrough* and all her sister ships were named after Lord Nelson's captains and somewhere in the house I have a small framed aerial photograph of her.

She had three 3- inch guns, a number of Oerlikon machine guns, depth charges and a weapon called a hedgehog which fired a number of explosive projectiles from the bows to a point about fifty yards ahead when a possible U-boat had been detected by our asdic. Asdic is broadly similar to radar but with a shorter range and operates under water to detect objects such as submarines.

The crew consisted of about 180 ratings and 8 officers. The captain was an elderly Lieutenant Commander RN and the other officers were either RNR (Merchant Navy men in peace time) or RNVR like me. Incidentally the V stands for "volunteer".

I was given charge of the Ship's Office, dealing with official correspondence, submitting the many reports required by the Admiralty etc. But perhaps one of the most important tasks — no doubt in the crew's mind - was to calculate each rating's fortnightly pay entitlement, draw the total sum from whatever shore base we were near (escorted by two armed sailors), make up the pay into separate envelopes and issue them at a Pay Parade. It was quite a relief when I found I had no money missing or left over! For the ship's office work I had one big advantage in that from an early age my father had let me practice using his typewriter.

My second major duty was to take charge of the forecastle division of seamen, a third of the non-specialist ratings on the ship. I had to deal with any problems they put to me and to pass on to the captain, via the first lieutenant, any requests such as for compassionate leave due to domestic problems, promotion when due, etc. When coming into port my division was responsible for handling the mooring lines from the bows or for dropping the anchor if that was called for.

At sea I was one of the watch-keeping officers, on duty for four hour stretches on the bridge, seeing that the ship went where she was meant to go and calling the captain to the bridge in the event of an emergency such as detecting a possible U boat. When we accompanied a convoy I had to alter course at the correct time to a new leg of the zigzag, as a means of foiling any U boat which might have been about to attack.

At Action Stations my job was again on the bridge, passing on the captain's orders and taking charge of B gun, one of the three inch guns which had been detailed to fire any required star shells as well as high explosive shells, which, as it turned out, we never had to fire. Our action was mainly with depth charges and the Hedgehog.

In heavy seas — quite common in the Atlantic - the ship rolled a lot, up to perhaps 40 or 50 degrees either side. I quickly learned that I was prone to seasickness (a misfortune shared by Lord Nelson and a distressing problem if you are left in charge of a ship when on watch or if you have to prepare some official papers before entering harbour). Each time we went to sea it took three or four days for me to find my "sea legs" and stop being sick.

INDEX

Our ship formed part of the Fifteenth Escort Group along with five sister ships and our main duties were meeting incoming Atlantic convoys to take over protection duties against U boats or aircraft or operating as an independent group searching for U boats. In late May 1944 *Narbrough* was sent to Milford Haven in South Wales, in preparation for the D-day invasion of Normandy (6th June as it turned out).

We then became one of the escorts for a convoy taking American troops to invade Normandy. The Commodore in charge of the convoy was on the leading troopship, the *USS Susan B Anthony*, carrying a large number of troops (perhaps 2000?). We were stationed some 300 yards on her starboard beam and travelling along what was supposed to be a mine-free channel. Half way across the English Channel a loud explosion meant that the Commodore's ship had struck a mine and she began to sink.

Then began the tricky task of taking off the troops as quickly as possible. Our captain had to bring the ship alongside at the forecastle and hold her there whilst my division's job was to get the soldiers safely aboard as they climbed down large landing nets hung over the troopship's side, her deck being higher than ours. We managed to take off several hundred soldiers safely and two other frigates then took off the remainder. I never heard whether there had been casualties when the mine exploded but it would be almost miraculous if there had been none. Our ship was of course absolutely packed and we were glad to unload the troops on to landing barges when we reached Normandy. I could see German shells landing in the sea but not near us; there were hundreds of craft of all sizes around the shoreline.

During the following weeks we made several other voyages to Normandy and once, whilst we were at anchor there awaiting orders, a tug which was towing a section of the Mulberry artificial harbour being built by the Allies to facilitate the landing of troops and supplies made a mistake and caused the harbour section to hit our bow, producing a large hole above the waterline. We returned to Portsmouth dockyard for repairs and the crew enjoyed a fortnight's leave. During my leave my mother died suddenly at the age of 44, whilst only she and I were in the house, and I was absolutely devastated.

Later in 1944 we became part of the escort for a convoy taking war supplies to Russia — and if you have heard anything of the naval war you will have some idea what such convoys were like. It meant going from Ireland up into the Arctic Circle, past the North of Norway and Spitsbergen, to reach Murmansk in North Russia. I have never experienced cold like it, with sea water breaking over the bows and freezing so as to cover the decks with ice at least a foot thick. We sometimes wondered if the weight of ice would cause us to turn turtle, especially as there had been rumours of such a fate befalling another ship (probably just someone having a laugh at newcomers' expense).

When we reached Murmansk the Russians seemed distinctly cold and hardly appreciative of the supplies which had been brought at some loss of ships and lives. We never set foot in Russia and were kept at anchor until the return journey. This, together with a dislike of

Communism, determined my opinion of the Russians and when the Russian government after the war offered a medal to people involved with the convoys I did not apply for it until many years later when Gorbachev improved diplomatic relations and renewed the invitation. The medal is quite gaudy in comparison with the British campaign medals I received but I suspect it might have a certain scarcity value.

During that trip to Russia, I had my twentieth birthday and was accordingly promoted to Sub-lieutenant, RNVR. When we were entering a harbour in Britain a little later we passed the remains of a sister ship which had been towed home after the front half had been blown up by either a mine or a torpedo. I found she was the ship in which had been serving Sub-lieutenant Michael Clark, RNVR; he was the only chap I came across after being commissioned who had been on my training course and he was of course killed, since the wardroom and the bridge were both in the front half of our frigates.

Until Germany surrendered in May 1945 we continued to patrol in search of U-boats or to escort convoys. During this time I received a Commendation in a Special Order of the Day by the Commander in Chief, Plymouth (along with many other naval people). A little later I was also mentioned in dispatches, together with three ratings from *Narbrough*. I feel sure that the captain put my name forward merely because I was the youngest officer and it was meant as a testimonial to the efforts of all the ship's company. Nothing I did was more praiseworthy than others' efforts.

Shortly after the war ended we had two interesting missions. The first was to Bilbao in northern Spain, taking a skeleton crew of merchant seamen to collect a merchant ship which had been interned during the war. We were the first warship to go there and the Spaniards seemed quite friendly. Most of the crew went to a bullfight but as I abhor such activities I volunteered to stay aboard as duty officer. I heard that at the bullfight the mayor made a welcoming speech in which he thanked the captain for the compliment paid to Spain when we entered harbour. Evidently he thought that the red and yellow stripes on our Carley floats (life-rafts) had been put there because they were the colours of the Spanish national flag. In reality they had been there all along, for easy identification by any rescuers. What we enjoyed most of all in Spain was the unlimited supply of bananas and oranges, which had not been seen in Britain for many years.

The second mission was to escort a tug which was towing a surrendered U-boat that for some reason we were handing over to the Russians. The U-boat did not move under its own power and she was manned by a British crew with one Russian Naval Officer on board as an observer. We called at Kristiansand in Norway on our way to Libau in the Baltic Sea, then in Russia but now Latvia. In Libau we were moored alongside a dock and again no one was allowed ashore but we had been welcomed in Norway.

INDEX

In early 1946 we took *Narbrough* across the Atlantic to hand her back at Boston, Massachusetts. The crew then went by train to New York station where we were

promptly taken by bus to the docks to board the *Queen Elizabeth* (not the battleship I had served in during 1943 but the largest liner in the world which had been used as a troopship and was then far from luxurious). She brought us back to Britain and a spot of leave.

My next posting was to *HMS Opportune*, a destroyer which had taken part in the famous 1940 battle at Narvik, Norway, when a flotilla of British destroyers attacked a similar German Flotilla.

The Flotilla leader Captain Warburton -Lee, RN was killed during the action and awarded a posthumous VC. My job was to be Navigating Officer and when I joined the ship she was in the Portsmouth dockyard awaiting the arrival of most of her new crew. I spent some time updating her charts from information in Admiralty Fleet Orders, such as the location of new shipping hazards, e.g. wrecks. After two or three weeks I contracted German measles, was sent to hospital and never rejoined *Opportune*. Instead I became an Assistant Divisional Officer at Portsmouth Barracks.

My new duties included granting leave where appropriate to the hundreds of men passing through the division, and acting as "Prisoner's Friend" for any rating posted to the division who was to be court -martialed. Altogether I dealt with 6 courts martial, all the charges being desertion. It took some time for the demobilisation of the armed forces to take place and everyone had to await his turn in the prescribed order of release. Some sailors opted to go AWOL and then had to face the music. My job was to speak up for the accused if there was any defence (I never found any!) but also to speak in mitigation whenever possible. A prison sentence resulted in every case but I think I managed to have it made quite light in deserving cases. I also had to serve on a Court of Inquiry when a Sub-lieutenant had been caught smuggling a lot of duty free cigarettes out of the dockyard. I understood that my presence was required so as to have an officer of the same rank as the accused sitting on the court. My recollection is that the villain escaped with a fine and a loss of seniority.

In October 1946 my turn for demobilisation came and during my demob leave I had my 22nd birthday, being duly promoted Lieutenant RNVR. It was during that leave that I met my wife Milly, who had received a Defence Medal for her service in the ATS (Auxiliary Territorial Service - the name for the women's section of the army). But that is a different story and a very happy one.

INDEX

PHOTO ALBUM

Nov. 11, 1919 - Passengers and staff members observe a two-minute silence on the first anniversary of the Armistice at Paddington Station in London – Does that happen now or have we all forgotten what to do?

INDEX

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.

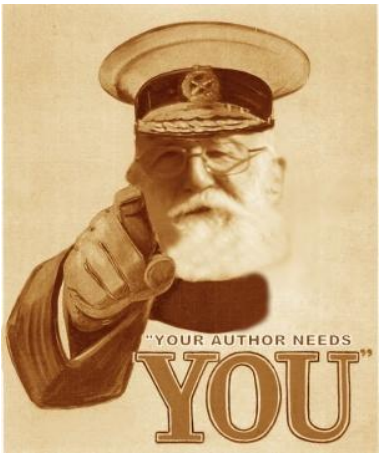
To go there please click **HERE**

Crossed the Bar (Recently Notified)

INDEX

SLOPS

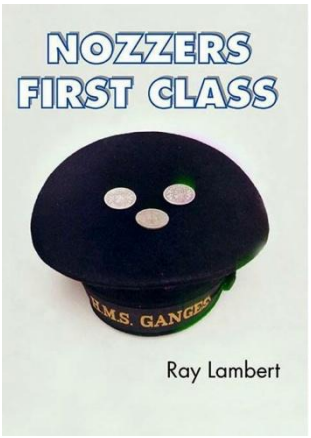
Journalist & Best Selling Author

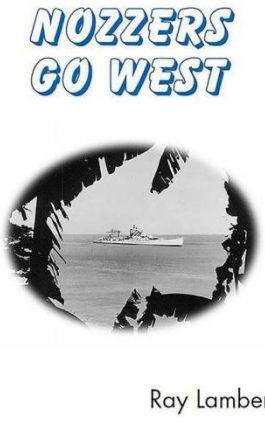


OUR IN-HOUSE **BEST SELLING AUTHOR** IS OFFERING THE FOLLOWING BOOKS AT A SPECIAL PRICE FOR MEMBERS OF THE ASSOCIATION.

Ray Lambert

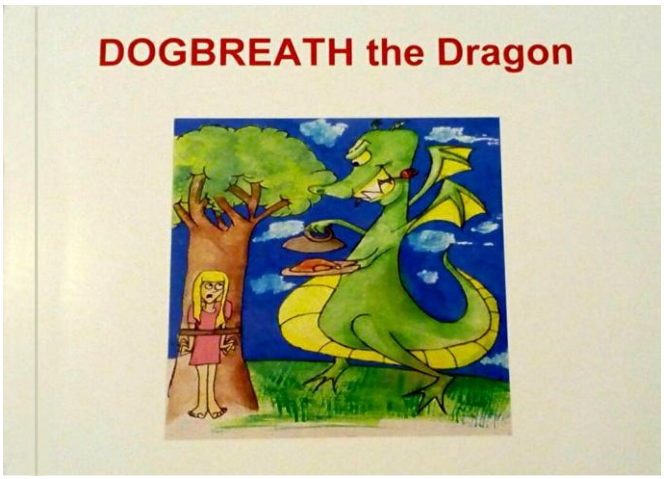
Follow the author when he was a handsome young man in Ganges and as he joins HMS Superb at Chatham. Go with him as he begins the "Luxury Cruise" of 1954-55. Join him from Punta Arenas to Vancouver and much in between. Learn of Guantanamo Bay and the Falklands before they became headline news. Each book costs £7.99 including UK postage. Click **HERE** for more information & to contact Ray by email





INDEX

Something for the Youngsters



Phil Grimson

Shipmate Phil Grimson offers his latest book for sale targeted at children from 8 years upward. It is a magical tale of chivalry which should enchant most youngsters and lead them into a make-believe

world where there's fierce and fiery combat when a princess is captured by a dragon.

There are bold knights charging to her rescue one of who wins her hand in marriage.

KINDLE DOWNLOAD £5.59 **PRINTED VERSION £13.99 + P&P***

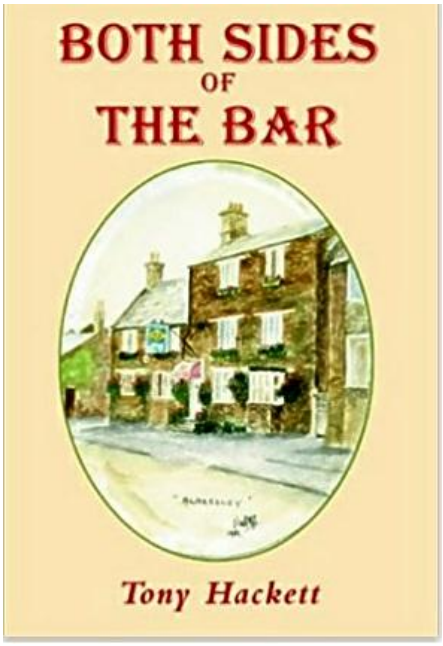
Phil can be contacted by email by clicking on this **LINK**

*** IF YOU CONTACT PHIL DIRECTLY YOU CAN BUY THE PAPERBACK BOOK FOR ONLY £12.50 + P&P AND PHIL WILL DONATE £1 TO THE HMS SUPERB (CRUISER) ASSOCIATION FUNDS**

INDEX

Life After the Navy

Tony Hacket



Tony, the son of a police officer, joined the Royal Navy aged 15 and spent the next 10 years travelling the world. He entered Civvy street in 1959 and went into the pub trade. This book relates Tony's endeavours in balancing his life between his love of rugby, managing often run-down pubs and his love of the sea and finally his successful ownership of his own free-house.

An interesting insight into the trials and tribulations of being self employed.

Available as a hard back book from Amazon at £12.99

REUNION PHOTOS

Left to Right
Arline Grundy - Fred Grundy - Brian Hill - Carol Hill - Jo Brierley - Libby Saunders - Brian Saunders

A small gathering this year – but almost perfectly formed !

WHO WAS MISSING ?

Left to Right
Andy Andrews - Norman Webber - Robin Smith - Fred Grundy - Bill Cook - Brian Saunders - John Ward - Brian Hill - Joe Heaton

Left to Right
Ron Baker - Janet Ward - Jean Baker - Sharky Ward - Shirley Cook -Bill Cook -

?

He was there but somehow escaped being photographed – Who ?

Andy Brierley

PEOPLE SEARCHING FOR PEOPLE

If you can assist with any of these appeals please contact Brian Saunders in the first instance. No details will be passed on to third parties without express permission. These appeals will be left in the magazine for a few months

From previous issues

The following message received from Derek Thompson, via Facebook
Just wondered if any of you gents knew my father **Derrick Thompson (Tommo)** he was a stoker mechanic (E) 1st class on board HMS Superb in 1955/56. He passed away in 2003 aged 72. I myself was in the Andrew and served for 23 yrs. I would be grateful if anyone knew him

Neil Cooper, the son of Terry Willey, writes
"My late father appears to be mentioned in the booklet from the 52-53 tour of West Indies. He's stated as leading electricians mate. His full name was **Terry Keith Willey**. Be great to hear from anyone who knew him"

Derek Baldry (Killick Sparker) would like to contact Ginger Dunne from 1956
Stoker Clive Godley would like to get in touch with old shipmates - I have his telephone number and email address so if you'd like it get back to me. (BS)

Larry Boudier who was in the Chatham field gun's crew in 1955 would like to know if anyone knows of others in that crew

Eleanor Ingalls Fochesato from New Jersey, USA would like to contact John Stevens, from the 1953 cruise to Maine, USA.

Bob Butcher known to many as "Butch" & who served on Superb between Nov 1950 to July 1951 wonders if Curly Watson is still around. He would like to make contact.

ARCHIVED CONTENT

Past Copies of the Magazine can be accessed on-line by clicking on the appropriate month

December, 2018

January, 2019

March, 2019

April, 2019

May, 2019

June, 2019

July, 2019

August, 2019

September, 2019

October 2019

Laura Kardo researching her grandfather, Charles Harris, who served around 1951 & 1952. would like to know more about him.

Jeff , the son of Jim Stewart who was on board as a Telegraphist between 1947 & 1951, would be happy to receive any information re his dad. Jim was also on HMS Vidal in 1955

INDEX

Click here to contact Brian Saunders **by email**

INDEX