

**A** call from shipmate Ron Clay on our mutual orthopedic experience got round to the Chairman's November news letter. He told of the Royal Navy's first submarine that sank off the West Country. I was surprised to hear from Ron on its recovery and restoration, in which he played a significant part;

Ron got in touch with Brian and the sequel to Ron's original story (with pictures) made interesting reading in last month's magazine.

I visited W. H. Smith's big store at Blue Water last week, usual extensive Xmas cards and calendar display was an example of rampant diversity. I know it's hardly the time to depict Arabs on camels in a mid-east setting, oasis, palm trees and the like, but a baby in a manger with Mum and Dad, cows and sheep looking on without malice or evil intent is adequate to pass the Christian message, but in an obvious minority. I am not the religious type but readily confer to being Christian, like a stick of Blackpool rock, if cut in two it would say it, all the way through.

There is a bit of the lapsed Buddhist in me. In the past I enjoyed a nice smoke, do like a sensible drink plus get satisfaction from swatting bluebottles. From where I stood viewing the display I could see a card with two nuns facing each other. I was curious and wondered what the caption said: Nun No. 1 to Nun No. 2 "Mother Superior, I have just heard there is a case of syphilis in the convent!" Nun No. 2: "Thank God for that, I was getting sick of the Beaujolais". You may assume I was telling you a joke; do believe me when I say that was the actual Christmas card.

It's a poor picture for UK/EU energy stability; Russia's ability to indulge in brinkmanship this last month as their main supplier has been demonstrated, no sabre has been rattled or word spoken, just tweak the valve down a bit to deplete reserves held by those customers, many totally dependent on that new pipeline will have pooped their lederhosen. We, in the UK, import L.N.G. (liquid natural gas) for 50% of our power, tankers from mid east and the U.S.A. arriving on a daily basis are critical. I notice Sunday newspaper says we hold sufficient storage for only four hard winter days. That sounds much like our predicament in 1941, '42 and '43 when each tanker of oil carried by Norway or the U.S.A. was literally our life source. The U.S.A. churning out the T2 type tankers serviced that need; today we have no fleet of anti-sub frigates to provide some safeguard for them. 80 years ago on the thirtieth of December, 1941, at Baltimore the first of a class of vessel that numbered 2,700, on termination of contract U.S.A., was launched. Its name *Patrick Henry*, commonly called the Liberty type.

To backtrack, what the Dickens goes on at Westminster when this sort of predictable black hole has been apparent for ten years? One wonders if Russia and China co-operated in the

scare. China as hungry for energy as the UK immediately opened its purse and bought out all others in that market; there is reason the price of gas to thee and me has taken a vigorous jump. The UK abandoned storage capacity that held 70% of our reserves in 2017, a stroke of government genius.

We are currently constructing, with partner Norway an undersea power cable to feed us with Fjord hydro electricity down the North Sea, capable of delivering 1400 mega watts; what do you think of our part of the deal?; to feed back our excess wind power -Ho-Ho-Ho!

Tales of our, and the U.S. submarines, finding and tapping Soviet Union's undersea cables was a spur to new Russia to build that trio of special vessels to do likewise, along with the ability to cut them; that's our power and communications gone in one hit. Germany, who abandoned their Nuke power generators under Merkel, used their own low grade coal for emergency energy security, coal is still used by them, would you believe, bought from Russia, in vast amounts. Ramifications of any of these events leads to one thinking "what a buggers muddle", it all is for the EU and N.A.T.O.. Conclusion- all self inflicted.

I moaned about Westminster sitting on its hands, it's like watching them arrange the deck chairs while the *Titanic* foundered.



Last week the new Speaker of the House let us into drug culture, rampant in that place. Cocaine openly snorted from certain desk tops, plus the regular offices where one goes to buy a spliff, always on sale. Prior to that revelation I thought the only problem was members in their cups from several subsidised bars, casting their half pissed votes on national trivia. A prime example of their decision powers

is sending our troops to assist the Polish protect their borders from illegals Not trying to knock the Poles, never met one who was not industrious or likable.

Mr. Speaker, in the film clip, had a dog at his heel; it was an explosives sniffer. One can see the historical significance in that; it had evidently been a regular resident for several years. What surprised was the introduction of another lively hound, a drug sniffer, that problem now so severe. Hound will be non-partisan of course, so accusations of political bias will not cloud the issue. I wonder if we will hear of any member seller, buyer or user going to court.

They like to refer to themselves as the 'Seat of Democracy', on occasions 'The Mother of all Parliaments'; a sure indication they are high on something in a state of a deeper delusion than I thought.

## THE FLAT FOOTED MINISTRY OF DEFENSE

Ex First Sea Lord, Sir Tony Radakin, Britain's new Chief Defense Staff, for whom I had dubious regard and grave reservations, has given me a metaphoric kick up the bum by an open assault on what he called in his speech; 'the flat footed Ministry of Defense'. His speech, alas, was not on the floor of the House but to the Royal United Service Institute. Civil servants, he said, seem determined to block change and progress; the M.O.D. in every department too slow and resistant to change. It was a rousing speech which exhorted them to "Just do it" and do it in five months, not five years, with more focus on time and less on money. Will it have an atom of difference on the grey-suited blob? - Form tells us it will not. An indication of the M.O.D.'s methods is their fixation on processes instead of outcome. The noble Lord is the first naval type to occupy his responsibility for twenty years. I think it a wonderful start to returning the navy to the position of Senior Service. One can only assume he is ticked off about the eight frigates that should be in build at present, when in real life, only three are on order. It is the end of your career Milord, do get in there and kick some butt - on a daily basis!

I am unable to forget those two Junior Officers from *Conqueror* (sinker of the *Belgrano*) who, when it became strikebound at Faslane with a civil service walkout and on their own initiative, decided to 'store ship' before a crucial long planned attempt in the Med to steal a state of the art Russian Sonar towed array. The pair went to the M.O.D. police station at air base entrance,



HMS Conqueror returns from Falklands  
3 July 1952 at Falsane

told the duty officer they were about to 'break and enter' their naval store and use the fork trucks to transport goods. The police had never met a situation like this before, accompanied them to the stores as padlocks and bolts were torn off; *Conqueror* sailed on time.

When the strikers learned of this you may recall the hell of a row that ensued; they "just did it"; that was in 1981 during strong militancy. Defense of the Realm was a factor here and I warm to such conduct; the navy "Just did it". I had often wondered just what a nuke like *Conqueror* could do, being a

hunter/killer; it was sprightlier than a missile boat, log had it doing 8000 miles - at 500 feet deep - for 21 days at full power, speeding to the south Atlantic during the Falkland War; 28 knots all the way. Not much need to ask why Australia decided to go nuclear instead of diesel electric.

Should you wish to make a charitable donation for Xmas - the M.O.D> may be struggling to pay Prince Andrew's £20,000 per annum 'naval pension'.

**HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL OUR READERS,  
WITH A SPECIAL ONE TO OUR PRINTERS AND TYPERS.**