

Ay Oop Shipmates,

It would be correct to say I have no right to nitpick the content of Navy News. It comes to me free, gratis and second hand, from my brother then, later, may get pushed through Robin's letter box.

Recent issues have increasing space devoted to (L.G.B.T.Q+). I found exactly what that acronym stands for in the monthly magazine, British Legion, who have a dedicated staff lady handling that department; it's quite a mouthful (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, plus).

Back to Navy news; it had an approximately 6" by 6" article on a recent Pride March, plus a further full page on aspects of that persuasion of very (to me) complex grouping - complexity of which, if you are a 'people handler', 'manning' or 'welfare person' grows by the day.

In very recent history the fact of female crew members on submarines - or not - hinged simply on loos; resolved, again simply, by an expensive reallocation of space to allow fitting - back-in and sit - as opposed to -shuffle-in and face - loos.

Current reports on demands by transgenders, of which I read, there are 'eight sub-species' with specific rights by legislation, have blown that all out of the porthole.

To me, purely on the shipboard aspect of all this, a major radical cultural revolution is taking place in the space available; hot air and cash being expended on it over-shadows a paramount need to be prepared to do violence to the Queen's enemies.

It comes to a pretty pass when a U.S. Mideast ambassador has to tell H.M. government, it's up to you to look after your own merchant marine, not to rely on U.S.N. vessels that may be in the area.

The mentioned 'cultural revolution' in 'tween decks brought about that pernicious contrary SEX and its impingement on ship board life can get admirals dismissed from the Service for smiling at their captain (a lady) with an off-the-cuff remark about their situation or surroundings, or some other innocuous thing, never mind a covert cuddle or illicit interlude.

My fertile imagination sees a new boy joining his ship being issued with his watch card detailing Port or Starboard, Fo'csle or Quarter deck, First or Second Part of - which part of the loo arrangements you are assigned to and when it's your watch's turn to wear the knickers. A dash of rouge may be worn on 'make or mend' days. Lipstick for chiefs and P.O's only.

Ball gowns on Wednesdays in the wardroom. Wednesday was, of course, traditional 'make and mend' day.

If the historic pipe for such a break was made today i.e. (hands to dance the skylark), lord knows what would ensue; can envisage a replay of Caligula's bacchanalian feast.

Be assured I am not homophobic, just enjoying the diversity gradually developing in the new world of 2020.

Acknowledging that nothing ever stays the same I would mourn the restrictions to mooch about, visit another mess etc. at the day's end, free to speak on any subject with no rancour intended, unsegregated! Maybe I missread the reason for construction of those two 'white elephants' recently departed Dockyard Rosyth are cutting edge vessels to accommodate a host of bathrooms for a dozen categories of sexual orientation; ample space is available. Their 'alleged' carrier planes reside at R.A.F. Marham, flown by R.A.F. squadron leaders. Great rejoicing took place last week at end of Portsmouth special mega dredge - elephant #2 was tugged in tied up ahead of elephant# 1.

Be not surprised if upcoming defence review (budget chop) closes Pompey barracks and all move into the elephants, again room enough to absorb them; savings on barrack gas bill will enable a trip just out to Spithead for next review of vessels in various state of 'moth balling'. Am I over sceptical, fearing for the nation's assets?

Half a dozen miles down the road in the ancient parish of Faversham the council fathers have safe keeping of a 700 year old copy of the Magna Carta - on velum of course -. It's up for sale; local paper says it's up for sale 'outside the U.K.'

Can you imagine Washington selling a copy of their 'constitution'; it's less than half the age, or President Putin cashing a copy of Peter the Great's little black book, courting comely crumpet in Crimea?

How can we allow another high tech group Cobham, recipient of substantial government cash, be sold to a U.S. asset stripper? Bluntly, it's your and my tax cash going into Pentagon coffers; any R & D or patents belong to them, income so earned becomes theirs.

Specktral Edge, GKN, Apple and GE, all high tech, gone to asset strippers; same background of nature on your tax pounds.

Theory is, we are once again, an 'island trading nation'; what will we trade with our bright stars gone - plus the jobs? Remember Commonwealth Preference, where we traded high quality goods with them without the 'rip off'. Vast amounts of meat, unpolluted by drugs and antibiotics, 'cut off' by order at a stroke when our 'statesmen' make us a 'vassal state' -that's one who pays taxes to a foreign government E.C.

I do use the 'statesmen' word loosely and believe the 'intellectual property' of those firms belongs to us, lock, stock and barrel, to be passed to apprentices from our families. Oh lor! You say, he has got his knickers in a twist today.

My progeny, and yours, passed an impoverished hand to embark on life's journey.

Do you feel embarrassed at our airport customs U.K., seeing Canadians, Aussies, New Zealanders line up in the 'foreign' section? In your life time they fed us, risked the dreaded U-boats getting here, and died, a large proportion of the 55000 air crew.

Bit of a jerk around but a last word on Pompey Barracks; 14 Admirals have employ therein and at Whale Island. What do they do in a navy paying off frigates and destroyers to get sufficient bodies to man those plane-less carriers? M.O.D. has 32 Admirals on the books, I suspect Prince Andrew was scheduled to join their ranks ere long, now on hold I gather.

I would like them lined up with a C.V. of achievements, plus salary and expenses.

An article seen recently numbers 107 Canadian vessels on the French shore for 'Overlord', looking up Canadian casualties on their designated beach Juno on that day records 961 - shame on us.

It wearies one to see/hear the labour peer Lord West, full title, of Spithead, bang on about the lack of frigates to meet current commitments, while the Super Carriers (misnomer) soak up man power and cash. He, the very person of power, still in the R.N., a sea lord of obscure merit, scratched the backs of Blair and Brown, along with other ticket punching admirals when political decision was sought to get jobs into Rosyth, Mr. Brown's constituency.

Jobs to polish those M.P.'s C.V.'s was the only consideration, not the national need. The 'Noble Lord of Spithead' was on the Westminster scene when Cameron and Clegg, of the shared government, totally axed our Maritime Patrol Squadrons. Millions invested in their enhancement upgrades, simply flushed down the tax payers' drain.

Those planes were named Nimrod, a biblical name that really suited their purpose and ability, frequent winners of NATO & Pacific anti-submarine competitions, with time on station near double the opposition.

Here's the biblical passage: 'In the eyes of the Lord, Nimrod, was a mighty hunter'. Such lyrical prose has got to be from that translator William Tyndale; a northern lad hunted down and burnt at the stake for making the book readable by plough boys, in English, not Latin.

I digressed there; my hands are up in surrender!

Please, before I shut up, allow me a thumbnail sketch of Poseidon, purchased from Boeing, a version of civilian 737/800, cost will scare you, to fill the 10 year M.P.A. gap. They will enter service incompatible with R.A.F 'brand new' Voyager airbus tankers. We will have to purchase and maintain. U.S. origin MK54 torpedoes, ditto sono buoys, ditto anti-ship missiles, all radically different from R.N. Brit fit on our ship-borne helicopters.

How efficient, or economic, is that to R.N. budget, as ever you are paying Shipmates.

If same purchase team bought your underpants, they would have no flies and your shoes would squelch as you walk; keep a change of socks handy.

Be happy,