

Hello Shipmates,

Jo called me to her computer for the April magazine, commenting on how subscribers had multiplied;

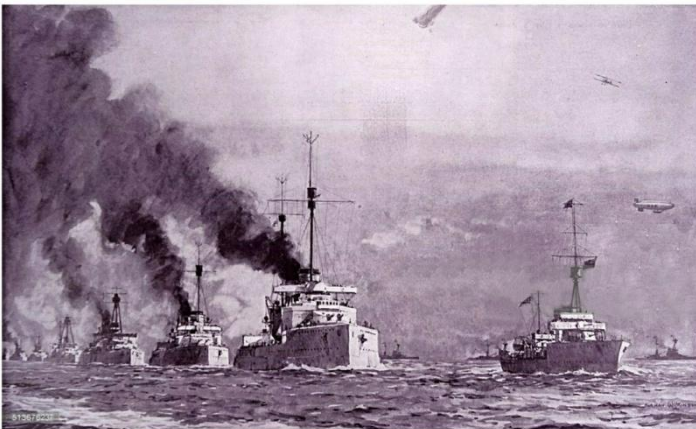
We are not fizzling out like a damp squib'.

This expansion could mean we have to suggest 'relocation' to our 'Editorial Publishing' team to a central Paris location more befitting their station. We will have to lodge faith in Miz Libby's close scrutiny of receipts for 'legitimate expenses' with a Le Folies heading submitted as 'Fact Finding'.

I noted John Ward's (Sharkey) explanation of why wardroom members are called 'pigs'. It varies from my own understanding. All P.A. systems seemed to require an opening utterance of 'Testing, Testing, 1.2.3.' Common alternative to that was; switch on then blow into the mike a couple of times. Puff, Puff comes out exactly like a porker's grunt, hence; grunt, grunt 'Captain speaking...' Always good for a universal repeat and irreverent chuckle. I wonder if such prevails in today's navy?

On TV one sees very senior officers (Captain of Q.E. Carrier for example) mount his box and open to his new crew of youngsters with 'You guys'. That grates on my old fashioned senses and consider it bloody appalling, better educated than I - Yup. Farther up the status pole - Yup. Would I want to follow him to the local boot fair? Nope. Based on his TV persona the exalted position robbed of its gravitas by - himself.

**GERMAN HIGH SEAS FLEET OUT AT LAST TO SURRENDER:
LED CAPTIVE INTO BRITISH WATERS**



"LEVIATHANS LED BY A MINNOW".
H.M.S. CARDIFF LEADING THE GERMAN BATTLE-CRUISERS
"SEYDLITZ", "MOLTKE", "HINDENBURG", "DERFFLINGER", "VON DER TANN"

Another item in April; surrender of the Kaiser's high seas fleet, an unimaginable event six months earlier. When relocated to Scapa Flow with a covert arrangement amongst German crews to scuttle, it would have been equally unimaginable to know, decades later, that their armour plate was in great demand, to 'line out' nuclear laboratories. Having lain submerged, uncontaminated by residual radio activity from W.W.11 bomb blasts, plus much testing to make them ever more violent by Uncle Tom Cobley and All.

The book Cox's Navy relates salvage of much of that fleet against all naysayers. He had no experience of such a task, used methods that left normal salvagers open mouthed, a prince among scrap men.

Clearing my Father's office, a copy of Illustrated London News, dated 30th November 1918 surfaced. I enclose a picture of the cover, a large magazine by any standard, 2/- price prominent. That must have had a considerable purchase power in 1918. It reports the fleet's surrender and is full of super pictures.



Prominent is Admiral David Beatty, whose mega riches allowed him to flout rules, get away with personal design changes to his uniform etc., later altering Jutland reports and charts and fraudulently signing them. I have him down as a 'hole' of sorts.

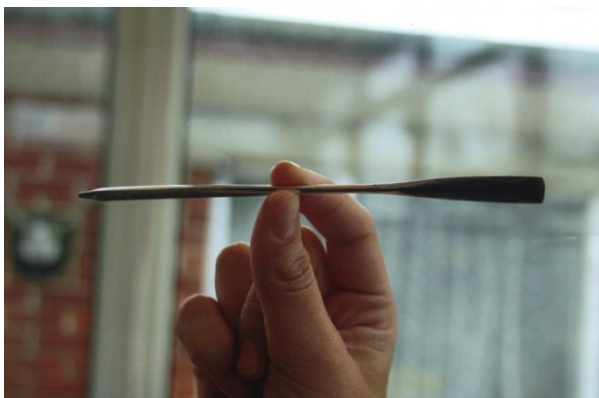
On new naval officers, I think it a grave omission their 'modern short course' no longer includes Naval History to any significant degree; it's the foundation of their chosen profession. I am forced to feel faulty foundation forecasts poor support structure to follow, does not bode well for the kids joining at the bottom.

Contrast that with the Royal Marines; a personal booklet is issued to all ranks down to the lowliest boy bugler; the Corp's history that will be absorbed by all, there after conduct that preceded and is expected hence forth is not open to question - hurrah for the bootnecks.

Others' memories of Shotley are illuminating; changes must have been rapid and radical in the first half-dozen years post W.W.11. A brother plus, a pair of uncles, available for questioning whose answers were always 'Don't', excellent catalyst to spur one on to have a go! If Health and Safety executive's dead hand had been alive at that time, last months of '46, naval manning would have been strangled at birth.

Many, many moons ago I read a book called 'Brutal or Beneficial'. Diligent enquiry and search has never brought such a tome to light, or even a clue to track one's existence, but I keep my ear to the ground. Tedious and aggravating often, but nothing to break a fifteen year old of that era; different and interesting from life that went before.

Power boat at Shotley pier was a Steam Pinnace, such as capital ships used to have. Beautiful small compound steam engine crouched over by a stoker. Pulling power to speed a tow of half a dozen fully crewed cutters beyond Felixstowe, each boat in charge of a fifteen year old youth, first class cox'n to be cast off and race back to the pier by 'sailing a mile', 'pulling a mile' 'sailing a mile', 'pulling a mile' and so on.



The cutter was a heavy boat, each oar a substantial chunk of wood when a 'sharp stroke' was called. An east wind straight up the estuary made one really 'cream along' when sail set. When racing the mast was let go with a crash sufficient to cut the transom in two, an

invitation to severe maiming if not on the ball. Turns taken to hop over the transom and sit astride the rudder caused a water spout up one's front, considered super fun of the first order. Team work required was a joy. Race day proper at end of summer had Hawke boat a clear winner.

At Captain's prize giving we each received a slender blue tin box, inside a replica cutter oar in silver, equally as tiny. Over the years it surfaces every now and again, by accident. Another excuse to exercise my new camera - see picture of granddaughter with it pinched in her fingers. Thoughts of mayhem races to the pier gives me a rush even today!

Felixstowe is a major container port now, was an R.A.F. facility then. From Shotley mast top one could see the last Sunderland's come and go occasionally. Rivers Stour and Orwell always had a dozen or more Thames Barges rafted up ready to get away when the tide changed in or out in their favour.

Of great interest when let free on a Sunday 'make and mend' with our cox'n, was the laid up for scrapping post war navy, long trots two or three deep, 'Algerines' 'Flowers' all the way past Harwich to river head, all dead ships boarded by us at will, strictly forbidden! - but the ultimate playground.

I recall an ex Polish destroyer named Bursa was a particular favourite. Just off Bloody Point, where rivers divide below Ganges was an aircraft's remains visible at neap tide. My head tells me it was the donor of the three bladed prop fixed at half landing in the school block stairs, could be wrong. 'Sea days' invariably taken on Hunts, with H.O. crews waiting for demob, were a savoury that really whetted the appetite to keep the nose clean and get to sea as soon as possible.

I reflect on an adolescence that could not be bought for 'vulgar cash', a Utopia away from gritty, smoky, dirty Corby, who never suffered hurt from a common enemy, or hunger from the vagaries of weather; never a need to fret about my bank stash - didn't have one, ha!



Cannot let Shotley go without a share of a picture from a Plymouth newspaper. It shows our Brian Hill, notable resident of that city, who is standard bearer for local Ganges Branch. Always willing to show their flag and march for the boy entrants, noted for his solo renditions of the Oggie Song, on demand at any venue. As the tallest bearer, with a lovely posture,, square jawed, he struts his stuff with style and grace, wolf whistles galore with a kit bag full of blown kisses from the appreciative Gay Pride contingent are his normal fare, well, if you've got it

flaunt it. Miz Carol, his number one supporter, never shows a trace of jealousy, has been heard to say, 'If you have a special chap like my Brian, you must be prepared to share him'. Yea to that I say.

Did you notice any celebrations in Europe last week to mark the 70th anniversary of N.A.T.O.? Neither did I. Could be because not one of them honoured the treaty agreement! Commitment to spend at least 2 percent of their G.D.P. on it. The U.K., nominally European these days, boasts of 'compliance'. An aware single mother on benefit could see through the creative accounting used in Whitehall to achieve that claim. Annual M.O.T, of a M.O.D tea trolley, forward purchase of P.G. Tips plus sticky bun wastage, all entered up by foreign office on the N.A.T.O. ledger.

Vladimir's man on the pay roll in that office visits the Russian embassy's sound proof room frequently so's he can indulge in a good belly laugh with his mates. It is obvious why Europe's leaders all hate President Trump, he will keep reminding them of their perfidy.

As Uncle Sam's agent, he can do that as solitary member of N.A.T.O. that 'pays its way - plus'

My dilemma is whether to recommend you take the Russian language course or Mandarin. Fall back option is wait till they get here and it will become compulsory.

Here the rant better endeth.

Tatty by the noo! Andy