

ANDY BRIERLEY'S BLOG

Investing in the raffle Star Prize donated by shipmate Brian Turner I wondered how many homes have a sample of his 'marine art' hanging where those three pottery ducks used to, forever, fly south.

As a strong fan of steam I wish to bring to your notice S.M. Turner's star pupil S.M. Brian Harmer.



A recent letter enclosed a photograph of newly finished oil that delighted the eye. My 'steam nut' young brother, who was visiting, also thought it a superb rendition. I would like to share it with you if our other 'centre of excellence' Brian and Miz Libby could print it in colour.

Notice the signal box Frodsham Junction. Pity is, I do not know actual finished size of picture.

Yes, I know all the foregoing seems to be named 'Brian'. If you have seen Python film 'Life of Brian' they were all born with expectation of showing great talent --- We are not disappointed!

100th anniversary of the R.A.F. has been marked with a couple of T.V. shows of merit. For me, a picture to make one catch breath was in the Daily Mail. A Hawker Hunter flown by pilot Allan Pollock, now 82, marked R.A.F. 50th anniversary by starting at Richmond Park, hedge-hopping over the Thames bridges, reaching Westminster, doing three low, loud circuits just as Big Ben struck noon. He continued bridge-hopping until faced with Tower Bridge. He could have hopped over it but decided to go through.

Reports have a double-decker bus, pedestrians and cyclists on the roadway. Pilot's fate - arrested on return to base and cashiered!

I did set off to comment on R.A.F. drones, their ability to seek out targets, loiter time and clarity of image, then hit the selected item in the belly button.

Operating technology started by U.S. Air Force has now cross-pollinated the U.S. Navy. They recently launched their first autonomous surface vessel, named *Sea hunter*. D.A.P.A. (U.S. advanced research agency) picture shows a 'very slim trimaran', 140 tons, capable of 27 knots, can remain at sea for months, crewless.



Mother Russia's frantic sub building programme could be neutered if this technology takes off



Potential autonomous sub hunting surface ship Sea Hunter

like, its air-borne equivalent. To run an unmanned vessel cheap as chips and produce large numbers, to 'track, locate, trail' a multi-billion rouble sub could break their budget. Technology is what broke U.S.S.R, trying to keep up; possibly it could recur in Russia.

From 'published matter' I understand none of our current

frigates are dedicated A.S. (anti sub) variants - thanks to so called 'peace dividend' of a few years ago. The error is to be corrected, again from 'published matter' in our new class that M.O.D. B.A.E. keep banging on about; their 'Global frigate' for worldwide sale.

Who, at their grossly inflated ship unit cost, on form, eight (8) year build time are their projected customers?

France's Naval Group launched their eighth Fremm frigate last month at Lorient, named *Normandie*. It took 12½ months to build, that's 54 weeks, according to my fingers. It will be fitted out, handed over for service May/June 2019. Italy shared design costs of Femm, Fincantieri have just launched their eighth out of an order for ten.

These are no economy utility vessels; the Italian navy calls them their 'high and fighting force'. My contention that M.O.D. - B.A.E are not fit for purpose stands. Fincantieri built Cunard's massive show boat, Q.E. cruise liner in 3 years, that's 5 years less than B.A.E. M.O.D took to build our Super Carrier. What's up with U.K. shipbuilding? Is it gross mismanagement, labour lethargy? Maybe the knack has been lost and we should spend our cash in another place, saving mega-bucks plus shed loads of time. An example is DAEG's from South Korea, 16 cell A.A missile magazine, A.S. missiles, land attack missile, towed away ASDIC's, hanger for a ten ton helicopter, full electric propulsion said to be exceptionally quiet; just what the A.S. task needs.

France's Naval Group and Italy's Fincantieri are planning to merge, cannot help feeling B.A.E., M.O.D. will get rid of Global Frigate if given away with Christmas crackers: that's about Christmas 2025!



A parliamentary question was answered not too long ago about the Libya debacle. The frigate we deployed had only three (3) defence missiles in its silo; sounds like a Python sketch, but true. That operation saw no Fleet Air Arm; it had been sold for scrap value to the U.S. Marines with zero hour engines. The R.A.F., whose boast of doing what F.A.A. can do, consisted of actually paying rent for space on a southern Italy airport. Their 4 tornado's aerial tanked; U.K. - Italy, then Italy to Libya, to shift some muck, bombing. Reports say the cost would have retained F.A.A. total Harrier inventory. I risk boring with this tale of how plotless maritime U.K. is *****

Back to domestics: Listening to Classic F.M. on the 11th of the month, the D.J. gave usual Saints' day info, then "It's National Submarine Day". That was indeed, a new one to me.

Jump a groove to the February issue of the e-magazine, a bit about Bernard's the Naval Tailor, whose shop had the corner plot bottom of Military Road, Chatham. Enquiries in a couple of bling shops in town drew a blank when seeking a wedding ring for Jo. The relevant finger is lifeless, withered, needing a really tiny circle. Eventually Bernard's emporium supplied it without a

whimper. It was very economical (cheap), thus preventing excess expenditure at such an early stage of liaison. It was forever falling off when baking, washing up etc., requiring a frantic hunt.

Before long it went into the trinket box and has stayed there for many long years. Several folk, on getting to know us, voiced surprise at knowing we were proper wed, as she wears no ring. The very first civvy suit of my life came from Bernard's. At that time one used to be able to hire a locker in the Navy House on Orchard Street; remember the place, dinky little cabin, clean bedding, cheap as chips and a cafe downstairs.



Military Road, Chatham

Within a month the locker was burgled and some other dude was strutting his stuff on my hard won finery. I prayed it be too tight in the crotch and chafe him raw. All this came to mind recently when visiting the Co-Op bank. Their location is the exact spot, just up the road where the other naval tailor Greenburg once stood. Odd both establishments shared the same business ethos, 'Hit and miss service, cavalier attitude with one's shekels'.

I'll away the noo, cast off thy string vest, summer is about to break upon our worthy heads.

