

9<sup>th</sup> Jan. 2019  
Brierley ME9 7LX

Greetings Shipmates,

The 'crossing of the bar' of Pete Tasker who, in sixty odd years of letters, I always called 'My right royal marine' will leave a void. Phone calls Sunday mornings, during the free period, were timed to avoid encroaching on his telegraph crossword, at which he was no slouch. He seemed not to have a malicious thought or deed in his body, such things being a waste of 'good life' time. If you know the last couple of lines of Sea Fever, Masefield's poem, they sum up his demeanour for me, I quote:

All I ask is a merry yarn from a fellow laughing rover,  
And a quiet sleep, and a sweet dream, when the long tricks over.

In my haven of tranquillity (garden shed) is a constant reminder of a time he and I strolled down a seaside street, stopping to view a window of musical instruments, grand pianos to triangles. A non-descript little box of tin whistles gained our attention.

The upshot was that we left that shop with a 'Pied Piper' type tin whistle each. To the best of my knowledge neither ever managed to master the most simple tune, both being as musical as breeze blocks. Lack of hearing did get Pete frustrated, frayed at the edges and impatient at times. An extended period as 'small arms instructor' was the culprit, long before ear defenders were deemed an absolute essential.



*Superb* was his one and only ship, an acknowledged and cherished time for him. Prior to that, Cyprus during the unrest, then on to Borneo during the fall out with Indonesia. At its conclusion Blighty was to be next stop but Korea got very ugly. 42 Commando upped sticks to go further east. It's said 'we live life to build a memory bank' for when we grow old. I shall bore you no further with mine, but ask a small indulgence for a wee epitaph for Pete; no maudlin sentiment, on which he would choke:

Underneath the growing grass,  
Underneath the living flowers,  
Deeper than the sound of showers,  
There you shall not count the hours  
By the shadows as they pass.

**Rest in peace my 'right royal marine, life was richer for your presence .....**

Nothing ever stays the same... Was intrigued to learn we W.W.2 schoolboys (children) enjoyed a nation whose field patterns, size and shape was no, or little different, from medieval times. To support this assertion the speaker had, at his disposal, millions of aerial photos taken by allied air forces during W.W. 2, most now lodged in Keel University.

Since that time thousands of miles of hedgerows, spinneys, woods, marshes and ponds have been eliminated. Prairie-like fields support a restricted crop culture like rape, as an example. I feel, when the current political debacle peters out, those 'common agricultural conglomerates' will need to relearn how to become multi-crop farmers. Exotics like potatoes from Poland, cabbages from Andalucía may be denied us.

A change that really disturbs is one that may have less immediate impact, but, as an Englishman, makes me cringe like a mangy cur; 3600 British Jews currently have applications to become German citizens ----- Yup, German! The Jewish Chronicle cites anti-Semitism and rampant lawlessness as a driving force; these families are not the extreme factions of that religion, more the entrepreneurs, small, law abiding business people that make an area buzz.

A minor Christmas fair at Hythe, in rural Kent, last weekend had 'two armed police officers' (nearly said 'men') on constant patrol. Had a drugged up beheader run amok and been rewarded with a well deserved bullet in the ear, our crazy litigation culture' would demand the officer be hung on a feast day at Tyburn.

That Miss Abbott, a shadow minister, is of that ilk, was amply demonstrated last month when deploring a police patrol car which had stopped a pair of fleeing scooter-mounted robbers - pillion rider wielding a machete, by ramming them!

Shortly I expect Miss Abbott to make up the robbers loss of 'no claim' from the public purse.. You may think my views extreme; I put my hand up to that.

In my filthy one horse steel town of Corby, all snot noses of my generation knew the Bobby at half a mile and perhaps his shift rota for the week. A crooked finger at you from over the road got a respectful approach.

Vast quantities of beer were consumed by the steel makers, to my knowledge it did not result in an orgy of smashing, kicking and destroying when 'time' was called. An occasional drunk prostrate would be propped right way up against a wall to prevent chocking on what he had consumed.

Note I used 'he'. Cannot ever recall seeing a drunken lady - much less a girl of twentyish-kicking and screaming in the gutter. Our Detective Sergeant, never in uniform, always the raincoat, long before Colombo made it fashionable, - held a unique status like Dick Tracy of radio fame of that time, and large enough not to be overlooked.

With three brothers my parents did not get off Scott Free. If the Bobby knocked he was asked in, doffed his tall hat, wiped his feet and offered a cuppa! Any 'problem' and its solution were analysed - his departure followed by swift, and painful, retribution if required.

Culture then allowed law be upheld at a fraction of the cost, in a fraction of the time. The so called 'zero tolerance policy' was practiced in Corby many years before New York, with just as dramatic proportional result. If the number of police is quadrupled today I feel results would be little different. Parliament has removed their powers for rapid radical response.

Yes! Every organisation breeds its power-drunk rotten apples, that is what experienced leadership, based on 'time served' is best able to root out. The current 'university bred' man manager? Shoehorned into his chauffeured limo, who never got tired feet circulating his pavements, evaluating, observing local Homo sapiens and their area of influence, is a beautifully polished round peg in a square hole.

As ever, lack of cash is part of the problem. Folks like me, with a smattering of fiscal training struggle to understand why our nation borrows billions, yearly, for onward transmission to unworthy causes and despots worldwide via the E.U. We have it enshrined in law.

I do have time for much to do with India, but am floored by their government order for 'two stealth frigate' of Krivak class from Russia: it must derive a useful boost from £98 million in cash aid from Britain - yet we cannot afford to purchase sufficient frigates of our own.

It is announced Canada has chosen Global Type 26 design of ours, but only design, just like Australia, all to be built in country. A reader's letter recently has interesting figures, said combined populations was approx. 62 million, will build 24 ships - Oz 9, Canada 15. The United Kingdom, population approaching 67 million will build 8, of a much lesser specification.

How we still posture as a 'front rank defence nation' is a myth in the rarefied atmosphere of Pugin's masterpiece north end of Westminster Bridge, and bit further on the road, at Ministry of Defence. A bit of hard luck for Russia, may be advantageous for N.A.T.O. Remember Kuznetsov in the news when returning up channel belching black smoke? The carrier had a cruise to the Med. On return entered their 80,000 ton floating dock in Kola Inlet for remodelling. Dock had a massive problem of some sort, shipped water beyond control and whole set up heeled and sank. A crane on the dock reported smashed a 250 foot hole in carrier's hull. I would like to spend a spring holiday up there with a copy of the 'salvage plan' and - as an afterthought, I wonder who is now 'bagging salt in Siberia'.

Following all that news that went from bad to badder, here, to uplift you is news of a birth taking place this very day in 1931. Little Evelyn, who never uttered a profanity, ex laundry maid of Ardross Castle, looked down and saw, ANOTHER son! I ponder if her silent thought was 'Oh bugger'. Consulting her chap - with biblical name Cephas (honest) - they decided to name it Andrew. Should you wish to contribute to child's wine bill, note post code in top right hand corner.

Thought for 2019 - Keep breathing!

Luv from him.