

# H.M.S. SUPERB (CRUISER) ASSOCIATION

A MAGAZINE FOR THE MEMBERSHIP



**CHAIRMAN OF THE ASSOCIATION, BRIAN SAUNDERS**

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**Superb - Defending Britain Since 1710**



# ANDY BRIERLEY'S BLOG

Hello Shipmates,

**W**e are indeed a lucky band of pilgrims. I don't think anyone felt a bump as revered volunteer chairman of recent years stood down, forced by physical pressures.

Lo! Another worthy volunteer stepped into the breach. The latter you know resides in the shadow of the Pyrenean mountains, but distance is no impediment if you have Miz Libby attached at the hip as chief protocol and admin: he inherits a further two ladies from Robin, well versed in association account keeping and versed in the needs of our relaxed social calendar. Miz Denise and Sister Caroline.

Diversity question hit on the head with no need for 'strong-arming' from 'wokery wonks'. We have heard of a 'pack of wolves' or a 'gaggle of geese', I feel our ladies fall into a category of a 'murmur of mature crumpet'. A moral question may raise its head here if the ladies decide to follow recent Yuletide fashion of getting their kit off, to pose for next year's calendar in the altogether. Gentlemen of our quality will frown on that, eh - oh yes we will.

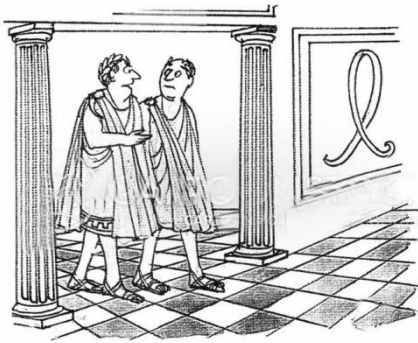
A glance round the International scene at changes of leadership is a modern horror; example Burma, I feel Superb Association could treat them all to a master class.

Banner headline in Finance Section of the Daily Mail: **B.A.E. CLINCHES £1.8 BILLION ROYAL NAVY CONTRACTS**. Absent from the article; who else tendered? Work is maintenance, upgrades following trials, repairs etc. It covers what the M.O.D. referred to as 'State of the Art Super Carriers', plus type 45 & 23; contracts last five years. I was surprised to see a U.S. firm K.B.R. will be responsible for docks and buildings at Portsmouth for a similar period of years. State of the Art stretches things a bit following an eight year build and further two year trials. Word to fit that in 2021 must be 'obsolescent'.

But wait; following the contract closure B.A.E. gave their chief executive a pay rise plus a £2 million windfall; that to dissuade rivals trying to pirate him. I struggle with that thinking: B.A.E. and C.E.O. are one and the same.

The 13% pay rise is over two years; it makes his basic pay £1.1 million. In 2020 CEO was paid £6 million 60% more than 2019 when he pocketed £3.7 million. I fear there may not be enough cash left to renew plugs in the 'sea-woman's' bathrooms.





"What Caesar doesn't understand is that all politics is local!"

A radical departure from that boring nautical stuff. I reside in a village that's been the narrowest bit of the legendary Dover Road since Roman times. So narrow substantial steel guard rails are fitted to both sides for yokel protection; the rails are mangled, ripped out at regular intervals by monster trucks. Visiting the High Street chemist can be an interesting test of one's agility. But! the real pearl in our Parish belly button sits just beyond The Bull pub. A public toilet - gender split by two traps per side, a splendid little structure, squeaky clean,

polished copper pipe work. To one with a cardboard bladder of many decades it epitomises the advanced forward thinking of a modern state with a seat on the U.N. Security Council.

Without a clue in the Parish news sheet it was demolished, rubble removed overnight. Why? To stop it being used as a drug station and same-sex dating venue; all convinced me the nation is plot-less; thoughtful action with proper reaction - an alien concept. One can imagine the draft plan by Julius and his cohorts as they de-boat and got up the beach at Dover, sandals round their necks to prevent salt water damage, i.e. stop at Faversham for a bit of petty pillage, pasta and vino, then quick march to Newington, stop just beyond The Bull for a regimental leak, fall in once more for the march to Londinium. Village Co-op is 'conveniently opposite *The Bull*'; but I hear on the grapevine that their doorway is serving that vital function, hope the Italian army don't stage a re-enactment.

Last month's news letter carried comments from 'readers'; that's a nice addition. John Ward mentioned Pigs, used as a blanket term for officers, not really meant to be derogatory, I think. I understand it came from ships when P.A. systems were fitted, commonly a Tannoy. On the bridge, when wishing to share some gem of information, the Captain lifted the mike, pressed the switch to speak, then to check it was 'live' pursed his lips and blew into it a couple of times; that came out of the speakers as 'grunt, grunt, Captain speaking ....'.

Secondly 'Valentine'; I've forgotten the context but the name always goes through my head as taken straight from the Daily Mail several years ago. I feel it's been aired before, so excuse me if that's so:

Valentine, oh Valentine  
You are always in my thoughts,  
I'll never forget the night we met  
You gave me penile warts.

The vulgar things always seem to stick in the memory.



I took Jo to her monthly visit at Maidstone eye hospital; cross country there and back was gridlocked at any junction, large or minor, with, a very sedate pace in between; the adventurous zipping in and out to gain a yard, and popular annoyance. It may not be long before lock-down becomes a nostalgic talking point, shopping for essentials in zero traffic, all the others 'working from home'.

Listening to the wireless on Sunday I learn world population has jumped to eight billion. Southern TV lets us know how many are joining illegally on a daily basis. We may live long enough to ponder the biblical question: Death, where is thy sting?'

Even I think this effort a bit of a mishmash, maybe a reflection of my life in these past few months.

Bright spot last week was when Robin phoned; he was buoyant, upbeat, even had a small gift for me. Apart from us both being a bit Mutt and Jeff gossip flowed and I appreciated that contact.

**Stop Press:** a month ago business report related that Babcock's had posted a huge loss last year; its shares have plummeted. The firm, you will know, is a major Royal Navy contractor.

Yesterday its shares rapidly went back up, precipitated by the news of its reorganising, re-modelling the company to recover efficiency and cash flow. The news was bad for 850 workers reported as 'mid-managers' axed. One hope they and the firm survive and the likes of B.A.E and the N.H.S. monitor how it's done with their efficiency and value for money in mind.

Enough, enough -

Andy



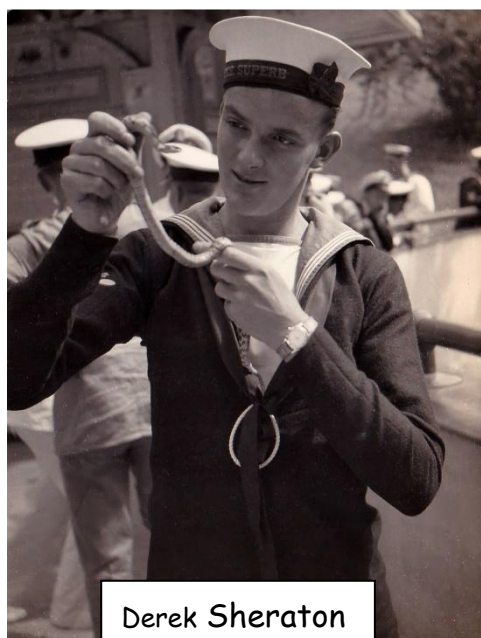


## NOZZERS GO WEST Part 24

*Santos appeared to be the centre of the butterfly industry and the butterfly wings were used to decorate souvenir trays and pictures. These trays found their way back onboard by the dozens. It was rumoured that more than two hundred came up the gangway on one night alone. Ginger managed to persuade someone to bring him one back and that was stowed away safely and earmarked for his elder sister, who had got married since he had left England.*

*Not being allowed ashore, due to his alcoholic misdemeanour a few days earlier and what now seemed ages ago, he had time to put his souvenirs and trinkets in order.*

**I**n the top flat and just inside the port catwalk door, was a small NAAFI bookstore. It was not much more than a glorified broom cupboard really with one of those half stable type doors that the navy enjoyed in their ships. The interior was lined out with shelves that were laden with a multitude of underwater and fishing gear, ranging through snorkels and goggles, flippers, knives with cork handles that would float if dropped, to spear guns and just enough room for the NAFFI man to get his chair in. There was also a selection of writing materials, pads and envelopes etc. reading books and, what Ginger was interested in - a selection of photograph albums. He picked himself a nice big one and spent many hours back on the mess deck putting the photographs he had amassed into it, making sure that each page had the name of the place he had visited displayed on the top. It passed the time, what little free time he had in between his bouts of the punishment routine he had landed himself with, where he seemed to be at everyone's beck and call, plus, he figured it would make a nice record for his family back home to see where he had been.



Derek Sheraton

The photographs were easy enough to obtain. A couple of marines would go ashore with a camera in every port and within a day of leaving that port, stacks of pictures would be on sale at sixpence each. A couple of seamen did the same thing and they displayed their wares outside the gunnery office and at the same price. Ginger would walk from one 'stall' to the other and choose half a dozen pictures to fill one page of his album. Previously he had kept his pictures in a small case but now he had an album - and the time to spare - they were all placed on the pages and the album carefully stowed, away from prying eyes and thieving fingers.

Another claim of fame of Santos, or actually São Paulo which was not too far away, was their snake farm. As with any

invitation to visit - that usually was euphuism for 'grippe run' - several people made the trip to the snake farm. Although it was foremost a research laboratory, where they looked into snake bite and finding antidotes; to make it interesting to tourists they exaggerated the snake farm angle. Ginger got his information second hand, partly from the boys mess deck and partly from those returning aboard after a good day's entertainment.

If the old war time saying: '*Loose Lips Sink Ships*' was still relevant then Superb would have been on the seabed many times during their commission, judging by what 'confidences' were imparted by well meaning friends returning on board.. Naturally there were no secrets to be kept under wraps now that the war was well behind them and many of the old-hands gave the impression they were relieved to be able to talk openly, if at time a little too frequently.

One man that came back on board couldn't wait to retell the tale of how he had become the hero of the hour at the snake farm. He said that the attendant had asked for anyone to step forward and pick up one of the venomous snakes. A wall of blank faces and no takers met the offer, until this one man stepped forward bravely. The man, a mechanic and a favourite at the children's parties in his pirate costume, told the staff that he boldly grabbed the snake and held it up for all to see. Even after his feat there were still no more takers and the man spent the rest of the visit revelling in his fame as a hero of the day.

Later, as he returned on board still revelling in the adulation of his fellow man, he confided, quietly and confidentially, to the gangway staff that he had seen the snake being milked of its poison just prior to his act of bravery, so it was not dangerous, plus, he added: 'I knew that the attendant wouldn't let anyone be bitten by a venomous snake'!

The gangway staff respected his confidences and he managed to keep the hero worship going for a few more days, before coming clean.

There were also tales of the trip to the snake farm up, over and sometimes in between the mountains. Tales came back of trips made on roads that were still at the theory stage in England; big wide roads that wound and twisted their way ever upwards and something similar to the autobahns of Germany. They were in complete contrast to the swamps and huts of the natives on the mud just across the other side of the river from where the self-proclaimed 'busiest port in the world' plied its trade. It appeared that the money stopped at the dockside and didn't extend to their country people on the 'wrong' side of the river.

To Ginger Santos seemed to be a dreary place and, apart from not being able to see the array of butterfly wing mementoes on sale for himself, he had not felt any sadness at not getting ashore. It was also the wrong end of the pay cycle and after Montevideo there was no money left until it was time to leave Santos and payday came around once again. In any case he had no plans for going anywhere until he had paid in full for his indiscretion on his last run ashore in Montevideo and that was not far away as they left Santos harbour at 1100 on Sunday.

The river trip took them into a fourth day on the way up but only one day to get away from there when they left and they entered Rio-de-Janeiro bright and early at 0800 the very next



morning, announcing themselves with a twenty-one gun salute as they did so. Midday the same day would signal his freedom from his punishment routine and all restrictions removed. The delights of Rio awaited him - and him with the added bonus of an almost untouched pay packet burning a hole in his pocket.

## TO BE CONTINUED NEXT MONTH

### The First Time

I remember the first time I tried it,  
I was only a lad of fifteen;  
And though she was younger than I was;  
She was more poised and serene.  
I was eager, yet awkward and backward  
Uncertain of how to proceed;  
But a feeling of joy soon possessed me,  
The warmth of her hastened the deed.  
It was out in the shed, I remember  
The evening was scented, by hay;  
Her body moved gently towards me,  
As my hands softly did play.  
At first I was wholly bewildered,  
Then my chin against her I lay,  
Her brown eyes were quick to relieve me,  
Of waiting and being afraid,  
Much later my heart pounded gladly,  
(It seemed hours since I began)  
My heart was alive with new born pride  
Of a boy who had grown to a man.  
Twenty years have passed since that evening,  
But my memory recalls even now  
That first thrill of Joy I felt as a boy  
On the day that I first milked a cow.

From Sharky Ward



# The Unknown Soldier

by Mark Elkins



Charles Elkins, on the left, with an unknown companion

*This is one of my father's stories, which he wrote for my brother and me in 1990* **Mark Elkins**

## 'TOMMY ATKINS', NOVEMBER 1944

Park Prewelt Hospital, near Basingstoke had been built to house the mentally ill. Now, it was an Emergency Medical Services (EMS) hospital, its patients, young soldiers who had been wounded in the battles raging across North West Europe.

Each ward drew its nurses and sisters from a different London hospital, one of which was St George's, at Hyde Park Corner. The patients arrived by ambulance from a nearby airfield, having been flown there in specially adapted Dakotas.

Above every bed was a child's slate on which was chalked rank, name, number and regiment of the occupant - except for the slate above one bed, on which was written simply 'Tommy Atkins'.

Tommy was deeply unconscious, and had been flown in from 101 General Hospital, Brussels. As was, regrettably, often the case, the silver chain around the neck that carried the identity disk was missing. Hence 'Tommy Atkins', the sobriquet of the British soldier since the Boer War or before.

When Tommy regained consciousness, it was discovered that he was totally unable to recall his name, his past, or what he had been doing to become so comprehensively injured.

His right arm and leg was in plaster, his ribs were tightly strapped and his head heavily

bandaged.

Nurses, sisters, doctors and patients all tried to find the trigger that would release the memory. A nurse with a dictionary, having as an appendix a list of common Christian names, patiently read through from A to Z without success.

Many patients were commandos, but they all agreed that Tommy's frame was too slight for him to be one of them. Tankies, signalmen, gunners, they all tried their particular jargon, but no flicker of recognition rewarded their efforts.

First success came to the Padre, who tried a long shot. Claspings Tommy's left hand he intoned, 'I believe in God...'

'I believe in God, the Father Almighty,' replied Tommy and proceeded to recite the whole of the Creed. So far, so good, but Tommy still did not know who he was.

The breakthrough came from an unexpected quarter. In the afternoons the local ladies came to visit the 'poor wounded heroes', bringing cigarettes and cakes. At Tommy's bed one lady said, 'Oh, you poor boy, you don't look old enough to be a soldier.' Tommy replied, 'I'm not a soldier, I'm a sailor and my name is Charles!'

The first task was to send a policeman round to Queens Road to deliver the good news to my family. Then came the naval officers with their endless questions.

All I knew was that we had been spotting for the monitor, **HMS Roberts**, and had manoeuvred closer and closer to the shore, where the Royal Marines were being mown down in their hundreds. [This was most likely at Walcheren, aboard a motor launch.]

My own theory was that we had been trying to draw the fire of the German artillery and so give the commandos some sort of chance. However, no posthumous medals or awards were issued and the remainder of our crew remained posted 'missing, believed drowned'.

## **GETTING THE GOOD CHOCOLATE**

After Christmas, now mobile but weak and suffering vicious recurring headaches, I was transferred to Mill Hill EMS Hospital. This was in the buildings of the public school, which had evacuated at the outbreak of war. I was the only sailor among hundreds of soldiers, most of who appeared to be trying for medical discharge.



When the doctors learned that I intended to try for university after the war I was warned to lower my sights, since invalided personnel would probably be graded too weak to withstand a degree course. And so I determined not to be invalided.

I think I must have been quite a nuisance to the medical authorities. For instance, once a week an Army Pay Corps officer came to the hospital to issue each of us with the standard 50 pence that was allowed from our pay to cover shaving tackle, chocolate rations and so on.

A NAAFI wagon was drawn up on the parade ground behind the pay desk and the ration was one bar of chocolate. Early arrivals received Cadbury's Dairy Milk, the rest more and more obscure brands of plain chocolate.

The first two weeks I paraded with the rest, but by the time they had called, in alphabetical order, 'Royal Army this that and the other' the Royal Navy was left with plain chocolate.

And so I complained that the Senior Service was being insulted by being called after so many Army regiments!

Sure enough, next week the parade was startled to hear the first name called... 'Royal Navy'. I marched to the table, removed my cap and slapped it in front of the officer. 'Salute for your pay,' said the NCO alongside him. 'This is the way the Navy do it sir,' I replied!

### **NO COMPLAINTS, SIR**

In February 1945, now quite fit apart from the persistent headaches, I was transferred to the Haslar Royal Navy Hospital, quite near to my original base at *HMS Hornet*.

After assessment I was sent home on 14 days leave and then transferred to a rest camp at Belmont Park, Bedhampton, near Havant, to await the invaliding board.

Still determined not to be invalided I scanned the notice board for the use of the (fit) camp permanent staff. A posting was on offer for a Navigator Yeoman. I applied and was sent with some other ratings to the RN Barracks, Portsmouth, where an officer explained that the party involved working in the chart room of the Commander-in-Chief, RN Pacific Fleet, stationed in Australia. What a job!

I did the rounds of the various officers, whose signatures were needed before a posting could be carried out. All OK till I came to the Medical Officer, who examined me briefly and asked 'any problems?' 'No sir,' I replied innocently, 'apart from the headaches.' A short wait whilst



the doctor made some telephone calls, then a swift return to Belmont Park, medically unsuitable.

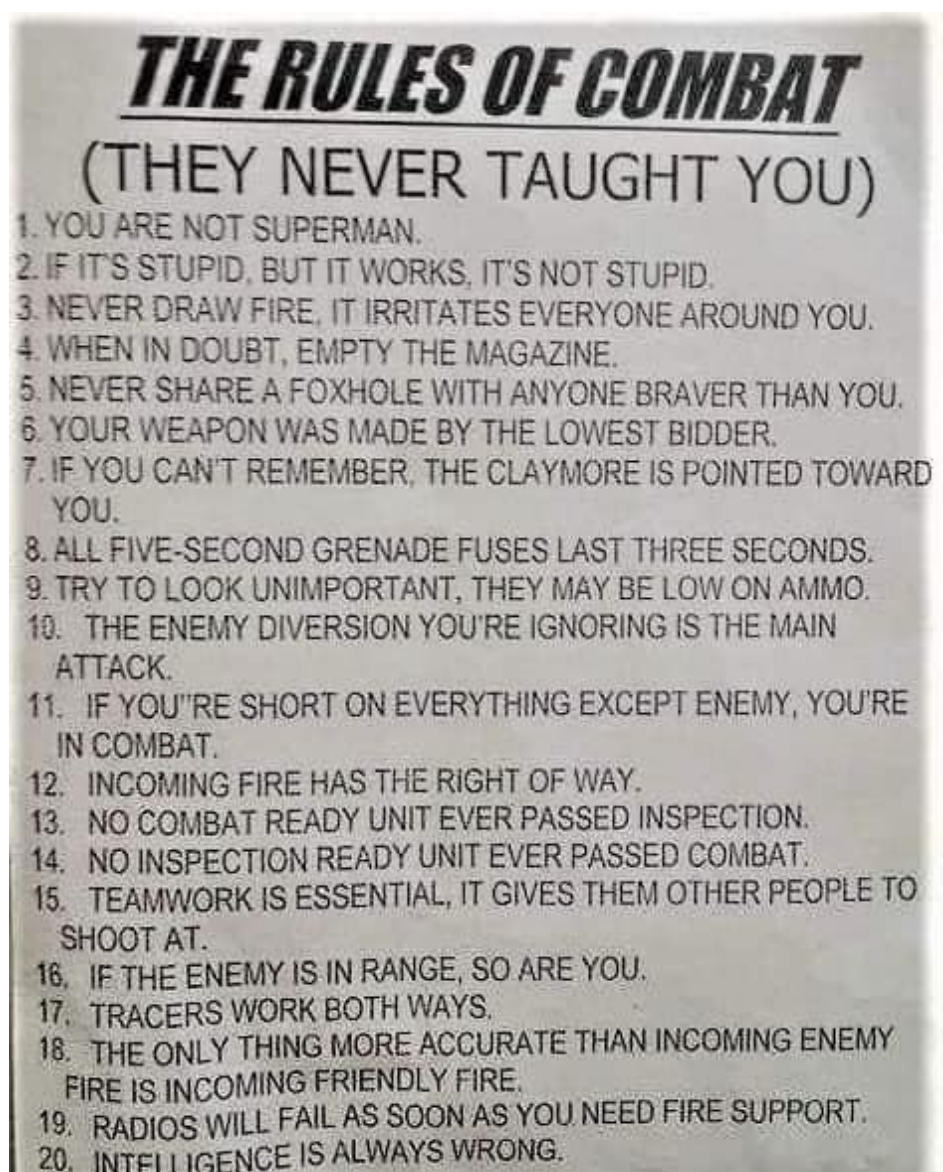
I waited impatiently for another suitable posting, and in April 1945 it appeared.

'Personnel of all ratings required for Naval Parties, to supervise the dismantling of the enemy naval installations in Germany and Japan.'

Off to Portsmouth Barracks again, doing the rounds, and once again in front of the doctor. 'Any complaints?' 'No sir.' Passed.

Where would it be, Germany or Japan? Off I went to a camp in Hayling Island, equipped with rifle and bayonet, and a khaki uniform on which I sewed the shoulder flashes 'Royal Navy'.

And so, in April, I found myself on the back of a lorry, as we drove through devastated Europe, en route for Heligoland or the north German ports, nobody seemed to be quite sure which.



# BACK IN 1956 Part 17

By Lt. Cdr. E. H. Chittleburgh

## THE ROYAL MARINE DETACHMENT



The Detachment formed at the Royal Marine Barracks, Eastney, on Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> January 1956. Almost at once the usual round of pre-embarkation training began and few will forget the bitter cold of Eastney Parade on which a great deal of our time was spent. We fired our range courses, had inoculations, and paid innumerable visits to the clothing store. Whilst at Eastney the Detachment provided the Guard of Honour for the call on the Major General Commanding Portsmouth Group of the C-in-C Home Fleet. On February 3<sup>rd</sup> the Detachment passed for duty before Captain Earl Cairns and after a week's embarkation leave, and an unforgettable night in Chatham Barracks, we joined the ship.

The course of events of this Commission can be found elsewhere in this magazine, and the first fling the Detachment had was when the Platoon landed at Dubai for an exercise with the Trucial Oman Scouts, the victors of Burami. The exercise was a great success, though our opponents became a little excited when they saw the Royals were about to assault their position. This apparently had never happened before, and it was equally apparent that it wasn't going to happen now, as four fixed their bayonets and moved down towards us looking rather businesslike. It must be admitted the momentum of the attack slowed a little, until it was pointed out to the Scouts that in fact this battle was not the real thing!

It was not until the East African Cruise that we had our first full round of Ceremonial, and we quickly became used to it. From Mombasa the Kilimanjaro Party set off to their mountain and those who were left behind in the ship were gravely disturbed by the reports of the orgies that were said to be taking place at the foot of the Mountain. In the period at Trincomalee both before and during J.E.T. the Tug-of-War team put in a deal of unobtrusive hard work. Then Detachment won the ship's competition and later represented the Royal Navy in the J.E.T. Competition, which it also won, losing not one pull throughout. Those who pulled for the Detachment were Major Morrison, Cpls. Thompson, Wark, Cox. Mnes. Moore, Brand, Philip, Gooderson and Tall, and the team was coached by Sgt. Barrett. During this time at Trincomalee the Detachment won the Inter-Part hockey, and later at Bahrein the Inter-part swimming. So far, only the collective Detachment teams have been mentioned, but there are others equally deserving. For instance, individual messes, particularly 42, 44 and 46 messes excelled at Deck Hockey or Deck Tug-of-War. Amongst those who played for the ship at soccer; Mne. Forsyth and Bugler Blyth: Swimming; Cpl. Lewis, Mnes. Knight, Morton. Cricket; C/Sgt. White, Mne. Staker and Mne. Keeble. Hockey; Major Morrison, Lt. Hardy, Cpl. Tucker and Mne. Mealen. Boxing; Cpl. Tucker, Mnes. Gooderson, Fraser and Mus'n. Churchill. Rugger, Cpl. Cox and L. Cpl. Baldwin.

We ran round Khor Kuwai like 'things possessed', greatly to the detriment of our boots, and completed the exercise with 'The Assault on Hill 600'. At Sir Abu Nu Air we carried out field firing exercise and later a night exercise with the Seaman Company. We were the 'enemy' in this particular jaunt and we think we did all that was required of us, and possibly more, until repulsed by the dastardly and un-British use of gas.

In December in Bahrein, the Royal Marines gun's crew and gun sweepers won all the half-yearly efficiency awards for gunnery. To those crews, and particularly the sweepers, we owe our congratulations.

In conclusion we have to offer the most recent contribution to the Fables of History. Once upon a time, at Freetown, a Marine was seen hanging over the guardrail engaged in earnest conversation with a man in a bum boat. The topic appeared to be a monkey, and for how much it was going to change hands. Eventually a bargain was struck at thirty shillings, and the monkey hauled inboard rather surreptitiously in a little wooden cage on a length of line. The Marine carried the cage to the Mess Deck and there, surrounded by his friends, opened it. The little monkey climbed out of the cage and made a graceful bow to his right and left, in a flash, the monkey crossed the mess desk, was out through the scuttle and into the water, making good time in the general direction of his previous owner who picked him up. The man paddled away, and like your correspondent who nears the end of his ordeal, on his face could be seen a faint but perceptible smile.



# GUESS WHO DID THE LAUNDRY

aboard Ships of the Royal Navy  
Chief of the Navy Rear Admiral Jack Steer helps farewell Shiu Hang Che in 2014.

Recently, we have witnessed the passing of Mary, the Mary of the Hong Kong side-party. She became famous because she took on a task (with her mainly female workers) sailors didn't like doing, namely to keep the ships side at 1 deck and below looking smart, clean, rust free and well painted right down to the water line so including the boot topping. In the main, sailors maintained 01 deck upwards. To those of us who served in Hong Kong, Mary was not only a 'saving grace' work-wise (even mine, but in black instead of grey for I was a submariner there), but had a choggie (naval speak for Chinese people) smile which illuminated Hong Kong and Kowloon together. However, it has to be said that Mary was nothing but shrewd and became a rich person whilst most of her peers were markedly poor.

It is not absolutely certain when Mary started her service to Hong Kong's dockyard, and after its demise, to the ships moored in the environs of HMS Tamar, but it is believed to date from the 1950 period more or less five years after Hong Kong bounced back from the Japanese occupation of the area.

However, her services do pre date the more profound yet unsung services of the inestimable value of the Chinese Laundry, which just about every warship came to value irrespective of where, geographically, it served. If Mary provided a 'service' to the Royal Navy it was parochial, whereas the almost countless Hong Kong families afloat in HM Ships provided a service considered by many to be yet another branch, living, working and yes, fighting alongside the other more well known branches of seamen, engine room, electrical, S & S, communicators, aviators and Royal Marines. In short, the Chinese laundry in HM ships became indispensable.

So, if Mary and her side party pre dates the proverbial Chinese laundry, when did this service begin and as importantly, what service was in place before it did so ?

When you think about large naval vessels carrying hundreds of crew for many weeks on the high seas, probably you never thought about how much dirty clothing and bedding needs to be washed and pressed. In addition to having batteries of guns, a battleship had to have washing machines and dryers! And who was selected to do the laundry work?

Believe it or not, but sometime in the 1950s and 1960s, ships of the Royal Navy of Great Britain going between U. K. and Hong Kong had two or more CHINESE LAUNDRYMEN! No, they were not Chinese sailors in the U.K. Navy. They were contracted labor obtained in Hong Kong, and they earned a living by charging sailors for doing their laundry!

In fact, one Chinese did laundry on a Royal Navy ship for 53 years before retiring.



After ironing more than an estimated three million shirts and surviving a bomb attack, the British Royal Navy's longest serving Hong Kong laundryman returned home in 2019 to retire.

Shiu Hang Che, 72, headed to the SAR after a 53-year career in the navy, the Ministry of Defence announced.



An informative blog by Godfrey Dykes gives rich historical detail of how the Chinese laundry was created and operated on battleships.

"In approximately 1950/51 (certainly during the early part of the Korean War) the Admiralty ordered that spaces should be made available in HM Ships to be assigned and dedicated as permanent LAUNDRIES - HMS Tyne

was also the Flagship for the Korean War. Laundry machinery was designed or procured from well known manufacturers and for the first time in naval history, a laundry school was established at Devonport in HMS Drake. The whole process of washing, ironing and starching clothes which started from pragmatic experience very soon became a science and led to the appointment of the Laundry Officer. "

I can remember so well the Suez War in 1956 and being a member of the crew of a big ship namely the Flagship, HMS Tyne. She was berthed alongside in Port Said at the northern end of the canal and serviced not only the needs of the large crew, made so by having all the extra officers and men required to service the Flag, but also the needs of many shore based personnel, even including some elements of the army and the air force, and in addition many of the small vessels (minesweepers etc) present in the harbour. Add to that, that Tyne had Egyptian senior officers as prisoners of war in her cells and spare officer cabins, and they too had their needs! Tyne had a huge laundry and also a huge bakery providing clean clothes and bread rolls in the thousands for many who were engaged in this conflict. Prior to joining Tyne, I had served in a small frigate for eighteen months with no laundry of any sort other than bathroom sinks and dhoby buckets. A couple of years after the Suez War, I gave up my bucket/wash basin/ laundry/and packet of DAZ dhoby dust (soap powder), swapping it all for a can of DAS (diesel after shave) when I joined submarines.

Many of you I know will have been to Cyprus, not too far away from the Suez Canal, whilst others would have visited Egypt or sailed East through the Canal heading for the sun of the Indian Ocean and beyond. All of you will recollect that the temperature in those climes, even in October/November, can be very high, and whilst pleasant dressed in shorts and tea shirt, it is



unbearable when dressed in No 8's with full anti flash gear, and remember, in a ship with 1950 style air conditioning: my meaning here, is to suggest a ship circulating cooler air than ambient, and still bloody hot down below in enclosed and confined spaces.

In such conditions, personal hygiene, dhobying of worn articles of kit and bedding, is a prerequisite, and even if the facilities are available, prickly heat, dhoby rash and other discomforts are still common place in such an operating environment.

In HMS Tyne, the laundry dealt with thousands of articles of kit from everything above the very personal articles like socks, handkerchiefs, underwear, and these included such items as hammocks, sheets and blankets (where used). This was the case in every large ship at this time, indeed all cruisers and above, with reduced laundry services in destroyers and below until just the ubiquitous 'dhoby bucket' was the only laundry available. Obviously, all shore establishments had a laundry and pussers laundry chits were in use shortly after WW2. So who manned and ran these LAUNDRIES? Answer, sailors from the crew. These were usually all volunteers, mainly from the stokers, the greenies, the seamen and Royal Marines branches/divisions, who like many others (butcher, fresh water tanky for example) were brown card ratings neither daymen or watchkeepers but full time special duties.

In approximately 1950/51 (certainly during the early part of the Korean War) the Admiralty ordered that spaces should be made available in HM Ships to be assigned and dedicated as permanent LAUNDRIES - HMS Tyne was also the Flagship for the Korean War. Laundry machinery was designed or procured from well known manufacturers and for the first time in naval history, a laundry school was established at Devonport in HMS Drake. The whole process of washing, ironing and starching clothes which started from pragmatic experience very soon became a science and led to the appointment of the Laundry Officer. In the early days, the Laundry Officer was an important appointment (not readily given to any old subby/junior officer) although later on in the story, and after the introduction of the Chinese Laundry, the appointment was ridiculed by the lower deck.

Many local orders were scripted to lay down the rules for these embryonic LAUNDRIES, being relevant to the type of machinery fitted, the crew borne and the number of laundry men engaged. By 1955, the very first BR (Book of Reference) BR 1277 had been issued to the Fleet sponsored by the Engineer-in-Chief's Department of the Admiralty called ''LAUNDRY MANUAL''. The BR was dated 26 August 1955.

Whilst doing one of my regular runs to the National Archives, I was able to get this BR, and because dhobying per se and laundry matters generally affect the whole of the crew, I thought it a fitting subject for a webpage.



In a moment, I am going to publish the content of the BR, but before I do just a quick note about the Laundry School in HMS Drake. The Laundry School was just one of several schools within the main RNB at Devonport. It became known as the "NAVAL JOURNEY", and throughout units in the Fleet (which had a laundry), a laundry man became known as 'Journeyman'. Now, the definition of a 'Journeyman' is a person who has finished an apprenticeship and is qualified, but works for a person other than for himself. Clearly, a laundry man was not so well qualified, and in any event, in the navy, that description fitted well to an artificer or a mechanic. The title, although coined to fit the nomenclature used in the naval laundry business was soon dropped, but for many years it meant that your dirty laundry would take a 'journey' through the cleaning processes and finish up all nice and clean the other end. That will become apparent in the contents of BR 1277 below.

For many years, ships based on Hong Kong and Singapore used laundry features offered by the locals. This method ran in parallel with what was happening in the Fleet at large viz, RN Laundries. Some of the larger ships which had LAUNDRIES fitted, stood down the RN laundrymen and in their place came local Chinese men often interrelated. At first, when such a ship had completed its 2½ year commission and was due to return to the UK, the Chinese crew was landed and the RN 'dhoby Wallah's' resumed their task. However, as time passed, these Chinese crews would take passage to the UK and then transfer to a ship coming back to serve in the Far East. After a while, they became permanent in the RN, shifting ships when necessary as refits and long DED's occurred. Moreover, the permanency soon saw them serving in ships in waters around the world, and that was the point, albeit piecemeal, when the RN stopped servicing their own LAUNDRIES. Remembering the piecemeal bit, by the early to mid 1960's Chinese laundrymen were the norm onboard RN surface ships.

I was amazed about what was involved in the RN laundry service and the BR tells all. Different I agree, but worth a browse to recall names like Teepol, Bendix washing machines, detached stiff collars which I wore in the early 1960's with front and back stud, and the like. Some of it is really fascinating especially the Presses and Pressing section. Get your wife to have a look at it and check that she is doing it properly - the pukker and pusser way! Enjoy.





# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Hi Brian,

It so happens the 'blow' Sharky mentions (*April, 2021 magazine*) I remember quite well. In actual fact it was the tail end of a hurricane which came across the Atlantic and was called 'Hazel'! The reason I remember it was because it happened to be my 21st birthday. Anyhow when it started to hit Gib. we were ordered to raise steam and proceed to sea asap. I found out later it was also to assist a Spanish destroyer in distress. I happened to be on watch in the fwd engine room on the starboard throttle so I didn't experience what happened up top. All I can say it was pretty rough down there so I hate to think what it was like up top!!

The worst part of the whole exercise was when Capt. Fuller, as he was then, decided to go about. As we turned to return and became broadside on an enormous wave hit us 'full square' and we went way over! It was so bad down below we all thought we wouldn't right ourselves. Anyhow we did, lived to tell the tale, and returned to Gib!!

When I went back to the ERA's mess there was water everywhere flooding the flat. It seems the wave that hit us flooded out the PO's mess which shared the same flat. It appeared that when we went about to return the wave had buckled several of the ship side plates and 'caved' in one of them. As you can imagine all the lockers were also flooded and the PO's were trying to salvage their No.1's etc. It so happens that a couple of the motor boats had also been badly damaged.

Regarding the Spanish sailors we picked up, all I can remember is seeing them lying out on the Quarter Deck covered as described. I am not too sure if any had been alive.. Certainly a day we couldn't forget!!!!

Superb went to Gib, the beginning of 1953 for a short visit. Not too sure what it was for? I celebrated my 21st birthday in the Salvation Army Red Shield Club and I still have the paper knife with the Gibraltar Emblem they gave me as a birthday present. We returned to Chatham sometime in April.

Another reason I remember was we had a National Service ERA, (incidentally was named 'Green'), who suffered from sea sickness and was in sick bay all the way from Chats. When we arrived he was one of the first ashore!!! He didn't join us on the 1954/1955 Cruise.

I also remember the hurricane that hit us when I believe we were in Nassau. We had to put to



sea again and went to the other side of the island to Sharks Bay(?). The lads who were ashore I believe had a great time. I happened to be on watch again as I hadn't gone ashore! I still have the 1954/55 Magazine so can check it out if you want!!

Hope this helps to jog some other memories!

Regards,

**Frank Nunn**



# PHOTO ALBUM

**Daily Mirror** (MAY 8)  
 Tuesday, May 8, 1945  
 No. 13,911 ONE PENNY  
 Registered at G.P.O. as a Newspaper.

# VE-DAY!



## IT'S OVER IN THE WEST

**TODAY IS VE-Day—the day for which the British people have fought and endured five years, eight months and four days of war.**

With unconditional surrender accepted by Germany's last remaining leaders, the war in Europe is over except for the actions of fanatical Nazis in isolated pockets, such as Prague.

The Prime Minister will make an official announcement in accordance with arrangements between Britain, Russia and the U.S.—at 3 o'clock this afternoon.

**ALL TODAY AND TOMORROW ARE PUBLIC HOLIDAYS IN BRITAIN, IN CELEBRATION OF OUR VICTORY.**

We now remember and salute with gratitude and pride the men and women who suffered and died to make triumph possible—and the men still battling in the East against another cruel enemy who is still in the East.

### War winners broadcast today

You will hear the voices of the King, Field-Marshal Montgomery and Alexander, and General Eisenhower when they broadcast from the B.B.C. Home Service to-day.

After the King's speech at 2 p.m. and separated from it by the news bulletin, comes "Victory Report," a special programme which will contain the recorded voices of the King and Winston and other famous personalities of the war.

Additional features of the B.B.C. Home programme, which will end at 8 p.m. to-morrow, include at 3 p.m. an address by the Archbishop of Canterbury in a Thanksgiving Service for Victory, and at 8.30 a tribute to the King.

### VE-SCENE TRAFALGAR SQUARE

It was a high old time in Trafalgar-square last night. Everybody wanted to climb something. This party of Wrens and Allied soldiers celebrated by clambering on to the Hon. Army policeman present—like Nelson on his column—turned a blind eye.

## London had joy night

"Daily Mirror" Reporter  
**PROCESSIONAL CIRCUS, VE-EVE.**  
 THIS IS IT—and we are all going mad! There are thousands of us in Piccadilly Circus and a newsreel camera has its canopy hoisted for the first time in getting on for six years.

A huge V sign glared down over Leicester Square. And a group of girls and soldiers of all the Allied nations are waving nation and sporting and civilian's temp-poods and swarming over cars that have become hooped down in this strutting, swishing mass

bombers "shooting up" the celebrating Londoners.

We have been waiting from two o'clock to celebrate. We went home at six when it seemed that the news of VE-Day would never come, but we are back now.

And on a glorious night we are making the most of it. A paperballed throng is trying to get the best of the V sign. I had the "five light" but the din from Piccadilly Circus is drowning my voice.

It is past midnight. We are still singing. A group of men

cameras are pelting—Roll out the Barrel!

—We sang it when we went to France in 1918 and we sang it as we tried to get out in 1940. They told me. "Now we sing it for victory."

And I terrific cheers a New Zealand sailor climbed on the bonnet of a car and from there to the roof.

He stood there swaying above the crowd as the American army swarmed up.

Continued on Back Page



# CROSSED THE BAR



Further details of ex shipmates (but not necessarily members of the Association) who have crossed the bar can be found on the appropriate page our website.

To go there please click [HERE](#)

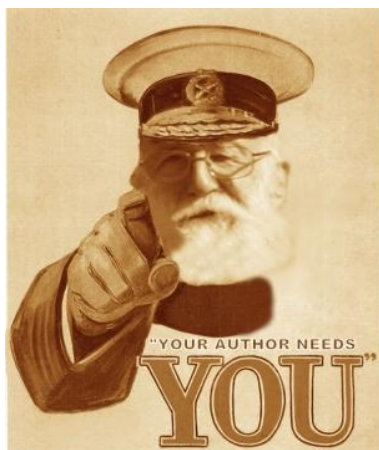


## Crossed the Bar (Recently Notified)

None reported recently



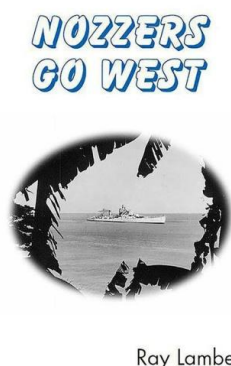
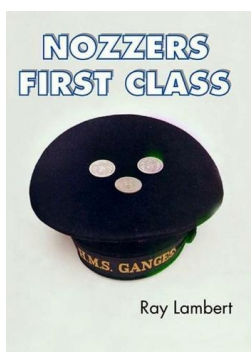
## Journalist & Best Selling Author



OUR IN-HOUSE **BEST SELLING AUTHOR** IS OFFERING THE FOLLOWING BOOKS AT A SPECIAL PRICE FOR MEMBERS OF THE ASSOCIATION.

### Ray Lambert

Follow the author when he was a handsome young man in *Ganges* and as he joins HMS Superb at Chatham. Go with him as he begins the "Luxury Cruise" of 1954-55. Join him from Punta Arenas to Vancouver and much in between. Learn of Guantanamo Bay and the Falklands before they became headline news. Each book costs £7.99 including UK postage. Click **HERE** for more information & to contact Ray by email

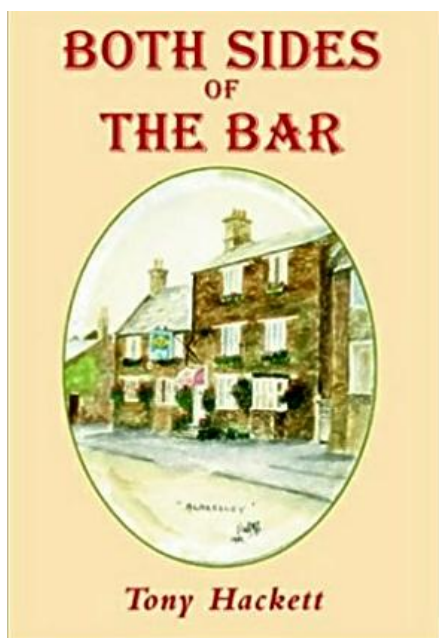


## Life After the Navy

### Tony Hackett

Tony, the son of a police officer, joined the Royal Navy aged 15 and spent the next 10 years travelling the world. He entered Civvy street in 1959 and went into the pub trade. This book relates Tony's endeavours in balancing his life between his love of rugby, managing often run-down pubs and his love of the sea and finally his successful ownership of his own free-house.

An interesting insight into the trials and tribulations of being self employed. Available as a hard back book from Amazon at £12.99



# PEOPLE SEARCH FOR PEOPLE

If you can assist with any of these appeals please contact Brian Saunders in the first instance. No details will be passed on to third parties without express permission. These appeals will be left in the magazine for a few months

## From previous issues

A request from Guy Robinson as follows:- My Dad, **Christopher Robinson**, served as a midshipman on HMS Superb when he was around 20 years old, around 1949/50. He speaks fondly of HMS Superb. Does anyone by any chance remember him?

The son of **Jim (James) Johnstone** asks if anyone knew his father - a Royal Marine on the 1954-55 cruise

**Stoker Stephen (Steve) Maddison** (1946-47) and still going strong at 92 asks if anyone remembers him.

**Keith (Danny) Lambert** was a stoker on board the 1954-55 cruise and is looking for old oppos. Hopefully he will join the Association.

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The following message received from Derek Thompson, via Facebook

Just wondered if any of you gents knew my father **Derrick Thompson (Tommo)** he was a stoker mechanic (E) 1st class on board HMS Superb in 1955/56. He passed away in 2003 aged 72. I myself was in the Andrew and served for 23 yrs. I would be grateful if anyone knew him

Neil Cooper, the son of Terry Willey, writes

"My late father appears to be mentioned in the booklet from the 52-53 tour of West Indies. He's stated as leading electricians mate. His full name was **Terry Keith Willey**. Be great to hear from anyone who knew him"

Derek Baldry (Killick Sparker) would like to contact Ginger Dunne from 1956

Stoker Clive Godley would like to get in touch with old shipmates - I have his telephone number and email address so if you'd like it get back to me. (BS)

Larry Boudier who was in the Chatham field gun's crew in 1955 would like to know if anyone knows of others in that crew

Eleanor Ingalls Fochesato from New Jersey, USA would like to contact John Stevens, from the 1953 cruise to Maine, USA.

Bob Butcher known to many as "Butch" & who served on Superb between Nov 1950 to July 1951 wonders if Curly Watson is still around. He would like to make contact.

Laura Kardo researching her grandfather, Charles Harris, who served around 1951 & 1952. would like to know more about him.

Jeff , the son of Jim Stewart who was on board as a Telegraphist between 1947 & 1951, would be happy to receive any information re his dad. Jim was also on HMS Vidal in 1955



## ARCHIVED CONTENT

Links to past copies of the Magazine can be obtained from Brian by sending an email message

[CLICK HERE](#)  
to send message



**THE END**