

H.M.S. SUPERB (CRUISER) ASSOCIATION

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CHAIRMAN OF THE ASSOCIATION, BRIAN SAUNDERS

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Superb - Defending Britain Since 1710



ANDY BRIERLEY'S BLOG

Hello Shipmates,

Sweden's desire to join N.A.T.O. had Putin, in a T.V. address, declare he would defeat them during his ambition to reclaim all territories lost in the past. He was, I think, talking about the 21 year war in 1700. A breathtaking statement!! But, like all politicians; to say - then do, are poles apart; in light of recent events he could get his nails severely clipped. The world has a cast iron lesson in what the underdog can achieve.

Ukraine's young people thought freedom was worlds apart from that Marxist utopia, converted their thoughts to deeds, although it is costing them dearly to do so.

To a more uplifting subject concerning our own shipmate Brian Turner. His prowess with the paint brush is well known, his modelling - not so.

As you probably read in last month's (September) magazine, a just completed, carrier *Victorious*, of about five feet long is a joy to behold. I'd opine it is a thing of beauty.



At the reunion I asked about aircraft on deck, would he purchase miniatures from the trade? "Goodness. No!". He made a full strike group of 6 Sea Vixens and 6 Buccaneers himself. Where he gets his patience from the Lord only knows.

I asked if his models were exhibited anywhere - he lives in a delightful little harbour town - the answer was no. His city fathers must be a lead-footed bunch if they cannot see interest being stimulated by museum quality work such as Brian's.

Turns out that about a year ago the maritime press had Plymouth's desire to set up a nautical museum. I was surprised such an address did not have such a venue. The one in Chatham drags in thousands of visitors, all spend a couple of bob to gain entry, then pass through the shop and

refreshment room; the motive, as all retail outfits, is 'profit'. Take a quid, expand your exhibits, pay for transport and insurance, get new stuff in on long term loan etc.



Launch of aircraft carrier number 3 in China, named *Fujian*, tip the scales at 80,000 plus tons, is their first own design and build. One can notice it's a catapult equipped vessel that nearly certainly benefits from spy cells in U.S.A. pinching electromagnetic catapult technology.

Their first carriers were of that Soviet design built in the Ukraine; neither had catapult or arrestor wires. India followed the same route with ex Ukrainian hull. Now they have a homebuilt design in completion; 'proper carrier' that can hold strike squadrons, quite unlike our vertical take offs, which are heavier, thus shorter range with less offensive load carrying.

Meanwhile we, in the U.K. continue to compound our position as the world's naval laughing stock; our three billion carrier is, again, at anchor off the Isle of Wight. Was headed for a four month deployment to the United States but failed to make one day at sea following (quote) "A string of technical problems". The vessel is recorded having spent 87 days at sea in first two years of service.

At a ceremony in Pompey in January it was named **COMMAND SHIP. N.A.T.O. HIGH READYNNESS FORCE**. That's at the large end of the scale.

Recall the army rifle in 1985, five years after its inception, M.O.D. forced to report on its fitness for use, found 50 faults; a 'replace' version issued in 1992 found only seven defects had been remedied, and that following the Gulf war.

The 'suits' at M.O.D. did not give a shit about Tommy Atkins or they would not have sent him in harm's way with a sub-standard basic tool - his rifle.

Thinking further about Plymouth's desire for a maritime museum; four or five years back, perhaps less, a Falkland frigate, in very beat-up state was being hawked around various dockyards as an exhibit in need of a home. It was *H.M.S. Plymouth* - the beat-up state being due to her being the recipient of five unexploded bombs delivered by some determined Argie pilots. What better nucleus to build a museum round in that place.

I notice a seismic change in uniform, is it specifically for those matlots hauling H.M.Q on the Gun Carriage or a general mess issue for those in depot, or without a ship ?

Am alluding to their 'cap tallies' which read 'Royal Navy'. Maybe I demonstrate my ignorance again and find they have just become the norm.

Can see the benefit of it for wearers for example who bid their loved ones farewell, sail for the U.S. east coast on that three month exercise but fails to make it beyond Isle of Wight due to multiple poor workmanship problems; must join the queue to enter dry dock for an extended period.



Upside to that is no expensive strike wing was on board, not that we own one; vessel was on its way to 'ponce' off the U.S. marine corps, again.

Had to write this in fits and starts, if it comes out a bit disjointed I'll know forgiveness is your strong point.



THE FIRST REMEMBRANCE DAY



1100-1159.

11am: Suddenly there is silence along much of the front. American private Frank Groves later said you could feel the quiet: 'There was no singing, no shouting, no laughter; we just stood around and looked and listened.'

Near Mons, a German machine-gun unit that had kept British troops pinned down all morning stops firing. The British troops watch in amazement as a German officer stands up, lifts his helmet and bows. He then orders his men to fall in, and they all march off.

In London, for the first time in two years Big Ben strikes the hour. In 1916 it was silenced and its clock faces were no longer illuminated so it couldn't act as a guide for Zeppelins bombing the city. Maroons, or fireworks, that had been used as air-raid warnings are fired from the roofs of police and fire stations. Some people think it's an air raid and run for cover. Florence Youngusband, whose husband George is a major-general in the army, is on the top deck of a London bus. In front of her are two soldiers, one of whom has a hideously scarred face.

He doesn't react to the sound of the maroons but keeps staring straight ahead. His comrade suddenly starts crying. The bus conductress sits down next to Florence, and then to her surprise puts her head on her shoulder and also starts to weep. 'I lost my man two months ago,' she says through her tears. 'I can't be happy today.'

Winston Churchill, the Minister of Munitions, is looking out of the window near Trafalgar Square, listening to the chimes of Big Ben. In the building around him he can hear doors banging and the sound of feet running down corridors; outside people are running into the streets. All over Whitehall windows are flung open and sheets of notepaper, official forms, even toilet paper are thrown out.

Just a few streets away, in a ward of Queen Alexandra's Hospital, a 24-year-old nurse by the name of Vera Brittain, who went on to become the celebrated author of *Testament Of Youth*, is cleaning dressing bowls. She can hear the sounds of celebration but carries on with her task. A nurse rushes into the room. 'Brittain! Did you hear the maroons? It's over — it's all over!'

It's come too late for me, thinks Brittain. Her brother Edward and her fiance Roland have both been killed.

11.02am: At the Golden Hill Fort on the Isle of Wight, a rocket is fired into the air signalling the Armistice. Private Harry Patch and the other soldiers are on the firing range and cheer wildly. The officer in charge tells the men to use up their spare ammunition.

The man next to Harry angles his rifle across him and shoots at a small hut on the hill, unaware it houses the men who monitor the targets. The men inside the hut dive to the floor as bullets rip through its sides. Harry said later, 'They were inches away from being the first victims of the peace'.

11.05am: In Belgium, American air ace Captain Edward V. Rickenbacker is flying his biplane over the American lines. He wants to see what is happening on the ground. He watches as khaki-clad figures appear from holes and trenches and start moving slowly towards grey figures on the other side. Across the battlefields of Europe, soldiers are shaking hands.

11.15am: Outside Buckingham Palace, despite heavy drizzle, a large crowd waving hats and flags is chanting 'We want King George!' The King and Queen step on to the palace balcony. The King addresses them as loud as he can: 'With you I rejoice and thank God for the victories which the Allied armies have won and brought hostilities to an end and peace within sight.'

11.30am: First Lieutenant Groover of the U.S. 79th Division is watching German soldiers leave their trenches near Montfaucon in eastern France.



One slowly walks towards the American lines and says to Groover with tears in his eyes that his brother had been killed here the day before and he would like to find his body. Groover agrees to let him search for his brother and bury him.

In the Belgian town of Lessines, the local population are driving out German soldiers hiding in their houses and cellars by pelting them with stones and sticks. For the soldiers' safety the British agree to escort them out of town and back to the German lines. The people of Lessines are so hungry the British cavalrymen have allowed them to skin and eat one of the horses that was shot in the operation to liberate the town.

11.45am: Three hundred feet above Parliament Square, men from Dent and Company, the custodians of Big Ben, are adjusting its mechanism so it can now strike every hour. Elsewhere in London, at the corner of Chancery Lane, a policeman is dancing with a group of girls. Strangers are kissing one another in the street. A middle-aged colonel is riding on top of a motor car banging a dinner gong.





DON'T WEAR A THREE CORNERED HAT- JUST BE A JOLLY JACK!

By Fred Grundy

It was a cold Monday morning in January 1952. I was just 18 years old and on my way to Chatham armed with a travel warrant, and with an appointment at the Royal naval recruitment centre. I worked down the coal mines, a reserved occupation and would have been exempt from national service. However, I had an older brother in the Royal Navy, a Seaman Gunner, who had done a two and a half year commission out the far east, and when he was on home on leave would impress me with his stories of foreign climes. Also his ability to "pull the birds" when wearing his sailor suit had not gone unnoticed.

I arrived at my local railway station just before 6 am, my appointment was at 9 am and to my horror saw several matelots on the platform returning off weekend leave. They were all roughly the same age as my brother and they all knew him, being from the same small town. They quickly espied me and asked where I was going. That was it! When I told them they all ganged up on me and told me in certain nautical terms to clear off home. They all told me less than romantic things about the navy and about my brother in particular for talking me into joining. One of them even offered me a ten shilling note, a fair bit of money to a matelot in those days, to return the travel warrant and go home. Another one suggested that my brother just wanted me to share his misery.

I stuck to my guns but when we boarded the train things just got worse. More matelots were already on the train, having got on at the other local station. They all knew my brother and some of them knew me. I was press ganged into the same compartment and the demolition job on my impending naval career began in earnest. To be fair to them though I must put things in perspective. Some of them were a few years older than me and already married men. They were returning to their ships on a cold dark January morning having enjoyed the weekend with their loved ones and the last place they wanted to be was on this train. So they gave it to me with both barrels!

One of them was called Hubert, older than the rest and from Lancashire. He was a two badge Stoker and had served in the last few years of the war. He had a medal for bravery; some said it was the George Medal. Apparently he saved a shipmate from drowning. He was one hell of a character and everybody showed him due respect. He referred to everybody as "Youth" or

"Cocker" and I quickly became both of those.

On a Monday morning following a weekend leave all Chatham ratings leave expired at 9am, hence the 6am train from Deal. This meant travelling to Maidstone and getting a bus from there to Pembroke barracks or the dockyard. The bus, a double-decker, was packed solid with matelots and I tried to melt into the background as much as I could, becoming more and more apprehensive the closer we got to Chatham. The bus arrived at Chatham Town Hall at about 8.45am, the Recruiting office was next door to it, and I jumped off the bus as quickly and as quietly as I could. Hubert however was not to be denied. As I ran across the road to the recruiting centre a loud Lancastrian voice shouted "Cocker". What I saw when I turned is embedded in my memory for ever. There was Hubert, in full Naval uniform swinging around on the vertical passenger handrail at the rear of the bus and shouting at the top of his voice. "Don't forget Cocker, tell him to poke it up his f-----g arse!"

The recruiting Officer, a big jovial Chief Petty Officer, quickly got down to business. "Right lad, Engine room branch. Twelve years service".

"That's seven years with the fleet and five with the reserves." I replied brightly, having read all the recruiting pamphlets. "No lad. We don't do seven and five in the engine room branch any more. Its twelve years continuous now!"

"That's not what it states in the recruiting books" I answered. "Those books are out of date" he said. "Seven years is not long enough to train you and get something back for all the time and money we would have spent on you." That's when I remembered what my brother had warned me about. "They will try and talk you into joining for twelve years. They get commission or something for that. Don't fall for it!" "No. I only want to join for seven and five" I replied. "You have wasted my time this morning" he said, "Sooner waste yours than mine for twelve years." I retorted hotly with all the cockiness of youth.

For what seemed an age we just glared at each other. Then his face softened and he gave me a fatherly look. "Quite a few sailors on the train from Deal this morning were there son?" He asked pleasantly. I must have looked suitably embarrassed because he smiled knowingly and said. "I think you have been got at. I want you to go home, think about it and when you have decided that you want to make the Royal Navy your career for the next twelve years apply again." "Do I have to give you the train fare money back?" I asked sheepishly. "No. The Ministry of Defence and the tax payer has paid for that." He replied cheerfully. "I am sure you will be back, but it will not be on a Monday when Jolly Jack is coming back off weekend leave!"

I walked through Chatham with my head in a whirl. I couldn't go home like this, I had to join something! I walked along the High street almost into Rochester and stopped outside the Royal

Air Force recruitment centre. I was looking at all the posters in the window when the recruiting Sergeant spotted me and coaxed me inside. He listened to my tale of woe with a show of sympathy saying that things were different in the R.A.F. One could join for as little as three years depending on what branch you opted for. In those days an air and sea rescue branch was in existence and I expressed an interest. I think that was for five or perhaps seven years. He told me that they were about to do an entrance exam for one other would be recruit that very morning and I could also sit the exam. I agreed and in no time at all was sat at a desk doing a written entrance paper.

Afterwards I sat in a side room together with the other would be recruit until I was called back in and told by the same Sergeant that I had passed the entrance exam with a good mark. Unfortunately the Doctor was off sick and I would have to come back on a later date for the medical. They would send me a travel warrant. I went home quite pleased with myself; I was going to join up after all. Come the weekend though when my brother came home, everything changed!

"You are not really going to become a Brylcream Boy in a three cornered hat are you?" That was among the more polite things he said, but he also went on to say that if I persevered the navy would climb down and take me in for seven and five. They always do he said. That was it. When the travel warrant arrived for the R.A.F. medical I sent it back with an apology. I really did want to join the navy!

I wrote away again for the Royal Navy but this time the reply came back stating the conditions of service were for twelve years only. The months went by and I got on with my life but the desire to join the navy remained. I wrote again, and this time the reply came back complete with a travel warrant for a Tuesday (no fool that recruiting Chief) stating that they would accept me for seven and five. I sat the exam followed by the medical at Chatham barracks, there were thirteen of us would be recruits that day and I was the only one for seven and five. That recruiting Chief had a good success rate!

When I arrived at *H.M.S. Raleigh* however I was gratified to discover that almost half of the lads in my class were seven and five same as me. Some years later though things changed and the navy had the last laugh. In 1956 the armed forces got a substantial pay rise but the Royal Navy, unlike the other two services, imposed conditions. They disbanded the seven and five and started a new short service of nine years. To get the full amount of the pay rise one had to sign on for a further two years or get three shillings and sixpence a day less than the nine year or existing twelve year man. That was a lot of money back then and many of us felt hard done by. The carrot they proffered was the removal of the five years reserve. I resisted doing this for a couple of years but finally succumbed and signed on for the other two. When I got demobbed at Portsmouth barracks in 1962 I was required to sign a form stating that I was now

a Royal Naval reservist for the next three years! "You shouldn't have joined if you can't take a joke."





NOZZERS GO WEST Part 41

By Ray Lambert

Just then the Commander came round the corner and almost ran into them. He was on one of his walkabouts. As always he had two or three others in his wake.

'Everything all right, leading hand?' he asked. It was just polite conversation. He would usually speak when he passed someone, rather than walk by without a word as most would have done. He had no axe to grind.

'Yes sir. Just about to wash down ready for repainting,' was the reply.

Two of the party started the ascent, taking one end of the heaving line with them and Ginger busied himself by tying the bucket handles to the other end. He was trying to look busy and at the same time inconspicuous until the Commander had gone. But the Leading Hand thought that he should continue the conversation.

'He's a bit nervous, sir,' he volunteered when he saw the Commander looking at Ginger. 'He doesn't like heights.'

'Oh,' said the Commander thoughtfully. 'Is he a good worker?'

'He certainly is, sir. A good grafter, one of the best,' the Killick replied helpfully, although he had no idea.

'Then I think we can excuse him going aloft and allow him to work down here, tying on the pots and so on.'

'Thank you, sir,' said the Killick.

'Thank you, sir,' chipped in Ginger, rather meekly.

Although he hadn't come across either the Leading Hand or the Commander close-to before, that day he became acquainted with two very nice men.

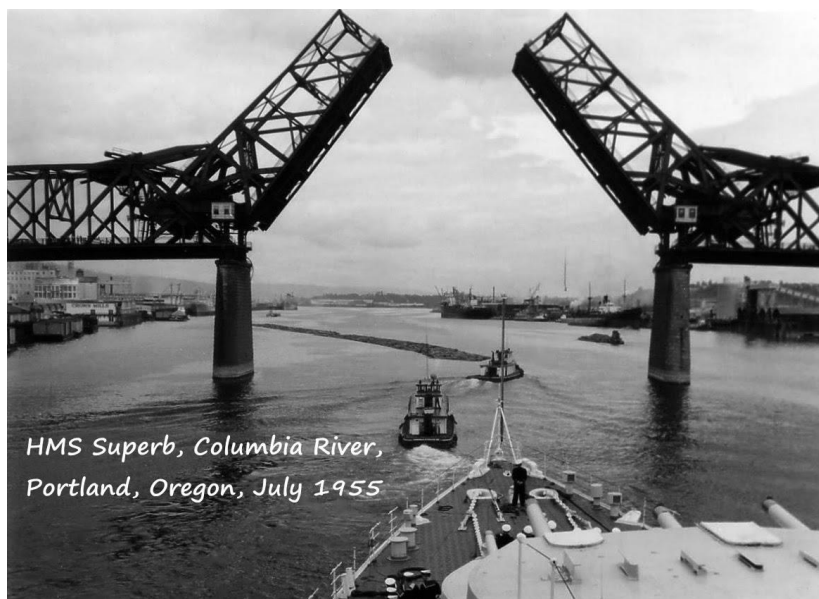
He felt no animosity towards the Commander over the stoppage of leave. He felt that it was a bit harsh particularly as he had put forward a reasonably good excuse but he couldn't dredge up any bad feelings over the incident. He reasoned that maybe there was a set down scale and, although he couldn't help it, he had abused the privilege of that extended leave that he had been given.

At least he hadn't been thrown in the cells for being cocky like he had in Montevideo and he had managed another run ashore that he wasn't entitled to when he should have been on duty so it wasn't all bad news. He wouldn't be going ashore until his ten days stoppage was over. There was nothing he could do about that except grin and bear it.



However, as the saying has it: 'Tomorrow is another day' and before they broke into another day, they had the excitement of retarding the clocks one hour. For reasons that were never made public they put the ship's clocks back by one hour at 1930 instead of the normal midnight, when two watches either gain or lose half an hour each.

The following day passed uneventful and then, on Friday, they picked up a pilot to navigate them a hundred miles up the Columbia River to Portland. The river was the main thoroughfare for the logging industry and enormous rafts of cut logs drifted sedately downstream as they made their way further up into the vast countryside of Oregon and North West America.



They were doing something like twenty knots, despite the log rafts, the odd tree root and the rogue log that seemed to be proceeding independently, so it was not long before they turned to starboard and into the Willamette River that branched off the main river, for the last bit of the journey before reaching the town.

Unlike the Columbia, the Willamette River was narrower and was spanned by numerous bridges that appeared to be made out of Mecanno. Most of them lifted in the centre just like a miniature version of London's Tower Bridge, to allow traffic through; others were of a rigid structure and were only just high enough for Superb to pass underneath. Luckily there was only about thirteen miles of that before they came to their resting place - right in the centre of town with the gangways out actually on the pavement. They were tied up right alongside a major highway with cars whizzing past all the time.

If they thought they had been close to town on other occasions; this was a real eye opener. There they were right in the centre of the City of Portland. The people of Portland loved them from the moment the first line connected them to the shore. There couldn't have been many large ships that travel up the river that far and foreign warships at that, albeit friendly ones.

Where people in San Francisco would stand and stare, people of Portland did so in their hundreds. Cars would pull up at the roadside, although it was a major highway and the occupants would get out and just stand and stare, some of them for hours on end. There was not very much to see. Just ship's crew doing their everyday things like sweeping or painting. The people were being friendly and just wanted to strike up a conversation but the Buffer, in all contemptuousness, would soon be on the scene to do his best to stop such happenings.



They had been told over and over again: '*.....you are ambassadors, ambassadors for the navy, ambassadors for the ship, and ambassadors for yourself and you must conduct yourselves as such at all times.*'

But apparently no one had explained to the Buffer that the only things he could qualify for as ambassador for would be pig-ignorance and downright rudeness. He was the most hated man onboard. Even bystanders on jetties all around South America and now the States, showed contempt for him and they didn't even know him.

He had never said as much, possibly because no one ever spoke to him socially, but he had all the hallmarks of having been a Ganges instructor and, as far as the boys were concerned, he tried to act like he still was. He particularly picked on boys because they were easy targets but it was good to see him gulp and back pedal hastily when someone a bit more senior stood up to him. Despite all his arrogance and bluster with young boys, he was not a brave man especially when faced down by someone who knew that they didn't have to take that kind of behaviour from anyone on board.

There had been an occasion, in the tropics of South America on a Sunday afternoon at sea, when Ginger had met up with three others on board that all lived in Norwich, his home city. They had known each other for quite a while by that time and all four were sitting on a bench on the port side of the upper deck when the Buffer had to interfere. None of them were on duty and it was Sunday afternoon.

Ivo, an AB, was the radar man. He lived in the row of terraced houses that could be seen high up behind the small city rail station. Tall Ginger was also an AB. A torpedo man, he was from the Lartman Estate in the city. Ted, the last of the quartet, had all but finished his time and would be discharged as soon as possible after they returned to England only a matter of a little over two months away. He was a right 'old country boy' and had no regard for the Buffer at all. The Buffer saw them enjoying a chat and laughing and strode purposefully up towards them. He must have been off duty as well, seeing it was Sunday afternoon but he just had to scream at somebody for something and, naturally, he picked on Ginger - the boy. He wanted Ginger to square off some rope ends. There was nothing wrong with them but he had a boy to bully and a reason to disrupt the little group.

Ginger went to get up to comply when Ted the 'country boy' staring straight at Buffer said loudly and probably too forcibly: 'Sit still Ginge'.

Ginger wasn't quite sure what to do, he knew Ted was right but the Buffer had power to misuse and could be relied on to do so as his mood took him. He decided to remain seated for an extra moment to see how things would pan out, which didn't help the Buffer's disposition whatsoever. If Ginger had been on his own the Buffer would have snatched him up bodily but with others watching he wasn't that brave.

Ted was a bit of a card; he had a habit of saying 'serpently' instead of 'certainly', only in fun of course but on that afternoon the Buffer was on the receiving end of 'sepently' as an answer to his every utterance. Every time he paused for breath, where he was at full volume, Ted came in with his 'serpently'; he must have misused that word fifteen or twenty times, by which time the remainder of them were laughing out loud and the Buffer was red in the face with frustration. Knowing that he was beaten and he had no business to interfere in the first place, he walked away, hopefully to slash his wrists.

Ginger was bit concerned that he might catch the backlash of that little soiree at a later date but being gangway staff he had very little dealings with the Buffer although he got some funny looks from him from time to time.

For some reason a press conference was called for onboard at 1600, almost as soon as they tied up alongside and got the gangways secured into place. Ginger had no idea why. He saw no press come aboard and had no idea what the 'conference' was about. He only knew it happened because it was recorded in the ship's log. Also the duty watch provided guards and sentries again.

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT MONTH



Commander Derek Willan

Commander Derek Willan, who has died aged 101, achieved his ambition to be a destroyer officer when in 1939 he joined *HMS Icarus*, whose commanding officer he much admired, the highly decorated Captain Colin Maud.



Willan thought there would be more scope for initiative, and, indeed, Maud gave Willan plenty of responsibility, as watchkeeper, torpedo officer, and in charge of the ship's correspondence: up to the outbreak of war in 1939, *Icarus* patrolled the coast of Palestine to control illegal migration.

On return to home waters, *Icarus* was soon into action: on October 14 in the South West Approaches she assisted in the sinking of the German submarine *U-45*, and on November 29 she took part in the sinking off southern Norway of *U-35*.

In early 1940 *Icarus* was converted to a minelayer and ocean minesweeper; however, in April 1940, at the start of the Norwegian campaign, *Icarus's* orders to lay mines off

Norway were forestalled by the German invasion. On April 8 she laid a minefield in Vestfjord, and the following day sank the ore-carrier *Europa*. On April 11 she captured the German store-ship *Alster*.

At the Second Battle of Narvik on April 13 1940, *Icarus* led the fleet up Ofotfjord. In the close-range battle, Willan remembered the bows being blown off the destroyer *Eskimo* by German torpedoes while other torpedoes hit the shore with their propellers still racing.

On May 28 *Icarus* was diverted to the evacuation of allied troops from the beaches of Dunkirk. On the first day, *Icarus* made two round trips in daylight, almost continually under air attack, and brought 1,142 men home. Fortunately *Icarus* suffered only one casualty, a rescued soldier hit by shrapnel.

Over the next few days, *Icarus* carried 4,396 troops in six trips, the last from Dunkirk on June 2. Towards the end of this frantic period, Willan recalled how *Icarus's* exhausted officers missed a buoy as they approached the French coast and narrowly avoided running aground. Willan's duties, driving the ship's motorboat and ferrying soldiers between shore and ship, were not, he thought, "very special", but, but he was awarded the DSC.

Derek Peel Willan was born at Devonport, Devon, on June 13 1917 and entered Dartmouth in 1931. He was the fifth generation of his family to become a naval officer: his great-great-grandfather was Rear-Admiral Charles Austen, brother of Jane.

While Willan was in the training cruiser *Frobisher* she salvaged a burning tanker and Willan earned £7 2s 1d in salvage money. As a midshipman he served in the cruiser *Devonshire* on the China station, and, back in home waters, in the battleships *Rodney* and *Nelson*.

After Dunkirk, Willan was appointed to the destroyer *Shakari*, where on convoy duties in the North West Approaches he was proud never to have lost a merchantman. The worst enemy, he noted, was the weather, which, on a voyage to Iceland, crushed the bridge structure, though nobody was hurt.

In May 1942 he was appointed first lieutenant of the destroyer *Ilex*, under refit in the US: the following year he took part in Allied landings on Sicily and Italy, and on July 13 *Ilex* sank the Italian submarine *Nereide* south-east of the Strait of Messina.

In January 1944 Willan took command of the destroyer *Catterick*, which, aged 26, he thought was "not too bad". He took part in the landings in the south of France and the recapture of Greek islands from the Germans. When he unexpectedly met his brother, Dick, serving with the Army in Egypt, he took him to sea for a fortnight.

Subsequently he commanded the destroyers *Havelock* and *Rapid*, before being appointed in 1946 to Hamburg, where he supervised the Germans in sweeping up their mines in the Baltic and North Seas, and where he met his wife-to-be.

In 1949 and 1950 he commanded the Malta-based landing ship *Messina*: one of his tasks was to fetch forage from Libya for Mountbatten's polo ponies. Promoted to commander, in the 1950s he surveyed the Montebello islands off Western Australia and, while making two round trips from Britain in command of the landing ship *Narvik*, he planned the 1952 British nuclear test.

In 1961, when a shrinking Navy was divided into a "wet list" and a "dry list" (the latter receiving no further appointments to sea in command), Willan, despite his extensive and early commands, was placed on the "dry list", and took retirement.

He taught maths and French at various prep schools before finding a niche in the census office at Titchfield, Hampshire. Nothing measured up to his naval life, and he applied himself to his hobbies, including philately. His book *Greek Rural Postmen and their Cancellation Numbers* (1996) was named *Oddest Book Title of the Year* by *The Bookseller*, and he was interviewed by John Humphrys for the *Today* programme on the subject.

He regularly completed hard crossword puzzles in 15 minutes and was a finalist in the Times Crossword competition in 1984; in 2018 he got a special mention at the "Listener" crossword setters' dinner as a centenarian still sending in correct entries.

In 1999 he was the oldest competitor on Countdown. He was a Portsmouth season ticketholder into his 90s and possibly the only man to have cheered Pompey to FA Cup victory in both 1939 and 2008.

Meticulous, determined and single-minded, with a strong sense of duty, Willan was nevertheless modest and family-oriented. He was a loving carer for his wife, Patricia "Paddy" Kinghan, a nurse, whom he married in 1947 and who survives him with their two sons.

Commander Derek Willan, born June 13 1917, died November 4 2018

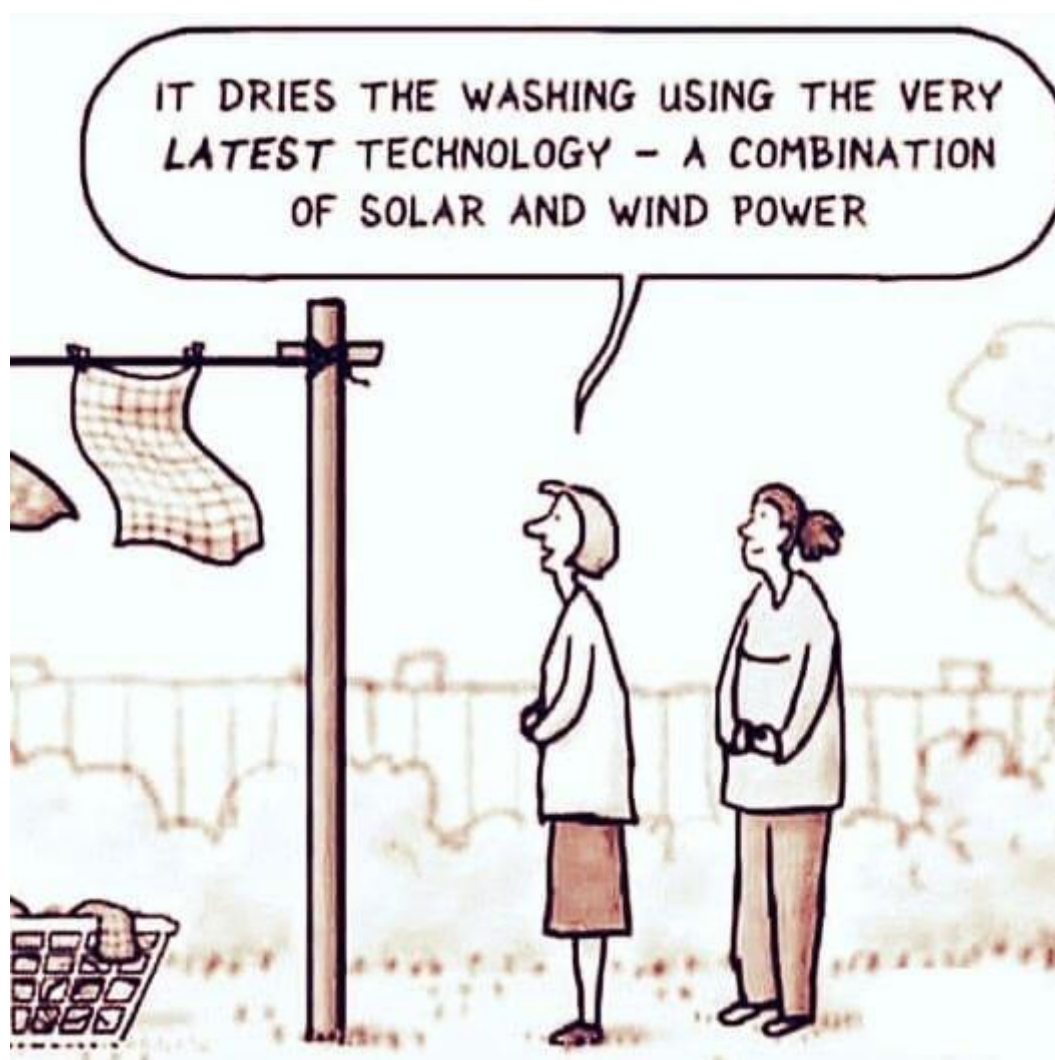


PHOTO ALBUM



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)





LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Hi Brian,

I would just like to comment on the effort Brian Turner must put in to all those models, there must be a lot of patience and effort put into all the work he does, what with the paintings as well. Well done Brian.

Last month's mag. had an article illustrating the connections between Her Late Majesty, the Queen, and her navy - what wasn't shown was that in 1957 the Queen once again came on board the Superb.

As part of the home fleet, we met up with the Royal Yacht and escorted her to Invergorden where there was a mini fleet review. The Queen came on board and met some of the crew and I think Bill Cook was one of the crew selected to meet her.

Best wishes for the future

Joe Heaton



THE END