

H.M.S. SUPERB (CRUISER) ASSOCIATION

A MAGAZINE FOR THE MEMBERSHIP

MAY
2020



CHAIRMAN OF THE ASSOCIATION, ROBIN SMITH

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Superb - Defending Britain Since 1710



ANDY BRIERLEY'S BLOG

Hello Shipmates,

Reading the Portsmouth Telegraph an article on the spate of diesel thefts from local lorry parks, by nocturnal gangs of mature chaps with short lengths of hose and five gallon cans; one must assume a fair quantity was required.



Different article is the M.O.D. lamenting a 'black hole' in finances that may - hah ! - result in slowdown of new frigate build.

Over the page - a report stated, Super Carrier had slipped, heading for Liverpool to show the flag; obviously it was one whose lights worked. Embarked air compliment, two in number, helicopters, each a different make - such as can be embarked on any frigate quarter deck.

It never crossed my mind where diesel for the journey north came from; was not swayed by complaints of fuel suppliers, irate at bouncing cheques being issued in Pompey by the M.O.D. The seed of doubt was sown reading medical page reporting on the plethora of local Admirals suffering similar cases of chronic lack of sleep, showing heavy dark bags under their eyes. No diagnosis is forthcoming but investigations continue.

Two plus two makes five; sigh of resignation on hearing Dominic Cumming's proposal from No. 10 to sort out M.O.D., big time. Following all previous reports of that nature I am forced to take the cynical view of; 'Oh yeah!'

I read of the Swedish defence procurement organisation FMV, highly successful, a world role model whose manning list numbers 1500. The result of their work is a cutting edge fleet of stealthy, innovative, fast anti-sub vessels and ultra-modern corvettes as the blue water contingent.

The article cites several 'business school studies' that cut the U.K. M.O.D. head count by 80%, that's 24,000 bureaucrats; cash figure savings would astound, and time spent on projects without all that deadwood passing paper, convening meetings must be some of the reason Darings acquired power 8 years ago are underrated, unreliable trains requiring £160 million to rectify.



The R.N. ordered 14 of those - M.O.D. promised 12, later cut to 8 - finally 6 joined the fleet with their cruising power failures - rectification yet to commence.



HMS Daring departing Portsmouth Naval Base, 1 March 2010.

Already Coronavirus is being used as a reason to cut the R.N. further. Any wagers on Dominic's sort out of the M.O.D; his civil servants will revolt, that could be apt as their efforts to provide the 'Sceptered Isle' with adequate protection is revolting? Who else, in the whole wide world, takes ten years to build a frigate, for example?

The M.O.D. is scheduled to hold a 'defence space conference' to ensure we are safe from 'cyber and space attacks'.

It is undiluted bullshit to paper-over our military inadequacies that exist this very day. The cost of said, useless, conference; accommodation, travel, expenses and so on 'ad nauseam', plus the paper generated, would eradicate the nation's shortage of toilet of bum wipes at a stroke, for ten years to come.

If you watched the recent TV documentary on a type 45 you will have observed the ship's helicopter crew take their laptops to the ops room.

Real time intelligence, your key to staying alive, is non-existent on those billion pound vessels, not fitted to reduce build cost; later promise to fit has been shelved.

Same TV show Captain revealed the ship is defenceless against submarines because the machinery is not 'raft mounted' as on all modern men o' war; the R.N. was doing that 25 years ago.

Noise of these 'Darings' is so loud any sub's passive asdic would pick it up from mega miles distant.

It is far from funny to say the crew, fo'csle to wardroom, will be bathing in 20 minutes when torpedoes arrive.

Will cease, my postie is due - ex. 4.B. HMS Rosthey - great fellow.

Tatty bye the noo,



It's the early 60s when one of Her Majesty's sleek black messengers of death enters HM Dockyard, Pompey for dry docking. 'Deeps' the Tanky, an able assistant to the Coxswain and oppo of the Leading Chef is instructed to run an errand to Victory Barracks (as it was called back then) by the Jimmy.

Resplendent in his battery acid honed No.8 trousers, salt encrusted steaming boots, off-grey submarine roll neck sweater and nicely yellowed cap with bow strategically placed over his left eye, our hero enters the Barracks. He strolls across the parade ground contemplating lighting up a DF when the strangulated cry of "That ugly creature there" rents the peace.

A Chief Gunnery Instructor, testicles tightly bound with black masking tape to obtain that required pitch, stands quivering on his mirror-like boots with inch thick soles and 200 polished hobnails. Deeps thinks, 'not me, I'm only a visitor' and ambles on.

The Chief of the Parade, who, as we all know, never runs anywhere, walks at great speed, pace stick clenched firmly under his arm. When he gets in front of our hero he places the tip of his pace stick on Deeps' chest to prevent any escape and eyes him up and down.

Deeps, having suffered the wrath of various submarine Chief Stokers, is totally unfazed by this apparition and awaits the next move.

The Chief of the parade, said in a loud bull horn voice: "There is a bit of shit on the end of my stick."

Deeps, looking down at the end of the stick, replied: "It's not at my end, Chief!"

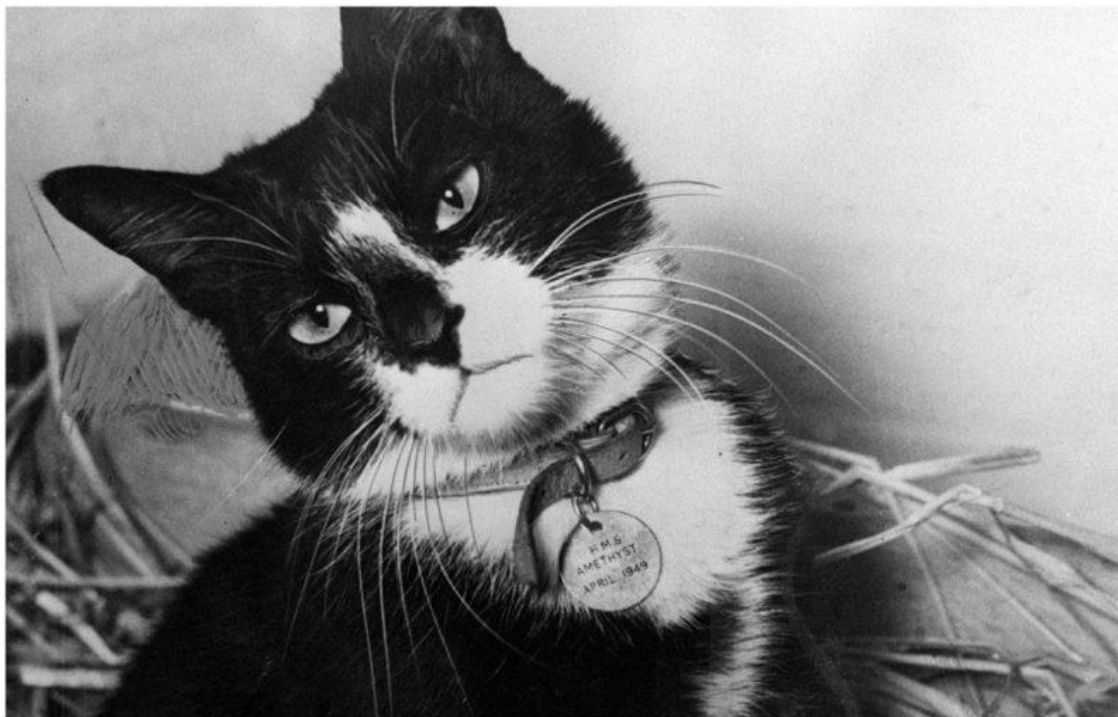


CHINA LAUNCHES SHIP IN RECORD TIME



SIMON, THE CAT CRUSADER

In the late 1940s, the *Amethyst* was stationed in China; in March of 1948, a 17-year-old crewman named George Hickenbottom found a malnourished cat somewhere on the docks of Hong Kong. He named the cat Simon and smuggled him onto the frigate. Although some of the crew were initially sceptical of Simon's presence on the vessel, the one-year-old cat soon proved its worth as a capable pest exterminator on the lower decks.



In October 1948, the commander of the *Amethyst*, Ian Griffiths, was replaced by a new commander, Lieutenant-Commander Bernard Skinner. By that time, Simon had already acquired a reputation as the ship's furry mascot; the new commander liked Simon so much that he granted him a few additional privileges, such as unrestricted access to most areas of the ship and the permission to sleep in the commander's cap. Over the next six months, the cat became a lovable and irreplaceable companion to the sailors, and even occasionally treated them to a grim gift in the form of a dead rat on their

pillow.



Unfortunately, Simon's carefree life aboard the *Amethyst* didn't last very long. In April 1949, things turned ugly for both the crew and their feline friend. The vessel was tasked with travelling up the Yangtze River to the port of Nanjing to replace the duty ship there. Halfway up the river, the *Amethyst* unexpectedly found herself under artillery fire by



the Chinese People's Liberation Army. One of the first rounds that hit the ship destroyed the captain's cabin, killed Lieutenant-Commander Skinner, and gravely injured the unwitting Simon.

The ship was quickly surrounded by Chinese troops; it became evident that an escape attempt was impossible. For the next four months, the crew were stuck in unfamiliar waters, unable to negotiate a safe passage back to the open sea, and had to treat their wounded with limited medical supplies.

Still, the medical officer managed to extract the four pieces of shrapnel from Simon's back, and the cat was soon roaming the ship with the same vigour. In a time of uncertainty and grave danger, he boosted the crew's morale and prevented them from losing hope.

Simon the cat received the Dickin Medal, for catching rats and protecting food supplies during the time the ship was trapped by the Chinese.

On the night of July 30th, the *Amethyst* finally managed to escape with the help of bad weather and limited visibility. On the way back to the United Kingdom, the ship stopped at many ports and the news of the cat who brought hope and tranquillity to the sailors spread across the world.

Upon return to Plymouth in November, the cat was presented with the *Amethyst* campaign medal, a Blue Cross medal for animal bravery and heroism, and the Dickin Medal, the animal version of the Victoria Cross, the highest award of the British honour system. To this day, Simon remains the only cat to have been awarded this particular medal.

Like all animals entering the United Kingdom at the time, Simon had to spend some time in quarantine. Unfortunately, during his second week of quarantine, he developed a severe infection which was a result of the wounds he sustained during the Yangtze Incident.



He died several days later, at the age of two. Nearly a thousand people, including the entire crew of *HMS Amethyst*, attended his funeral. The inscription on his gravestone at the PDSA Ilford, Essex Animal Cemetery states, among other things, the following: "Throughout the Yangtze Incident his behaviour was of the highest order."





FLOWER CLASS CORVETTES

by Andy Brierley

Pertinent to my comments in last month's magazine I offer some pictures to illustrate the focsle break being moved aft for accommodation reasons.

Percentage gain for crew comfort looks massive.

Before

Hulls exactly the same

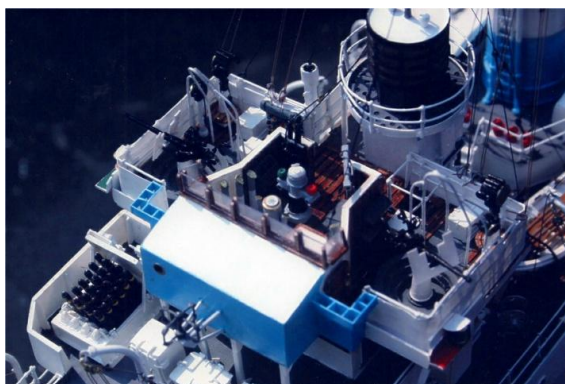
After



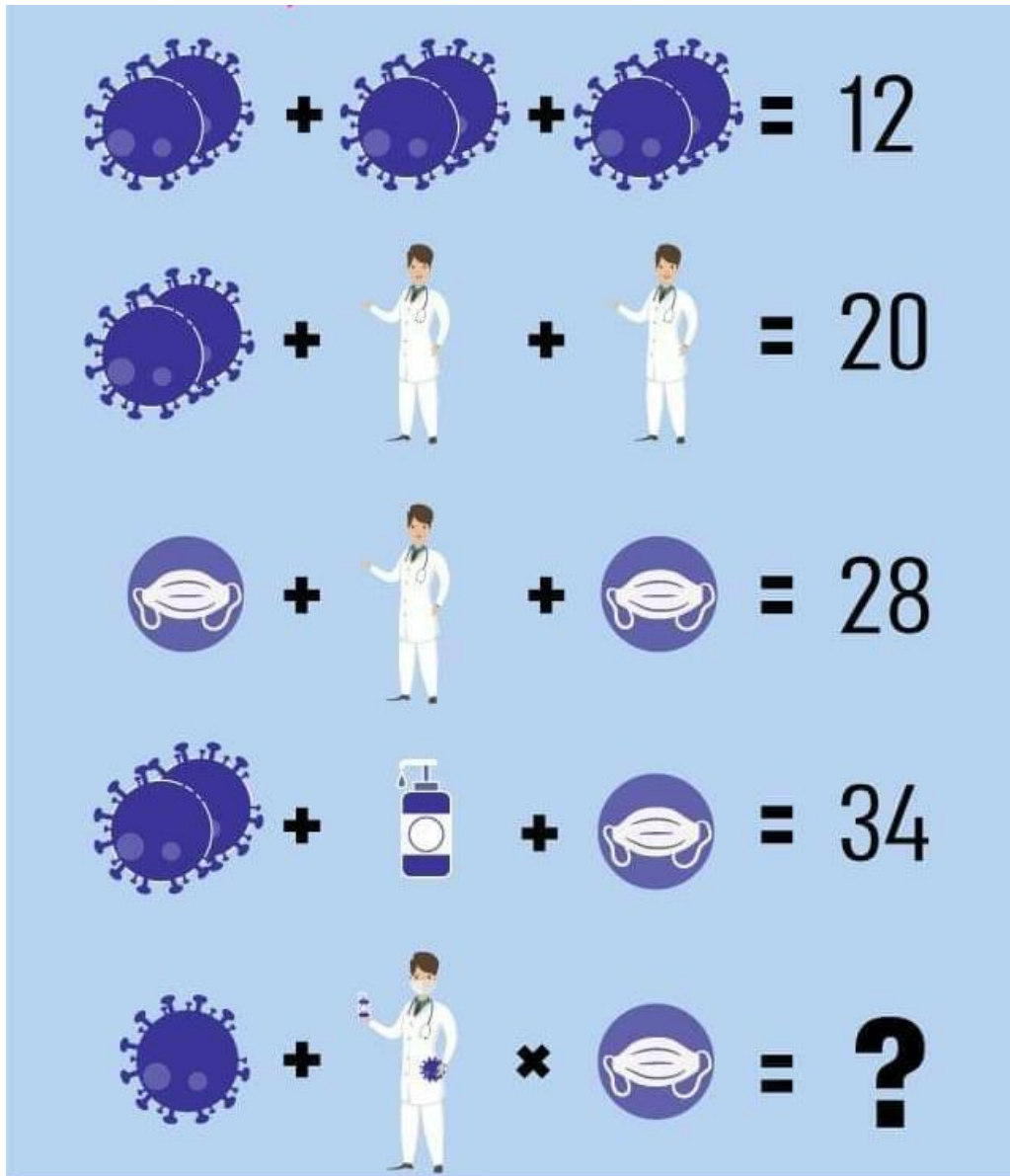
The before picture also shows the "forefoot" quick cutback. Design reason for that must be its origin in initial usage. Placed right on the bullring would have been a harpoon gun. No gun tub, no 4" gun mount, no stock of ammunition on focsle, which radically would change the pitching motion.



Location of Asdic Shack with RDF Loop on its front is seen, to perfection, in two photographs supplied by Brian Turner of his lovely Flower Class model. A later edition to the "Hedgehog" mounting can be seen. The Hedgehog mounting with bombs fitted. Really splendid work Mr. T, should Margaret wish to de-clutter I am prepared to take axe to our Steinway and make space available.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



Answer Click [HERE](#) or go to page 18



NOZZERS GO WEST

Part 11

The Newport News stood head and shoulders over them. She was almost twice as heavy for a start at 17,225 tons as opposed to Superb's 8,885 tons and her length at 717 feet exceeded theirs of 538 by an extra 179 feet.

They were given tours of the ship, sometimes whether they wanted a tour or not. People would appear at odd moments and from odd places with a cheery: 'Let me show you round our ship'. Those tours would inevitably include three triple eight-inch turrets and engine room departments and up on the bridge. They always remembered to thank the tour guide even if they'd had the same tour conducted by someone else on a previous visit. Just the same, they loved every minute of it.

They also loved the base ashore; particularly the PX store. It was early November but that store was decked out for Christmas. It was the biggest store Ginger had ever been in. It was like being in Santa's grotto. The staff working there were the friendliest store personnel he had ever encountered. Again, nothing was too much trouble.

Ginger was not too familiar with Americans. There had been a lot in England during the war and, what little he'd learned about them, was that they appeared very friendly. Those aboard the ship and those in the base fitted that image and, if anything, in their own country seemed even friendlier. Although, strictly speaking, they were not in their own country but it was close enough and they were all friendly enough. If this was what America was like he wanted more.

Having got used to anchoring for the day at around 1730 it seemed a bit strange, one day, when they returned to harbour and anchored at dinner time. Nothing had been said, either by word or daily orders, but everything became clear later when the Royal Marines headed ashore to perform Beat Retreat and Ceremonial Sunset. That spectacular in the naval base attracted more than 2,000 spectators on that Friday evening.

Splendid as it was, although Ginger didn't get to watch the show, he realised it also signaled that their time was drawing to a close and sure enough the following Tuesday, Newport News left harbour at 0615, witnessed mostly by the early rising boys and a few morning watchmen. It was like saying goodbye to an old friend and later that same afternoon, Superb weighed anchor and departed on passage to Port-au-Prince, Haiti, which was just across the way and only took until early next morning to get there.

It was pouring with rain when they arrived but the boys still had to perform their early morning quarterdeck ritual. Apparently they had just missed the tail end of a hurricane and, despite the devastation ashore and the pouring rain, they were ordered to dress the ship overall. Although

Ginger only had the quarterdeck to contend with, it was a far from easy job putting flags, bunting and awnings up in pouring rain and strong winds.

The word was out they'd come to pick up the president of Liberia and give him a ride to Jamaica, their next port of call. They were told that it would be only a short stay in Haiti but with the weather and reasons unbeknown to any but the privileged few, that short stay, hampered by dressing overall for reasons that were never made clear, it was well into the evening before they disengaged from the jetty and headed for Jamaica.

Having lost the best part of the day in Port-au-Prince time became of the essence and they raced along at almost full speed through very rough seas to get back on track and catch up on lost time. That lost time was made up during the night and Superb slid alongside the Kingston jetty in Jamaica right on cue and just before 0900 the next morning. The Kingston jetty stuck out into the harbour at right angles, on their port side on the way in and they berthed port side to with bows almost touching in the road.

Boys were still on that 1800 leave curfew so they made a point of getting a decent amount of time ashore by getting off the ship at the earliest opportunity. By good fortune they had arrived on pay day. Ginger thanked his lucky stars that he had money for a good run ashore this time and that he hadn't blown it like he had a couple of times in the past. They were allowed ashore straight after dinner and they made sure they got every second of it.

Off the jetty and to the left was the main shopping area of Kingston, just down the hill a little way. The boys did a bit of exploring down there and quickly decided it wasn't for them, nice and colourful though the shops looked. They were receiving extra money by way of an overseas allowance to top up their pay and although that extra made a substantial difference, they were still boys and boys pay could only stretch so far, plus after the American base, where the drinking age was twenty-one, their priority was to search out a few beers.

There was a little bar, not much more than a shack, up the hill and directly ahead of the jetty and although it was a bit too close to the prying eyes from the ship for comfort, they agreed to give it a try. There were several steps leading up to the door that was facing the road and they trooped in. Then the heavens opened - and about fifteen minutes later that hill was a raging torrent with those steps surrounded by two feet of water. They had witnessed their first tropical storm at close hand but, more to the point, they were trapped. With no way out and no telling how long it would be before the water level subsided, they had no choice but to order more beers and settle back to wait it out. After all, nobody would come looking for them unless they could swim uphill and against the tide.



BACK IN 1956 Part 5

A RECORD BREAKING SAIL

There are always people who like "messaging about in boats" and those who like to be out on their own. *Superb's* East African Cruise appeared to give ample scope to both types.

From the island of Zanzibar to Dar-es-Salaam, in Tanganyika, is 45 miles, as the albatross glides, but a boat would have to face adverse current averaging 3 knots and South West monsoon, blowing in its face.



The previous year a whaler from *H.M.S. Gambia* had attempted the venture, but after 36 hours it had to be towed the remaining five miles to Dar-es-Salaam. The all-comers record, set up by a local yacht, was 25 hours in the SW monsoon.

The crew was gathered- Lieutenants Bethell and Burley, Midshipman Lewis, Able Seaman Nicholls and Signalman Hadley - and preparations were made with great care. First the boats' bows were canvassed in from the stern to the keel box to keep food and sleepers dry, then Photostat copies of charts were made, camp beds,

blankets and mountains of food were stowed aboard. The 'Record or Bust' was our motto and we realised how important planning beforehand could be.

We intended to follow the dhow route inside the small rocks and islands even at night, to escape the full current, then to make one bold throw right across the Zanzibar Channel in one rack to Dar-es-Salaam.

At 14.00 we set sail to the cries of 'See you at the Pole' and 'Look out for slave traders' etc., but a fair breeze and a fine day kept our spirits high. The first blow soon fell however, as two bad leaks were discovered and, in spite of excellent caulking by Nicholls, continuous bailing became necessary. However, we refused to turn back and accepted the extra work.

The evening drew on and we ate an early supper. The lanterns and torches were too precious for casual lighting, so we had to eat before dark. In our rush to get away we discovered that we'd forgotten to bring any cups and so we were forced (?) to drink beer from the cans and then open up the cans for our safari-jar tea. We continued tacking between the islands and the shore in 20 minute long legs after dark and maintained the average speed required to complete a 24-hour journey and break the record!



At 21.00 we saw a fine search light display for the *Superb*, now well over the horizon to the N. E. And shortly after the moon rose, so we settled down to watches for the night. Two members were on watch in two hour tricks-one steering and one bailing. In the light wind conditions prevailing, two could handle the boat easily. A camp bed was erected beneath the thwarts either side of the keel box and was thus protected by our canvas 'deck', a third being placed in the stern sheets. This provided a very satisfactory arrangement, and we managed to get some sleep in spite of the cool of the tropic night.

By now it was 23.00 and a stiff breeze was blowing, causing spray to come inboard when, passing through a gap between two islands, a dhow shot out from the lee of the one to windward and commenced bearing down upon us! Our suspicions thoroughly aroused, we decided to dodge the Arabs, and, waiting until the dhow was very close and few points off the wind, we close hauled suddenly and gained the weather side. The Arabs made one attempt to follow, but could not sail so close to the wind as we and gave up! Sighs of relief from the entire crew as visions of being sold in some far-away slave market had arisen!

Towards the end of middle watch the wind started to die, and our spirits sank with it. We waited and waited for dawn with the boat slowly being carried backward by the current, but when the sun rose it brought very slight zephyrs, just enough to help us breast the current.

At breakfast time a large merchant vessel passed a couple of miles ahead of us. She was out of Dar-es-Salaam, which was over the western horizon, and we were beginning to fear it might remain there, but a knife in the mast soon brought us a sailor's wind, and in half an hour we were bowling along. At eight o'clock our hopes were high, we turned to the west. With every sail set and whole crew on the weather gunwale we rapidly caught up and passed the schedule by which we hoped to break the record and at midday, the lighthouse at the entrance to Dar-es-Salaam was raised right ahead.

We attempted the narrow southern entrance, but were confronted by a line of breakers and had to go round to the main entrance. At 14.15 we passed the harbour mouth with our ensign lashed to the mizzen and the boat and crew squared off. We had broken the record by three quarters of an hour!

In tremendous high spirits we moved up the river on the flood tide and proceeded to the local Yacht Club, where the club's secretary came down to meet us and gave the boat a berth for the night. He also very kindly mustered some embers from the club to put us all up-a very much more comfortable night than the previous one!

Superb entered the harbour at 07.00 next morning and we pulled off to her, everyone agreeing that our adventure had been great fun and well worth the hard work and planning.



REUNION REMINDER

THIS YEAR'S REUNION WILL BE HELD OVER THE WEEKEND OF FRIDAY 2nd AND SUNDAY 4th OCTOBER

Robin will be sending out the Booking Forms later in the year but you can download one here if you would like to book early

To download and print a booking form now click on the badge



DUE TO THE CURRENT HEALTH SITUATION THIS ADVERT IS INCLUDED AS A REMINDER ONLY - ROBIN WILL LET US KNOW WHAT THE CHANCES ARE IN DUE COURSE

The main event i.e. The Dinner is held on the Saturday but it's also important to attend the AGM (which is informal & of short duration!) on the Friday evening if you can

The Hotel goes out of its way to make us comfortable - the cost of the 2 nights includes Dinner, Bed & Breakfast on the Friday and Saturday & Breakfast on Sunday morning. There's plenty of good humour and loads of raffle prizes. Why not give it a whirl?

IF YOU CANNOT MAKE THE WHOLE WEEKEND AND LIVE LOCALLY - COME FOR THE SATURDAY DINNER ONLY



PHOTO ALBUM



*HMS Superb
13 September, 1951
Philadelphia*

*HMS Superb
New York
23 September, 1951*



*HMS Superb
New York
22nd September, 1951*

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.

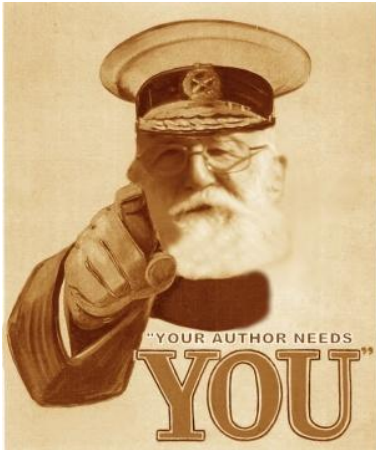
To go there please click [HERE](#)



Crossed the Bar (Recently Notified)



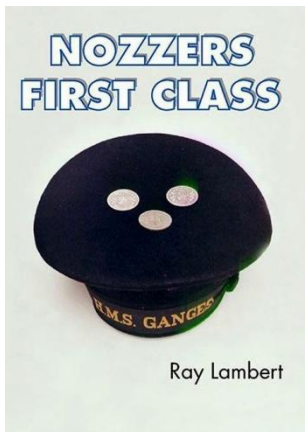
Journalist & Best Selling Author



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



Ray Lambert

NOZZERS GO WEST



Ray Lambert



Something for the Youngsters

Phil Grimson

DOGBREATH the Dragon



Shipmate Phil Grimson offers his latest book for sale targeted at children from 8 years upward. It is a magical tale of chivalry which should enchant most youngsters and lead them into a make-believe world where

there's fierce and fiery combat when a princess is captured by a dragon.

There are bold knights charging to her rescue one of who wins her hand in marriage.

KINDLE DOWNLOAD £5.59

PRINTED VERSION £13.99 + P&P*

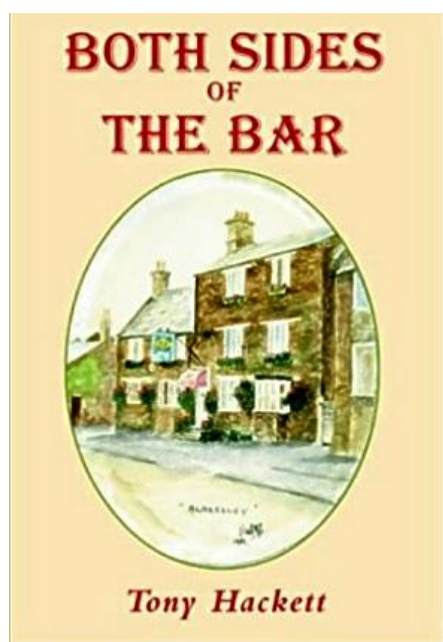
Phil can be contacted by email by clicking on this [LINK](#)

*** IF YOU CONTACT PHIL DIRECTLY YOU CAN BUY THE PAPERBACK BOOK FOR ONLY £12.50 + P&P AND PHIL WILL DONATE £1 TO THE HMS SUPERB (CRUISER) ASSOCIATION FUNDS**



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

Puzzle Answer

420

Double virus = 4, Doctor = 8; Mask = 10 and Spray can = 20

1 virus = 2 1 Doctor = 8 i Mask = 10 1 Can of Spray = 20

Therefore the last line is 1 mask (2) plus (2+8+10+20) equalling 42 multiplied by 10

To return to Puzzle CLICK [HERE](#) or go to Page 9

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

A request from Guy Robinson as follows:- My Dad, Christopher Robinson, turns 90 later this month (April) and 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?

From previous issues

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.

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

ARCHIVED CONTENT

Past Copies of the Magazine can be accessed on-line by clicking on the appropriate month

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

[Click here to contact Brian Saunders](#) by email

