

H.M.S. SUPERB (CRUISER) ASSOCIATION

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CHAIRMAN OF THE ASSOCIATION, ROBIN SMITH

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ANDY BRIERLEY'S BLOG

Hello Shipmates,

Last month's moan about poor military statuary being produced of late, came back to kick me up the backside on seeing this month's Navy news. About three years ago, on the same theme, I recall putting an artist's impression in the news letter of proposed piece, to go in the centre of the dock, at what used to be *H.M.S. Vernon*, depicting clearance divers at work in Europe's harbours at the end-ish of WW2. Buster Crabb and his like.



I did not hear a peep in the intervening years, then - lol! - The enclosed picture appears of a maquette, in prep for the finished article. Contributions have swelled enough for building to commence - a unique piece, unlike anything, anywhere else.

A 'Must View' should you visit Pompey.

Another piece, not far away, is a 'Field gunner with Wheel on Shoulder'. Such stuff is a joy to my watery eye, out of the ordinary and 'Pure British'.

Over the years several faces have become very familiar amongst the few shots inside 'infantry landing craft' on approach to the beach on D Day. I always wonder - did that chap survive? Who was he? Where was he from etc.?

About three years ago this letter, of high interest to me, appeared in the Mail. I never fail to say 'Rest in peace Billy Tibbs'. The expression on his face clearly shows tension, waiting for the ramp to drop. (Please see cutting at the end of this article)

I have a nephew in the Australian navy, a midshipman specialising in navigation, so that art is of interest, and another one touched on in a past news letter. At 1.30 a.m. a U.S. destroyer, *Fitzgerald*, collided with a container ship, damage severe, seven crewmen



died. Nine weeks later **U.S.S. John McCain** collided with a tanker, ten crewmen died. Later in the year **U.S.S. Lake Chaplain** collided with a fishing vessel, damage and casualties unknown. The **U.S.S. Antietam** ran aground off Japan dumping 1100 gallons of hydraulic oil into Tokyo Bay. Alarm bells jangled at the Pentagon. An operational pause was ordered in the entire U.S. fleet, of 24 hours, allowing crews to review 'navigation and rule of road' operations aboard 277 vessels, plus a week long 'bow to stern' safety review of fundamentals. The 'three star' admiral in command of 7th fleet (Pacific) was sacked; Captain of the **Fitzgerald** likewise, plus his No.1 and navigator. Other Captains' fates must be similar.

Prior to 2003 U.S. N. officers spent the first six months solid on 'how to pilot a vessel', basic seamanship. Now reliance has quietly devolved onto 'technology'; each new officer is given a box set of 21 C.D.s for computer based instruction. Young middies (Ensigns U.S.) have no tutor to question, are expected to 'master seamanship', by laptop, between all his other duties.

Here is a 'true tale' of a young lieutenant U.S.N., who learned of his sloppy seamanship the hard way when on R.N. ship exchange for the usual two years. I quote him "Frankly, I was embarrassed at my lack of maritime knowledge and skills. My first 90 minute long, written, 'maritime rules of the road' exam was a disgrace. I was used to the U.S.N. 50 questions multiple answer choice exam. The 'Royal Navy' sent me for remedial training, which was gratefully absorbed and of 'infinite value!'"

R.N. officer navigation and seamanship schooling is rigorous, they must qualify for the International Maritime Organisation's 'Standard of Training Certificate and Watch Keeping'. The robust training being a far cry from 21 C.D.'s that a whole generation of, now advancing, U.S. Navy officers experienced.

Does it highlight 'Grey matter is more important than 'silicon'? People before technology, so to speak, to avoid such death toll, for want of proper training. One hopes that generations of officers are burning the midnight oil.

The first woman to hold the post of Secretary of State for Defence, Ms. Mordaunt, was quick to wear, on her lapel, 'Submarine Dolphins'. Thought only qualified nuke crews had that privilege and right. Have no problem with gender, and would be considered a chauvinist pig if I voiced the thought; she is 'mature crumpet'.

First speech revealed: "We have done a great deal to wipe out inefficiencies and Britain already has an incredible ship building heritage". I quote her further: "The aircraft carrier alliance shows Britain has what it takes to produce first class, fifth generation ships!" Ms. M's experience being nil, one can only assume her civil servants wrote such equestrian by-product.



To allay fears I am just a biased grumpy old fart.

Here is a performance recap.

U.K. 1998 Defence Review: pledge to deliver 32 destroyers and frigates + 2 assault ships.

Delivered: 2 assault ships, 6 destroyers and frigates (the infamous D's that don't work in warm waters)

U.K. 2010 Defence Review: pledge to deliver 2 aircraft carriers + 19 destroyers and frigates, 6 of which were to be type 45's + 13 type 26's'.

Delivered: 2 carriers. Type 26's reduced to 8, and then only 3 ordered.

U.K. 2015 Defence Review: pledge to deliver 8 type 26's, 5 type 31's, 2 O.P.V's, 4 Ballistic missile submarines.

Delivered: would you wager a lead washer on their completion?

Bear in mind the struggle to crew them, fill all fuel tanks or send to sea with a 'war load' in their magazines.


Two fleet auxiliaries built in Korea are heavily criticised by our politicians because not U.K. built - by whom one may ask? At what cost? In what time frame? **Rare as hen's teeth they were delivered in a tight time on budget, after sailing 13,000 miles from the builder to arrive fault free.**

Unlike our brand new carrier No. 1 who had prop failure on first outing with attendant flooding. The second recent outing brought it back to dock again with flooding that must have been no small ingress as bulkheads and deckhead are reported 'pressure deformed'. Poor workmanship, by the way, was cited for the prop failure.

It is reported she will go back to sea in the last quarter to embark a 'Strike Squadron' - that surprised you! - But wait - it will be sent to the U.S. coast to pick up those of the United States Marines. R.N. equipment to be supplied; plastic hats and life belts, cocaine may be optional.

To see the highly experienced Captain dismissed his ship is a national embarrassment round the world's navies. Then it was compounded by said Captain letting the Joint Chiefs know they could shove his naval career up their joint hawse pipe. I suspect there was not enough room for another 'fly on the wall' at M.O.D. when that reaction entered the fray. Be certain you'll not see his replacement nipping up to the Co-Op in Dunfermline in the company car.

Have been a life-long member of the R.N.L.I.; never failed to send a couple of quid, even when things were tight. Southern TV shows, on a regular basis, local Dover boat on patrol in mid channel picking up illegals. It makes me upset that another National Charity is being misused to

 aid Border Guard task, a government responsibility, to pick up boatloads of 'young men' with kids. Their entry has its own reception committee, a mini coach to Croydon for

medicals, meals laid-on, accommodation, cash advance etc...

R.N.L.I. can start charging each illegal they pick up (not rescue) to fill the minor shortfall of my contribution. That sounds churlish really, but it makes me angry, being suckered, once again.

Guess I'll get over it.

Daily Mail

Billy, the face of D-Day

This being the 70th anniversary of the D-Day landings my Mum, now aged 93, has said that as there are so few people left who remember it first hand, this may be the last time it's described in great detail. Shortly after the landings, local cinemas across Britain showed clips on Pathé News, using a particular shot of a young soldier on a landing craft, at Sword Beach.

Over the years this clip has continued to be used and is, perhaps, the most used clip of the event. It features every day in the BBC's coverage of the run-up to the anniversary.

Mum has always wanted people to know the name of this young soldier (pictured). He is her brother, Private 5784588 1st Bn. the Royal Norfolk's, Arthur William (Billy) Tibbs.

The film and the still from it show commandos of No 4 Commando, 1st Special Service Brigade, aboard an LCI's landing craft on their approach to Queen Red beach, Sword Area on June 6th, 1944.

Billy survived that day but was killed by a sniper on August 4th in the Battle for Caen, nine days after his 21st birthday. He is buried in St Charles de Percy War Cemetery.

Mum told me that despite the strict control of information from the region the boys were allowed to send notes home confirming that they were OK. Messages from Billy came to an abrupt end, signalling the sad truth, and an injured colleague from the next village broke the news to the family about two weeks later.

James Gower, Huddenhams, Cambs



Tatty bye the noo



NAVY MATTERS

SS OHIO ENTERS PORT

8:00am 15th August 1942

Grand Harbour, Malta

Ohio was now dead in the water and slowly sinking 45 miles from Malta. Dozens more enemy planes were sent to destroy her. But this time they were within range of the RAF Spitfires and the defence was solid.

At barely 5 knots she was dragged, hauled and pushed by *HMS Bramham* on the port side, *HMS Penn* starboard, *HMS Ledbury* steering and *HMS Rye* towing, They slowly threading their way through the many minefields, both enemy and allied, towards the protection of the Coastal Batteries which were accurately firing on a possible submarine sighting, as well as a group of torpedo boats which decided against attack.

The Malta tugs went out to help and along with the destroyers still linked on either side of the tanker, used their powerful engines to guiding it into the port entrance.

It was 8am, the 15th of August, the feast of Santa Marija, when *SS Ohio* entered Malta's Grand Harbour. Barely afloat, with gaping, jagged holes and fire scarred hull, the hulk of a *Stuka* could be clearly seen hanging off the aft gun barbette.

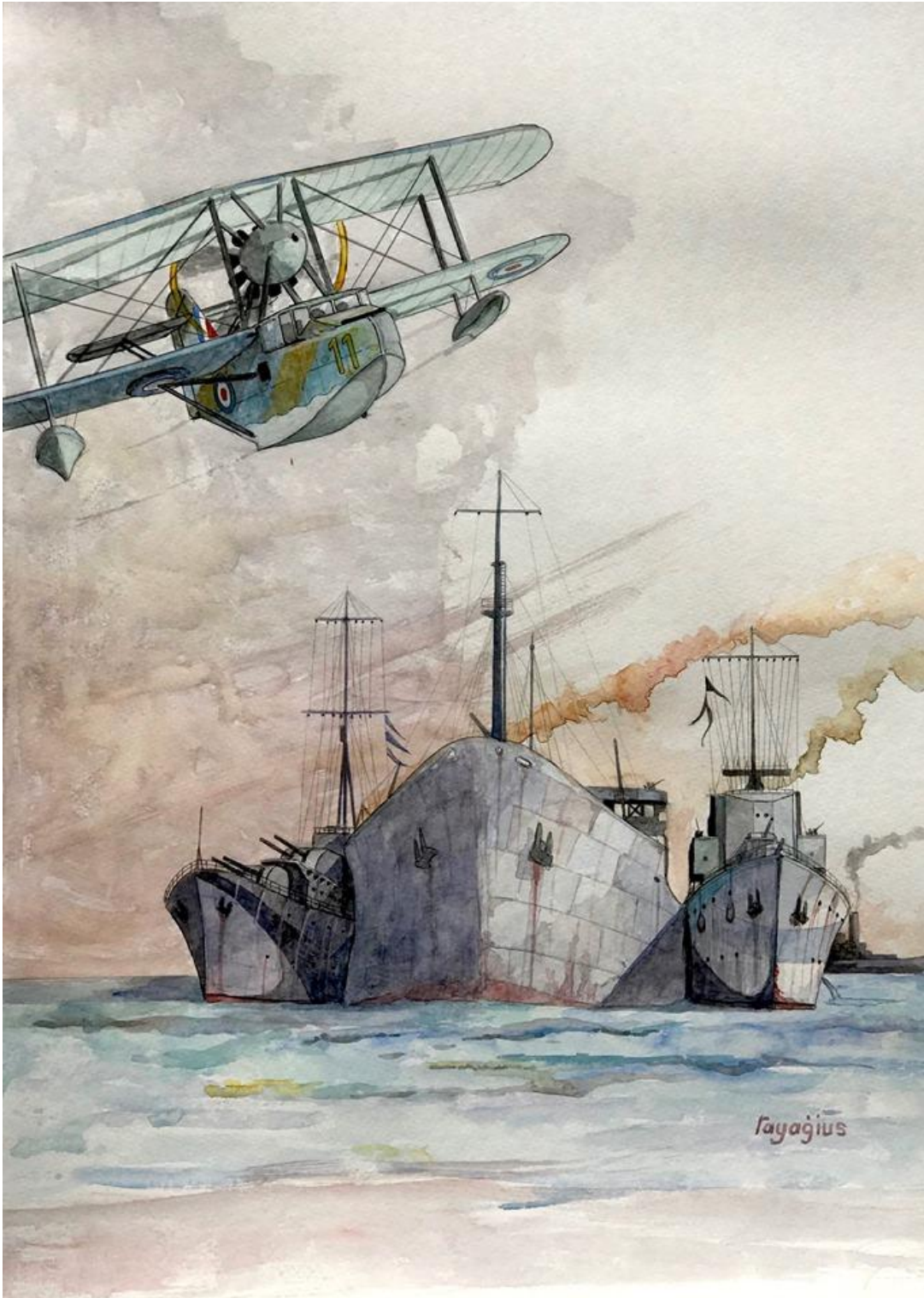
In the wreck strewn harbour, on upper and lower Barrakka, St Angelo Fort, St. Michael garden and wherever there was a space to fit, great crowds of Maltese men, women and children waved and cheered as brass bands competed to give their own versions of Rule Britannia.

Captain Mason stood on the battered bridge of the *Ohio* taking the salute from St. Angelo. Pride tempered by the fear that hopes would be dashed at the last moment with the tanker sinking in the deep mid-channel. He finally allowed his emotions to show as the ship finally berthed at Parlatorio wharf.

Pipes were now hauled aboard, and emergency salvage pumps began to discharge the kerosene. At the same time, a fleet auxiliary, *RFA Boxol*, began to pump the 10,000 tons of fuel oil into her own tanks. As the oil flowed out, *Ohio* sank lower and lower in the water. The last drops of oil left her as her keel settled on the harbour bottom.



Her captain, the amazing Dudley Mason, was awarded the George Cross. He and the island now shared the same decoration. He on his chest and Malta on her flag.



REUNION REMINDER

THIS YEAR'S REUNION WILL BE HELD OVER THE WEEKEND OF FRIDAY 4TH AND SUNDAY 6TH 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



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



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Brian, re Cdr Jack Ivester-Lloyd in last month's (July) newsletter, I am the proud possessor of 4 large water colours of hunting with Otter Hounds painted by the same Jack I-L. He also wrote numerous books about hunting and the country side in general. Never knew he was in the RN. Think he lived round Olney way in Northants., **Tony Hackett**



I was a very happy person. My wonderful girlfriend and I had been dating for over a year, and so we decided to get married. There was only one little thing bothering me it was her beautiful younger sister.

My prospective sister-in-law was twenty-two, wore very tight miniskirts, and generally went bra-less. She would regularly bend down when she was near me, and I always got to see more than I should. It had to be deliberate. She never did it when she was near anyone else.

One day "little" sister called and asked me to come over to check the wedding invitations. She was alone when I arrived, and she whispered to me that she had feelings and desires for me that she couldn't overcome.

She told me that she wanted to make love to me just once before I got married and committed my life to her sister. Well, I was in total shock, and couldn't say a word. She said, "I'm going upstairs to my bedroom, and if you want one last wild fling, just come up and get me."

I was stunned and frozen in shock as I watched her go up the stairs. I stood there for a moment, then turned and made a beeline straight to the front door. I opened the door, and headed straight towards my car.

Lo and behold, my entire future family was standing outside, all clapping!

With tears in his eyes, my prospective father-in-law hugged me and said, "We are very happy that you have passed our little test.....we couldn't ask for better man for our daughter. Welcome to our family!!!"

And the moral of this story?

ALWAYS keep your condoms in your car.....

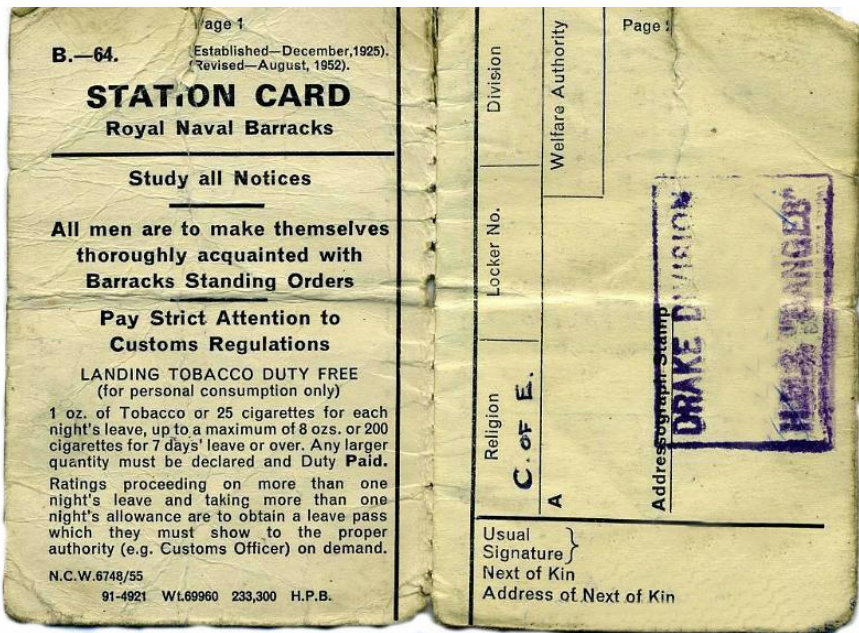


NOZZERS GO WEST

Part 2

Remembering the delights of the Joining Routine

The Joining Routine took two days to complete. They were each given a white card which was divided into about a dozen squares; each square had the name of a different department printed on it. Everyone had to fill in that card with the appropriate stamps before the Joining Routine was accomplished. The idea of the stamps was to ensure each of them had been



completely processed. It made sense. Particularly their Station Card - that was an identity card to cover them for their stay however long that might be. They wouldn't be going anywhere without a Station Card.

Then there was the Meal Ticket Department. Without a meal ticket, which was inspected and clipped at the dining hall door before they were allowed to enter, they wouldn't eat. Toward the end

of their second day they were directed to the Bedding Store where they were issued with blankets, pillow and bedspread. The first night, as they were not "officially" residents, they had to sleep in their hammocks in Duncan Block. That was no easy task because the hammock bars, that were probably left over from the war years a decade or so earlier, were very high up and required the use of a chair to be able to reach them but at least they had somewhere to sleep and something to eat; the rest of the Joining Routine could wait.

Some stamps were easier to get than others. Some were merely a formality and probably designed to make sure they were all inducted, introduced and integrated and that no one was overlooked; especially by the Pay Office !

However, one Department stood out above all others on the Joining card; the Kit Muster Room. The very name shot fear into their hearts. They couldn't help but look at it; the name in the white square and yet to be stamped screamed out at them. They had endured kit musters

continually at *Ganges* and hated every second of them. Now they were about to be subjected to one yet again.

They hadn't been subjected to that ignominy aboard the *Implacable*. Keeping kit lean and in good condition had been drummed into them throughout their *Ganges* year and they were all perfectly competent to keep themselves and their kit in good condition. Ginger figured that that humiliation should be well behind them now they had joined the Fleet and been to sea.

A cloud of depression enveloped them as each queried whether to get it over with right away or leave it until the very last. Either way there was no escape or any hope of dodging that rotten kit muster nightmare; one way or another that square on their Joining Card had to be stamped.

There was only room for a couple of people at a time in the Kit Muster Room and that meant they couldn't all go through at once and as there was no particular order for acquiring the stamps, most of them drifted off to get other squares stamped.

Ginger was the first to take the plunge, he was nearest the door and their kitbags were still laying where they had been deposited, so he decided that he might as well go for it. After all it had to be encountered sooner or later. He figured that at least his ordeal would be over with. As he stepped in the door, not knowing what to expect, he was met by a Petty Officer carrying a clipboard and - surprise, surprise - the ordeal turned out to be a piece of cake.

All he wanted to see was that everything he called out was dredged from the depths of the kitbag and marked off on his clipboard. Any missing items were noted and had to be bought from the stores and produced at a later date he was told. Having only been out of *Ganges* a matter of months, although it seemed a lot longer, there were no missing items and everyone's kit was complete and in tip-top condition and they all sailed through. All their gloom and despondency had been for nothing.

Then, toward the end of the afternoon of the second day they became Ship's Company with their Joining Routines completed and they began the process of settling into their new home and wondering how long they would be expected to stay.

This time there was no Chief to welcome or guide them but they were old hands now and perfectly capable of looking after themselves.

They were ready for the world whichever part of it they might find themselves in next.

To be continued



HMS GANGES - A POINT OF VIEW

The following article, although seen by several members who have Facebook accounts, may interest members who don't follow the internet.

Posted on Facebook in February, 2019

by irishroverpei

I arrived at *Ganges* in the late afternoon on March 15th 1955, along with roughly a hundred other fifteen year old boys. It would not be an exaggeration to say not one of us had the slightest idea of what lay in store for the next year. Charles Dickens might have penned it "the best of times and the worst of times".



Discipline was severe, routine constant and fear of punishment loomed at every turn. Some boys were homesick, some just tried to stay out of trouble, one or two ran away. Probably running away was the worse decision; they were always caught and returned to the camp. They faced what was without doubt the most severe punishment - cuts.

This punishment was something I never witnessed and can only describe from what other boys told me. The culprit was brought before the Commander's table; the

punishment which was awarded was six or twelve cuts. The boy was made lower his trousers, but kept his underpants on; he was made to bend over a chair. In attendance was a senior officer, medical officer and the master at arms. The master at arms held a long thin bamboo cane, the instrument of the punishment.

He would lay on the number of cuts prescribed, each cut raised a welt on the boys buttocks. I'm quite sure few if any boys receiving cuts ever thought to run away again. Through the year the training was intense, probably a good thing, it gave us little time to regret joining the navy.

Most boys just wanted to complete their year and go to sea. Graduating from *Ganges* held the promise of better times ahead, we would be real sailors, excited at the prospect of visiting far off and exotic lands. However, in the meantime we were still at the mercy of our instructors.

The greatest fear was of messing up; this meant the whole class was punished. One not only suffered the punishment such as doubling up and down the steps of laundry hill with a 303 rifle held high. The rest of the class were not pleased to suffer because of one boy's stupidity and sometimes made a cruel point of letting the culprit know.



There was also a degree of sexual abuse going on at *Ganges*, but we boys were too scared to ever complain or report such incidents. The showers at *Ganges* were just one bare room with several shower heads, no privacy. We were ushered in as a group of naked boys and told to wash thoroughly. Doesn't sound too bad does it? The showers usually took place at the crack of dawn, summer or winter we ran from the barrack towel around our waist to the showers. The water was freezing cold, we never had hot water. The cold water often caused some boys to duck in and out of the water quickly or sometimes not at all.

But this was *Ganges*; we never got away with anything. To get out of the showers we had to stand before our instructor, legs apart and arms raised for inspection. We were ordered to turn around and bend over, if the instructor was satisfied we were clean, we were allowed out. Some boys failed the initial inspection which only lengthened their time in the freezing conditions.

Thus was the nature of *Ganges*' harsh training regime. When I say there was sexual abuse I'm speaking from personal experience. There was a seamanship officer at the boat sheds. He was the officer that tested us when we endeavoured to qualify with a Bosun's pipe. The pipe (whistle) was used aboard ship for passing orders and instructions. However, for most of us boys, qualifying meant we could wear the Bosun's chain with our uniform instead of a lanyard. I heard many boys saying things like, don't bend over in front of the seamanship officer, or always face him don't turn around. While I probably believed the stories, I was still determined to qualify for my chain. I was ordered to report for my test one evening after supper.

We had just finished PT before going to supper, so I was in shorts. After eating I dashed down to the boat sheds to report for my test. He was sitting on a stool and told me to stand in front of him and begin. While I was going through the various calls I felt his hand slipping up the back of my shorts. He was fondling my right cheek as I tried to concentrate on piping. Finally he withdrew his hand and declared I passed the test. I was out of there in an instant, but never said a word to anyone, I was just happy it was over and I had qualified.

There were stories of many similar violations but none ever reported. Who would have believed us, this was 1955 words like paedophile and sexual abuse were unheard of. We had no one to confide in, our instructors would more than likely told us not to tell tales. So as I have said already, we kept our heads down aiming for that final day when we'd be drafted to a ship.

Nevertheless, as bad and as cruel as I have described *Ganges*, I remain proud to call myself a *Ganges* Boy. Indeed, I have never met a shipmate would ever claim otherwise. As Rudyard



Kipping wrote in his famous poem IF - "Then you will be a man my son".

Yes indeed, they were the best of times and the worst of times. *Ganges* will forever be

the legacy of every young boy who passed through those distant gates to emerge as a sailor and a man.

THEN, AMONG MANY OTHER COMMENTS, THERE WERE THE FOLLOWING

From Ray Lambert: - I joined *Ganges* in May 1953. I wrote two books about my year in the place. *NOZZERS* and *NOZZERS FIRST CLASS*. I didn't like the place at the time but still remember it well. The last Captain of *Ganges* (Murray Dunlop) refused to write a foreword for me because he said I portrayed the place in a bad light focusing on the hardships!

From Frederick Rodgers: - that is typical of *Ganges*, only want to hear the good things. Did he really think *Ganges* had no hardship no cruelty and no sexual abuse?

From Biff Griffin: - That about sums it up. It was a walk into the unknown and we were pleased to come out the other side. Never come across, or heard of any sexual harassment. Joined in February, snow everywhere, no toilet doors and toilet paper, *Izal*, one rough and a smooth side. I believe one was for wiping and one was for polishing. Well it worked well on windows.

From William Bell: - I think you could always tell if a man was a *Ganges* boy. The majority of them were top class shipmates and most were top of their game.



Arctic Convoy Runs Brutal German Gauntlet Through Frozen Hell



The story of Convoy PQ 17 still stands as both one of the most tragic and heroic ordeals in military history. Tragic because the convoy lost 24 of the 35 ships that set out from Hvalfjord, Iceland; heroic because after what must have been among the worst 13 days in human history, the remaining ships made it to Archangel, Russia anyway.

In mid-1942, Russia was just clinging to life. Starved of supplies and war material, the Red War machine was on the verge of collapsing under the weight of Hitler's much better supplied Reich. PQ 17 set out to the Russian port of Archangel on June 27 of that year, for what they thought would be (as near as possible) a typical Arctic re-supply. But unbeknownst to them, the Germans knew of the convoy, and had planned a massive trap.

The convoy was attacked by at least nine U-boats, six bombers, and 33 torpedo aircraft - while running in panic from the ever-looming threat of the mighty *Tirpitz*. After receiving information that an attack by the *Tirpitz* was imminent, the group commander ordered the convoy to scatter. The merchant ships became sitting ducks; many got lost and got stuck



in Arctic ice, forced to paint their ships white and hope they wouldn't be found by Luftwaffe bombers. While some of the ships made it back, and the survivors of the convoy made it to surrounding islands, the convoy was an unmitigated disaster. Still, some of the incredible stories of survival that came out of it rank among the most epic in military history.

The Tale of Two British Sailors

Two British sailors attended a church service in Cherbourg. Not speaking a word of French and not wishing to appear out of place they sat behind an important looking man and when he stood up or knelt down, they did the same.

At the end of the service, the priest made what was evidently an announcement, whereupon the man in front rose to his feet, and they did likewise - to a roar of laughter from the congregation.

As the sailors left the church, the priest spoke to them in English, so they asked him the reason for the laughter.

'Oh,' he said smiling, 'I mentioned that next Sunday morning there was to be a service of baptism and would the father of the child please stand up.'



A recent study has found that women who carry a little extra weight live longer than the men who mention it.

RUM AND THE BRITISH ROYAL NAVY

The end of a Royal Navy tradition, as the daily ration of rum was abolished due to safety concerns, on July 31, 1970. LSA Michael Johns pours a final tot at the Royal Naval Dockyard in Chatham, Kent. The crew wore black armbands to mourn the passing of the tradition.

On the deck of *HMS Fife*, docked in Pearl Harbour, soldiers stood wearing black armbands as the sun rose on July 31, 1970. They looked sombre — part formal, part grieving. Following a 21-gun salute, they held their glasses high — their last “tot” — and cried: “The Queen.” They tossed back the drink and threw the glasses into the blue water below. They were not alone.

Anchored near the International Dateline, *HMS Fife* was the last among the many British ships that lowered their oars for a moment to say goodbye to a tradition they had been following for around 300 years. *The Tot* was the daily ration of rum the Royal British Navy had nursed in its long seafaring history.



But the navy hardly figured in the scene when the drink took birth in the dark and sinister sugarcane plantations in the Caribbean some three and half centuries ago. Europe needed sugar in the 17th century. In huge quantities.

And for planters from England, the vast, barren lands of the Caribbean islands looked perfect for growing sugarcane. As they made sugar from molasses, they stumbled across a more interesting by-product, thanks to the extreme heat and fermentation — rumbullian alias rum.

The drink, which first quenched the thirst of workers and planters, eventually crossed the oceans to reach America and Europe. Demand increased — for sugar and rum. The planters needed workers who could be forced to work in such punishing conditions.



People in Africa were enslaved for it. As trade increased and money and merchandise floated in the ocean, traders attracted pirates. The water between the Caribbean and Europe turned red with violence. The traders had only one option — send an SOS to the

British Royal Navy. The navy glided in, lured not only by the big money the traders offered but also by the dark liquid sloshing inside the barrels in their ships.

Till then, the English sailors had tried every drink they could get their hands on. Beer went stale during long voyages. Wine followed. French brandy was good for a while, but it turned anti-national once England fell out with France.

Gin was more Dutch, their arch-rival in the seas. So rum fit into the role of the official drink of the British Royal Navy. It was a long honeymoon. The humid heat of the tropics could only be fought with some stiff drink. Add to that the squalid condition in the quarters below the decks where hundreds of sailors sweated away at the oars. The long tedious voyages needed some reprieve. Rum not only gave them that, but also imparted some sense of taste amid the cold porridge and salted meat that came in daily.



Prince William with a tot of rum

They called the drink Pusser's rum because the ship's purser (pusser is the slang for it) was responsible for issuing the rum. Pusser's became the original rum of the British Navy. But it did not take long for the British Navy to realise that if unchecked, the new habit could spell disaster to their authority on the seas. Meanwhile, the sailors suspected that the drink they were served had been watered down. They invented an ingenious method to prove its spirit. They poured a bit of their ration on gunpowder.

If it smouldered and burned, it was proof. If it exploded, it was overproof, with higher alcohol content.

If nothing happened, the purser might himself be tossed into the sea. The term "proof strength" for alcohol originated from this suspicion of the daily ration of rum. Over the years, naval strength rum has become the stuff of legends. Meanwhile, on board, incidents of drunken acts and violence grew. British Admiral Edward Vernon, who was called "Old Grog", oversaw the ships in the Caribbean for many years in the 18th century. He took steps to thin down the black liquid. Sailors tasted the new avatar and groaned — and called it grog rather than rum after the admiral's nickname. In the 20th century, when ships were carrying sophisticated weapons, sane heads on land decided that they needed steady hands on board. The tot must leave the vessels forever. Decisions were made, acts passed and soon painfully accepted. So in the morning of July 31, 1970, British sailors all over the world stood on the deck to have their last tot. And they tossed the glasses into the sea. But all the waters in the world could not drown Pusser's rum.



When the Royal Navy bid farewell to it, Charles Tobias, an entrepreneur, salvaged it, obtaining the rights to make it. He stuck to the tradition.



The end of a Royal Navy tradition, as the daily ration of rum was abolished due to safety concerns, on July 31, 1970. LSA Michael Johns pours a final tot at the Royal Naval Dockyard in Chatham, Kent. The crew wore black armbands to mourn the passing of the tradition.

Thanks to him, today you could taste many versions of the drink that served seamen for centuries — Pusser's Gunpowder Proof, Pusser's Rum Original Admiralty Blend, etc.

Produced from British Virgin Islands, Trinidad and Guyana, Pusser's is a blend of five stills. It is a veritable experience of Caribbean islands and cultures. The bright golden coloured spirit of the Gunpowder Proof brings the aroma of oak blended with coffee and honey. Take a sip. The tangy orange zest is unmissable and you can also pick up

faint notes of vanilla, light toffee and spicy oak. Ice goes well with Pusser's rum or you can add cola to smoothen its sharp edges.

And if you think back you might feel the sea at the back of the throat.

And to try it once again our Chairman continues the tradition at our annual reunion when a free tot or two of neaters (NOT Grog) is served to each and every member and guest at the evening festivities. If you let Robin know in time you can pre-order a bottle to take home.

In the days of Admiral Nelson
Or it might have been before.
The Navy got its heritage
Its customs and its law.

Now some of these were good things
And some of these were not
But they'll never find how to replace
That little daily Tot.

It isn't served haphazard
Like tea or even beer
But with pencil book and water
And other useless gear.

Jack dusty and his winger
Perform the sacred rite
They brew a swill called "Two and One"
On which we have to fight.

With bottle, jug and Fanny
We muster at the shrine
"Get into line you Sailors!
That first Fanny's mine"

Then with murmured incantations
Such as "seven, one and two"
The high priest and his acolyte
Dispense the Holy Brew.

When the seas are breaking over
And you feel you've had enough
When the chef has dropped his tatties
And his 'oppos' burnt the duff

When your locker's full of hogwash
And your hammocks gone to rot
There's nothing quite can touch it;
YOUR DAILY LITTLE TOT.



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)



SLOPS

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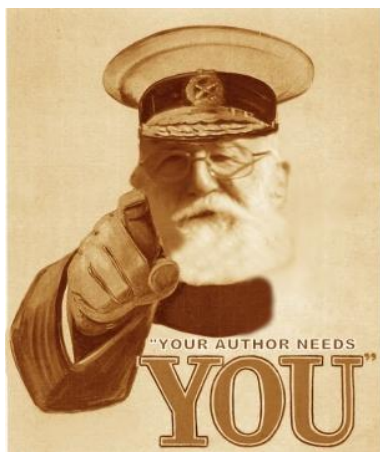
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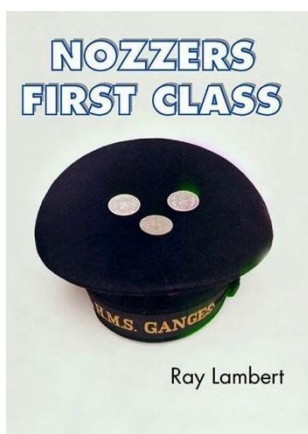
Journalist & Best Selling Author



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

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

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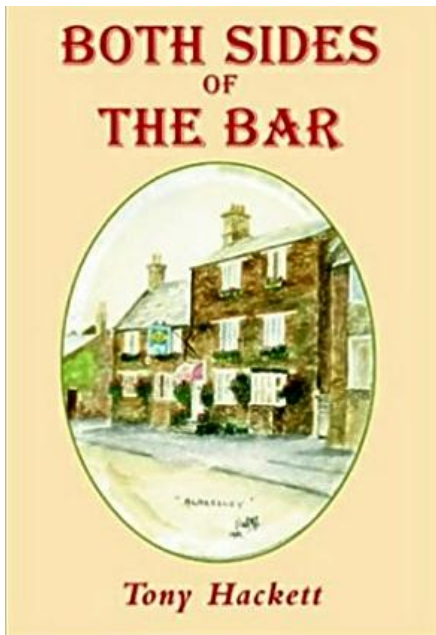
Phil can be contacted by email by clicking on this [LINK](#)

*** 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



"How can I salute yer with an ice-cream in one hand and me transistor in the other?"



A NAVAL CAREER PART 3 (OF 4)

By Jim Hirst

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This story were found on the BBC World War II website and Contributed by fireblade-sue subject John Malcolm ("Jim") Hirst and Contributed on: 01 January 2006

CONVERSIONS TO MINE WARFARE

As the war in the Mediterranean progressed, submarines became less and less of a threat; to be replaced by surface actions (mostly our MTBs and MGBs versus Enemy "E", "R" boats or flak lighters) or increased use of mines in the shallower waters. The latter affected both us and the enemy. In forward planning at some stage we came under the US Navy and I think that they perhaps concluded that ML must mean 'mine layer'. We were built with deck chocks to accommodate 8 moored mines, so for one operation somewhere south of Elba, it was 'off depth charges' and 'mount mines'.

Laying was of course done on a moonless night and in very close formation (keeping station on phosphorescent wakes), with the only light being a single dim flash from the boat ahead, to indicate that it had laid its last mine. Of course we never knew if our lay had any effect and were somewhat relieved when we moved to the other side of the battle and converted to mine sweeping.

At some stage after the Salerno landings the Navy was disconcerted to find that the Germans had made several considerable advances in moored mine technology:-

(1) The moored magnetic (Type Oboe, c. 700lb charge) extended the magnetic hazard into water too deep for bottom laying. Being wooden built the MLs had advantages over the larger Fleet Mine- sweepers for whom we could clear an initial channel.

(2) The enemy took to laying contact mines, with several metres of heavy chain between the mine and the top of the steel mooring wire. This could not be cut with the traditional serrated wire sweep. However, we found that the systematic Germans had equipped themselves with a much heavier sweep wire than we used and which incorporated three explosive charges each able to break a mooring chain. The continuity of the sweep was maintained by wire loops connected to the sweep above and below each charge, which trailed far enough behind the charge not to be blown apart as was the mooring chain. These we found in the captured Taranto dockyard and fitted them (31 MLF only) in Malta or Ischia, having removed the "Y gun" and all but six depth charges.



(3) Much more difficult for us was the extension to the radius of action of mines moored at an effective depth by clipping a cage on a horn, to which was attached a long 'floating snag line'. This was supported by corks all painted blue and very difficult to see if there

was the least wind on the water. Any sharp tug on the line and the mine detonated. (I met these more often in the Adriatic after I had left ML 557, see notes added on the mining of ML 558).

Cutting mine-moorings merely lets them float, visible but still active. Dangers can be postponed if they are sunk, a rifle fire task for which MLs were in much demand. It is not easy to puncture mines with armour-piercing 0.303in. using service rifles fired from the shoulder from the rolling deck of a necessarily stationary ML, with the mine bobbing up and down in the water. Occasionally there was a surprise when they detonated (particularly the moored magnetics) then it was safest neither to be too close nor too far away. One particular minefield we encountered was laid with mines, fitted with a device to detonate them when the mooring was cut. These gave an impressive splash. Tensions in the sweep wire could tell you when these explosions would occur, so offering predictable 'photo-opportunities' (in modern terminology).

After conversion to minesweeping, the 31st MLF was kept very busy, sometimes working independently to locate minefields, or quite often in front of the 19th Flotilla of Fleet Minesweepers. At first it was up the Italian west coast, clearing the way to Anzio, then into the Straits of Bonafaccio (between Corsica and Sardinia) and ports on these islands, also to open the way for the landings on Elba (which was quite fiercely opposed) and (in advance of the Fleet Minesweepers) another night sweep for the much larger landing operation the south of France (the plans for which sounded fearsome but which proved relatively peaceful.)

The following are quotes from Farmer Lloyd extracted from Flag 4: The battle of Coastal Forces in the Mediterranean. By Dudley Pope, (1954) William Kimber, London. p. 238 et seq.

The eight boats of the 31st MLF were fitted with captured German minesweeping gear designed for 'small fast craft'.... it allowed the MLs to sweep at surprising speeds; they could do 11 knots with a single sweep and 9 knots with double sweeps. ... however the craft could not stop without recovering the kites. There was no hydraulic system to get the sweeping gear aboard again, it all had to be hauled in on a hand-winch and lifted aboard with a hand-derrick.

The first division of the 31st, Lloyd, Coleridge, Waugh, Wilmot and Blair - were to sweep ahead of the American assault force to land on the coast near St Tropez. "Standing on the bridge of 556(?) Looking over a placid oily sea, I could not get the secret chart out of my mind, with its peculiar markings showing heavy and light gun batteries dotted along the shore.... but in any case we had to go right in and try to come out again. I gave the order to draw ahead of the convoy, knowing that the other boats would follow, and when we had put enough distance between the convoy and ourselves we started to stream our sweeps.

"This rather complicated operation had, by this time, become almost automatic with the crew and we worked each phase of it according to a time table, flashing a blue light astern to mark the completion of each. At last all were ready and we moved toward the French coast, which was already showing the first glow of dawn. Less light would have made it more difficult for the shore gunners; more light would help us to see any floating or surface-laid mines. Sweeping conditions were perfect, with no wind, a flat sea and very little current to worry about."

" We went right in until our gear was nearly sweeping the sea bed and then I started to turn. Until then no shot had been fired by either side. We were half way in our turn when there were flashes ashore and bursts over our heads. ... To seaward was a line of flashes where the big guns were opening up with all their heavy stuff. Closer inshore were occasional skyward waves of fire as the LCRs (now within range) sent up their rockets to descend on the defences and blow them to dust."

"A shoal of small fast craft low in the water darted past us ... the assault landing craft going into the beach along the channel we had swept At last Farmer's boys have done something worthwhile I shouted"

Allied shipping losses were negligible. Coastal Force losses included ML 563 mined while rescuing survivors from a ship already mined. ML 562 damaged by an 88mm shell, ML 559 damaged by two mines being detonated close ahead, and three PT boats all mine victims.

FIRST COMMAND, HDML 1246

Soon after the South of France landings I had to leave the 31st. ML Flotilla to take command of *HDML 1246* in the Adriatic. In an attempt to bring some order to the various warring factions in the islands and coastal regions of Yugoslavia the Royal Navy had placed a cruiser in each of the ports of Dubrovnik, Split and Zara (Rechristened Zardar by Tito).

We were assigned to Zardar (in Croatia) to accompany and protect *HMS Colombo* from limpeteers, human torpedoes, etc. The normal duties of these small (72 ft.) boats was harbour defence but their size, quietness and extreme manoeuvrability made them capable of much more active but cryptic roles 'among the islands'. These varied from placing or retrieving agents or air-crews to tying to coastal rocks under camouflage nets to detect and report enemy movement. (When I took over I understood that *HDML 1246* was one of these 'Special Service HDs'. I later learnt that several hours before the landing on Elba, she had a difficult time landing commandos to capture two 'Flak-ships' (F lighters) and to establish the 'Beach Captain' in readiness for the arrival of the main assault.)

We had an extremely rough crossing from Ancona to Zara and stove in the forward messdeck hatch cover but fortunately the deck level hatch survived. In Zara we berthed on top of a capsized German F Lighter for several weeks before someone thought of looking to see what it had been carrying. They found 70 (moored magnetic) mines each with c. 700lb HE. They were of course not armed but we felt relieved that by the winter of 1944-1945 raids by air or sea were almost over.

We had a relatively gentle time but "**Jugland**" displayed chaotic confusion with six different land or naval forces of whom one did not know from day to day who was really friend or who foe. We found it strange to witness daily 'tribal' type dance performances by grenade-festooned partisans on the jetty alongside us. Fifty years later the troubles of Bosnia have sadly brought much more general realisation of the local racial and religious hatreds. They seem no nearer to solution now than they were then. I enjoyed my brief spell in "1246". It was a reliable, diesel-powered, strongly built boat that was extremely maneuverable, and had a tough largely Glaswegian crew. It offered a good start 'in command' but lasted only a few winter months.

The longest serving skippers were beginning to be posted back for home leave as demands in the Med diminished. I therefore returned to a "B", (*ML480*) of the 3rd (Malta) Flotilla (shortly afterwards reformed as the 41st. Flotilla). She sported a Bofors gun on the bow instead of the usual rather ineffective 3 pounder, but my time with her was spent in the northern Adriatic working from Ancona and small ports further north. Fighting was almost over but there was a lot of 'clearing-up' to be done. One amusing incident for me was to be SNO (senior naval officer) of a small operation (involving several LCTs and MLs) to put ashore



"Popski's Private Army" to clear the German remnants off the delta mouth islands of the River Po. Never during active hostilities did we experience such intense air cover, perhaps meant to induce surrender ashore.

Most of our work was mine clearance, which took us towards Venice where the Italians complained that detonating every mine caused subsidence of the piles on which the city was built. Venice seemed a fascinating place which, fortunately, was much less damaged than most of the cities I had been able to visit.

The allies needed to open the port of Trieste to bring relief and food closer to the Balkans. The north of the Adriatic had been heavily mined; snag-lines were very prevalent so there was a strong need for us to clear a path in front of the Fleet Sweepers. The flotilla was sent in an **Operation** misnamed "**Hopeful**" to find a route across the northern Adriatic. There was intelligence to suggest that many mines had been laid across the route intended, so the course was altered, this may have avoided some but it led us straight into others.

The effective end of the air-war enabled us to have the assistance of an airborne 'mine-spotting officer' (a very rotund chap who bulged out of the cabin window of an antique and ponderous Walrus flying boat, seemingly threatening its stability). When he thought he saw mines he either dropped a smoke flare, waggled the Walrus, or gesticulated wildly. Despite his best efforts his help proved of doubtful value because he was unable to distinguish between mines underwater and the equally large and more numerous jelly fish that were not so lethal. Neither could he spot the snag-lines that were the greatest hazard to us.

Sad experiences had shown that a mine striking the bow would blow-off the mess-deck, whereas if it (or more probably a snag line) caught a propeller or rudder, then it blew off the wardroom as far forward as the aft bulkhead of the petrol tank space. Crew stationed amidships (even below decks) were relatively safe. Therefore when sweeping (except at night) we tried to have only one look-out right forrard, clinging to the jack staff, to spot mines or snag lines. His only instruction was to run aft as quickly as possible if he spotted anything, then engines would be briefly put full astern and you hoped to have the way off the boat before you got to the mine or be able to drift off it, if alongside. The other most exposed rating was the one on the stern with a foot on the sweep wire to detect a mine in sweep. His greatest danger was from a snag line caught aft without having been spotted.

This worked very well provided there was not too much wind to ruffle the surface. In the over-optimistically named '**Operation Hopeful**', it failed to protect the leader of the sweep *ML 558*. A snag-line caught on a propeller or rudder, detonated the mine and blew off wardroom and stern to matchwood, lifted the whole boat out of the water and threw the 'sweep-watcher' high into the air, but not quite far enough, because he landed on the bow rather than in the water ahead (sadly he later died). The next boat *ML 459* went to assist, so *480* which had been third, found herself in the lead. We knew one mine had detonated; we and boats astern had seen and cut others where we had dropped dan buoys, so there must now be



some gap in the lay. Having been given the choice, to me it seemed that rather than try to turn round with snag lines so difficult to see in ruffled water, it seemed far better to continue ahead. Eventually (with the remains of 558 in tow by 459) the flotilla made the west coast of Istria where we anchored in San Giovanni Bay. After several gins and some welcome sleep, next morning revealed I had smoked 63 cigarettes the day before!

There was also then a chance to inspect the damage to 558, remove anything confidential and beach her. The Italian vultures were already hovering. What a haul they must have had of petrol, I hope not too many blew themselves up with the ammunition.

The mine had destroyed almost everything aft of the tank space, the bulkhead of which had been ruptured but without fuel leakage. The wardroom deckhead had been folded forward and inverted over the aft Oerlikon, one of the depth charges had been dislodged and lost but was not set to detonate. Altogether, the ability to withstand such damage with so few casualties is a considerable tribute to the design, construction and builders, as well of course as a powerful consolation to most of the crew.

By then it was very nearly VE Day, so we made our way towards Trieste, (using the German coastal swept channel). En route we were called up by a lighthouse with the message in International Code -"Here 300 Germans, please take us prisoner." We had to reply "MRU (much regret unable), too busy." We did a few jobs in Trieste, (which we were the first allied ships to enter) and around Istria including checking-out the Island of Brioni, which Tito later took over as his `country retreat`.

But shortly after returning to Italy I was relieved for posting home to UK. I took passage in the old battleship *HMS Queen Elizabeth*. The comforts of the wardroom were a change, but did not change my mind about my preference for the freedom of Coastal Forces (or "Costly Farces" as we often called them). In the train from Plymouth to London I read (in the first UK daily paper I had seen for almost three years) of the atom bomb that had been dropped on Hiroshima.



PEOPLE SEARCHING 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

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



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

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