

H.M.S. SUPERB (CRUISER) ASSOCIATION

A MAGAZINE FOR THE MEMBERSHIP

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Nº 13



OUR SWORDS WE BARE
OUR SPIRITS DARE

CHAIRMAN OF THE ASSOCIATION IS ROBIN SMITH

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Defending Britain since 1710

ANDY BRIERLEY'S BLOG

Hello Shipmates,

From the tabloid press it seems the M.O.D.'s perpetual wasting of tax money is rivalled only by transgender issues in the competition for front page space.

For the latter I wish them a chance to get on with their lives privately, as my own ilk.

Rear Admiral Burton R.N., Commander U.K. Maritime Forces, 'took issue with the President of the United States' for banning that section of the community from serving in the U.S. forces, whose stated purpose being, time and money spent on 'sex change questions' was not a military requirement; war wounded in dire need of help is.

My stance in this is a feeling that Rear Admiral Burton could better spent his time and effort in addressing the first item mentioned. He could, perhaps, ensure fighting ships sail with full magazines or even, in some cases, magazines with only cobwebs. He does bill himself as a 'senior war fighter'.

Which war that was I am unable to enlighten you. Recent headliner informed us the M.O.D. had just written off £218 million on lost equipment and projects axed. Amongst item lost is a state of the art 'targeting pod' for front line Typhoon aircraft. A spokesperson says, 'extensive searches have taken place, but it couldn't be found'. They are only £601,000 a copy!

I would be surprised if a chap called Ivan has it on his bench in 'magnitogorsk'. Working out electronic counter measures.

R.N. section included non-refundable hotel bookings for crew of sub. *Ambush* after it collided with a merchantman and limped into Gibraltar, then redirected to the U.K... Cost £453,000 Some hotel.

We seem so complacent about these things, it's all a bore to parliament. That the R.N. wants to enrol a further 4000 bodies to operate properly - but we do not have the cash. That number of bodies were made redundant 3 or so years ago. The politicians' solution is to cut the Royal Marine's recruitment by 4000, and then dress them - the extra 4000 available - in bell bottoms. The Cadets (middies) at Dartmouth, one learns, are no longer taught Naval History and its influence on international affairs. That could mean plenty of 'unknown mistakes' will be remade.

In two month's time we are due a 'Strategic Defence Review', it is the 'habit', this last half dozen years, for those in power to pass it 'without debate'. Defence Sec. Fallon will be in vigorous 'smoke and mirrors' mode. He has just been on the Clyde where steel was reportedly cut for the new Global Frigate Type 26.

Defence Sec. named it *Glasgow*. Now the P.R. wonks are bound to drop the name, at regular intervals, as if it was at sea, in the fleet.





HMS Glasgow
Type 26 Global Combat Ship
Computer Generated Impression

Artist's impression in Naval News will be a half or full page before, the sports' section. It will not tell you this anti-sub frigate has no anti-submarine weapons (FACT). On the foc'sle will be the de rigour 5" gun. Chinese frigates being turned out like plastic ducks, sport Mach 3 anti-ship missiles.

B.A.E.'s Global Frigate is in the competition to meet Australia's frigate requirement.

Other two are Navantia - Spain, and Fincantieria - Italy. Both the latter have their new vessels in Australian waters; Italy for a month, Spain for the last six months, cross-crewing with Oz naval types. Both countries agree to co-ordinate with builders in Adelaide for 8 vessels. That's a thumbnail sketch of events, so far. With no pun intended, do you think B.A.E has missed the boat?

Now, here is the R.N about to score a first amongst Western navies.

It had announced it is designing a uniform with 'burka attached'. Thus allowing recruiters to attract Muslim females. Imagine how thrilled their fellas will be with our 'gender equality service'. They will be in close company, I assume in some cases, touching 'infidel males'.

It has the hall marks of some dreadful disaster, perpetrated by an I.S.I.S. sleeper. How exasperated can you get knowing the R.N.'s massive deficiencies, when serious cash and time is spent on such bilge.



Another Admiral of questionable service to 'our service' figured in a colour picture, late July's Daily Mail, alongside Prince Andrew - both braid bedecked, having a belly laugh. Have racked my brain but cannot dredge up his name.

He figured in an illustrated rogue's gallery of top civil servants who resigned their departments, to go directly into the employ of the firms they dealt with when in government. Such conduct is unlawful until a cooling off period has elapsed, and their knowledge of government policy is 'old hat'.

In the R.N.'s case it is not hard to see how substandard, inappropriate equipment, at inflated prices, gets into circulation, with such honest brokers like him in charge.

The crime is compounded - they are allowed to get away with it!

That's today's drip from 'beautiful downtown Newington'.



NAVY NEWS

The amphibious assault ship and helicopter carrier HMS Ocean is currently the largest vessel in the Royal Navy—it's also the flagship of the fleet.

With years to go before the first of the Royal Navy's two *Queen Elizabeth* class aircraft carriers become operational, the *HMS Ocean*—which isn't even 20 years old—is slated for retirement next year, and according to reports she might be sold off for a bargain price to Brazil.

HMS Ocean is a capable ship. She displaces 21,500 tons, was commissioned in 1998 and was just refit a few years ago. She can carry around 18 helicopters—but usually totes around less than a dozen—of various types, including large Chinook transports to Apache attack helicopters.

Past operations of one of *HMS Ocean's* tailored air groups.

Since the canning of the UK's Harrier force, along with its carriers *HMS Illustrious* and *HMS Ark Royal*, *HMS Ocean* has been the sole air warfare power projection vessel in the Royal Navy's inventory—with Royal Army Air Corps Apache Longbows providing the ship's over-the-horizon striking power. And this capability has been used successfully in combat before. Although the UK's Apache force largely wrote the book on deploying the AH-64/AH Mk 1 to sea, *HMS Ocean* is meant to have a highly flexible air wing that can feature a composite of various cross-service, and even cross-national, helicopters depending on the mission.

The ship is also built to execute amphibious assaults. In addition to her baseline crew of nearly 300, with another 200 attached to her air wing, up to 800 Royal Marines can be embarked at one time, along with 40 of their vehicles. The ship also carries four 51.5 foot landing craft (LCVPs) and has extensive command and control capabilities.



US Marines riding *HMS Ocean's* elevator during multi-national training exercises.

The Royal Navy gets a pretty big bang for their buck out of the relatively young *HMS Ocean*. She can do a lot of things, from anti-submarine warfare to amphibious assault, without the massive logistical footprint of a dedicated aircraft carrier. Above all else, the ship keeps the Royal Navy in the carrier game, which is not just a big deal geopolitically, but it is also significant when it comes to keeping skills needed to operate such a vessel fresh.

The ship does not have a well deck, although other RN amphibs do. Instead, *HMS Ocean* lowers the vessels down to the water from storage positions on the sides of her hull.



One of *HMS Ocean's* four LCVPs

But under the MoD's often puzzling defence spending choices, the versatile vessel will be retired next year. Many have called for her to stay in service at least until *HMS Queen Elizabeth* becomes operational, while others have demanded she be put in reserve for contingency operations. But recently it seems more likely that the ship will be sold. Her young age, updates systems, relatively economic operating costs, and versatility making her an attractive purchase for cash-strapped naval arms with big ideas.



HMS Ocean with *Apache*, *Chinook* and *Merlin* helicopters on its deck

Brazil in particular appears to be interested in buying the ship. That makes good sense considering their antique aircraft carrier, the *Sao Paulo*, which was supposed to go through complex overhaul, has now been decommissioned due to its poor shape and the large sum of money it would take to get it back in operation. This leaves the Brazilian Navy without any sort

of a flattop for the foreseeable future.

HMS Ocean can vary her aircraft compliment widely depending on the mission. Although not designed as an anti-submarine warfare ship, she has acted as one in the past successfully. Sure, *HMS Ocean* cannot operate fixed wing aircraft like the Brazil's AF1 Skyhawks, but the need for that capability has been of debatable for some time now.

HMS Ocean would provide a good mix of more usable everyday capabilities, like working as an anti-submarine and sea control platform or being able to quickly deploy Brazilian commandos ashore or deploying relief during a natural disaster.



It would also work as the centrepiece of Brazil's small but significant amphibious assault flotilla, which is made of a hodgepodge of four second-hand vessels of French, UK and US origin.

Supposedly there is a fixed price offer from Brasilia for the ship for £80.3 million pounds (\$100,950,000). That is less than the cost of a

single F-35B that will fly from the *HMS Queen Elizabeth's* deck, and payment for the ship from Brasilia to London may be broken down in instalments.



The Royal Navy has not confirmed that the deal with Brazil is done, but has alluded to the fact that "a number of options are being considered" including selling the vessel to a foreign government.

HMS Ocean is not an old or tired vessel. It will have served just 20 years at the time of its retirement and has been kept updated with modern sub-systems. Helicopter carriers with amphibious assault capabilities have become somewhat of a hot

commodity in recent years, with many navies procuring them with power projection in mind. The topic blasted onto the geopolitical stage in recent years following France's axed deal to provide a pair of Mistral class helicopter landing docks to Russia. Who should have bought the orphaned vessels was up to hot debate in the international press until it was announced that Egypt would be their new owners.



Egypt's new *ENS Gamal Abdel Nasser*, one of two *Mistral* class amphibious assault ship now in Cairo's possession.

Suggestions that Canada, India, Vietnam, South Korea, Saudi Arabia, The Netherlands, New Zealand, Singapore, China and even NATO should buy the ships were posited in high-profile ways before the purchase by Egypt was announced.

Brazil was also thought to have been an ideal candidate, although this was a couple years ago, when the Brazilian Navy still thought they would bring *Sao Paulo* back to life.

We will have to wait and see if any other bidders for *HMS Ocean* come to the table. A NATO ally would seem to be the ideal buyer for the ship, as its combat systems, communications and other support systems are meant to interoperate with the alliance's forces. Plus a low selling price point could be justified to the public as a move to enhance NATO's strength overall.





HMS Ocean has served as the centrepiece of many NATO naval exercises, including sailing into the Baltic Sea as part of BALTOPS.

Then again the UK could just find the funds to operate the ship, at least until they can claim a replacement is active in the form of *HMS Queen Elizabeth*. The plan also puts into question how the Royal Navy will afford *two* 65,000 ton class aircraft carriers—and an all-stealth fighter fast-jet contingent to fill their decks—when they seem to be unable or unwilling to fund even a single medium-sized helicopter carrier—one that pulls in aerial assets from across the MoD's inventory.



Supposedly the budgets are in place to see both *Queen Elizabeth* class carriers become operational, but it will be interesting to see if *HMS Prince of Wales*—*HMS Queen Elizabeth's* sister ship—will be sustained in an operational state over the long term. With *HMS Ocean* long gone by the time *HMS Prince of Wales* is supposed to become optional, sustaining one large fixed-wing capable carrier and one smaller helicopter carrier, and either putting *HMS Prince of Wales* in

mothballs or selling it off, will not be an option.

Still years away from being declared operation, the *HMS Queen Elizabeth* is complete, while *HMS Prince of Wales* is far along in its construction.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

With regret I am unable to publish any letters this month as I am on holiday until mid January ! However please continue to send them as they can be published in the February issue.



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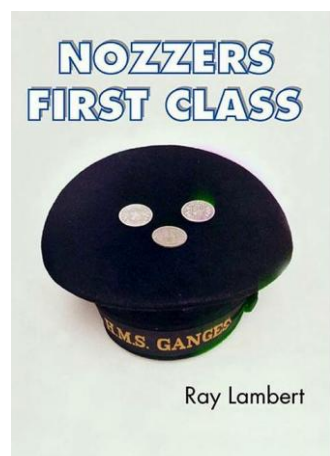
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JOTTINGS OF A VERY ORDINARY SEAMAN

By Ray Lambert

Following on from last month..... I had been 'surveyed' or, in language that I could understand: I was going home for a medical discharge. I was in *Terror* sick-bay and first things first, I had to go back to our temporary accommodation in *Terror* and pack my bags. Then it was a ride down town to Singapore Hospital to await a troopship home, because they said I couldn't fly. It was an army run hospital and no-one knew (or cared) how to handle me so, as I was just passing through and not on any treatment, I snuck off into town for my last afternoon.



WELCOME ON BOARD. WE'VE HAD 50 CASES OF SCURVEY AND WE HAVEN'T LEFT PORT YET

The next morning I was aboard the troopship *Dunera* and on my way home. They were transporting a whole gaggle (or should that be rabble) of pongos and my heart sank at the thought but my uncanny luck held good and I with a couple of others, was billeted in the sick-bay for the cruise. There was one 'patient' but he was quickly discharged and then the four of us had the place to ourselves. It really was a life of luxury; two matelots and two pongos. Me with my ears and the other chap had a bang in eye, so we became known as 'Hawkeye and Running Ear'. We became something of minor celebrities mainly through having to drink on the Families Deck, away from the rabble and playing with the young kids. It was a rough life but

someone had to do it.

After about a fortnight of that kind of hardship, including a run ashore in Gib - a place I knew well and almost missing the ship because Hawkeye was gibbering and staggering all over the place, we arrived in Southampton and a transfer straight away to *Haslar*. A couple of days in *Haslar* where, again, nobody wanted me, I staggered down to the boat jetty carrying kitbag, hammock and two large suitcases with no trolley or a little assistance, to wend my way to the Railway Station - destination Chatham.

My bits of paper said I would be met at Gillingham so I figured that would be my best bet so I was whisked up to the hospital and after a lot of ranting I was allowed out for the night to meet Lady Lambert.

*It was early days but so far no-one had mentioned 'discharge'.....
but more was still to come!*



OUR HOME PORT

Researched by & collated by Brian Saunders

Chatham Dockyard's origin dates to the year 1547. In that year a building was rented for the storage of rigging and sails belonging to the royal ships then wintering in the Medway.

In 1570 the dockyard itself was born, when a mast pond was completed. During the following year land for storehouses, a forge and other dockyard buildings were acquired. This land, the site of the original dockyard, was to the south of the historic dockyard. Most of the work undertaken at Chatham in these early years was connected with the maintenance and repair of royal ships.

Considerable expansion of the yard occurred in the following century. The dockyard then moved to its present site, with the original yard turned over to the unloading and storage of guns.

The dockyard was an obvious target during the Raid on the Medway in 1667 (1584349). By 1699 it included three single docks, a double dock and building slip, but by then Portsmouth had begun to supersede Chatham as the country's premier naval dockyard and Chatham went into decline until the 1850s.

At this time considerable areas of marshland were reclaimed for dockyard expansion, and work began on three enclosed basins and four new dry docks (with a fifth added later in the century) and a great variety of workshops, factory buildings and storehouses, coinciding with the busiest period in the dockyard's history.

The building of an extension in 1876 revealed the remains of an old warship, believed to be either the *SANCTA MARIA* (1033764) or *CHARLES V* (1433179).

The 20th century saw 12 submarines launched at Chatham during the First World War. During the Second World War Chatham's primary role was the construction of 'S' class submarines.

During the post-war years submarines continued to be built and in 1968 a nuclear submarine refit complex opened.

However, in June 1981 it was announced that the yard would close with a three-year rundown programme put into effect. The original historic dockyard has now been turned into a museum.

The closure of Chatham Dockyard on 31 March 1984 brought to an end more than 400 years of shipbuilding and naval tradition, but three decades on what is the legacy that was left behind?



Alex Routen was 15 when he started work at the dockyard in 1958. He remembers how the work was "hard, dirty and sometimes dangerous", but he loved every moment.

"I remember walking into the boiler shop to start my apprenticeship and thinking that I'd gone back 200 years to Dickens' days.

"There were machines turning and shafts whipping round, people hammering lumps of metal, [and] pot fires with smoke all inside the building," he said.

More than 7,000 skilled workers lost their jobs when the gates to the Kent dockyard finally closed, and with them went Chatham's long history of building, repairing and supplying ships for the Royal Navy.

Among them was Admiral Lord Horatio Nelson's HMS Victory, on which he won the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805 and was fatally wounded.

"It was like a town, a hive of industry... it was a real bustling place," said ex-worker Ian Russell, now 57.

'Clocking in'

"There would have been a lot of people in green overalls, and a few in white overalls, wandering around doing things. The cranes would have been moving to-and-fro... and there was a chipping hammer for taking paint off the boats.

"This place was a training spot for industries all around. People learnt all sorts of things in here that they can't do now."



Lots of workers arrived at the main gate to Chatham Dockyard by bike in the late 1930s



At its height, the dockyard - situated on the River Medway - employed more than 10,000 workers from more than 26 different trades, and was renowned for its high

class of work.

"You used to approach the dockyard down Dock Road towards Pembroke Gate, and there would probably be 10 or so buses at the bottom," said Mr Russell.

"It was a very busy place. Lots of people on bikes, motorbikes, [and] noise... before the dockyard hooter went off and you were late."

Chatham has a rich naval history.

The Royal Navy first started to use the River Medway in 1547, with the first warship, the *Sunne* launched from a small dockyard at Chatham in 1586.

It was followed by over 400 more, as shipbuilding evolved from wood & sail through iron and steam to the 20th Century technology of destroyers and nuclear submarines.

The dockyard played a crucial role in the defence of Britain and ships from Chatham fought in every war from the battles against the Spanish Armada to the Falklands.

By the late 19th Century, the dockyard had been expanded to include St Mary's Island and covered 400 acres.

It was so huge that workers would take a bus to get from one end to the other.



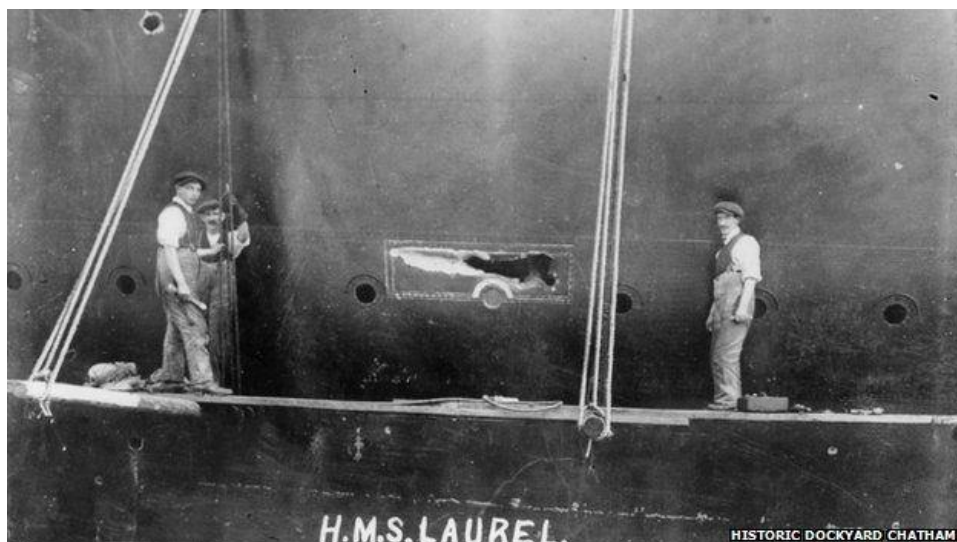
At its height, the dockyard employed more than 10,000 workers from over 26 different trades

Chatham and the rest of the Medway towns had been completely dependent on work from the dockyard despite the fact that the government considered that it was surplus to requirements in light of the Cold War and a Soviet military build-up.

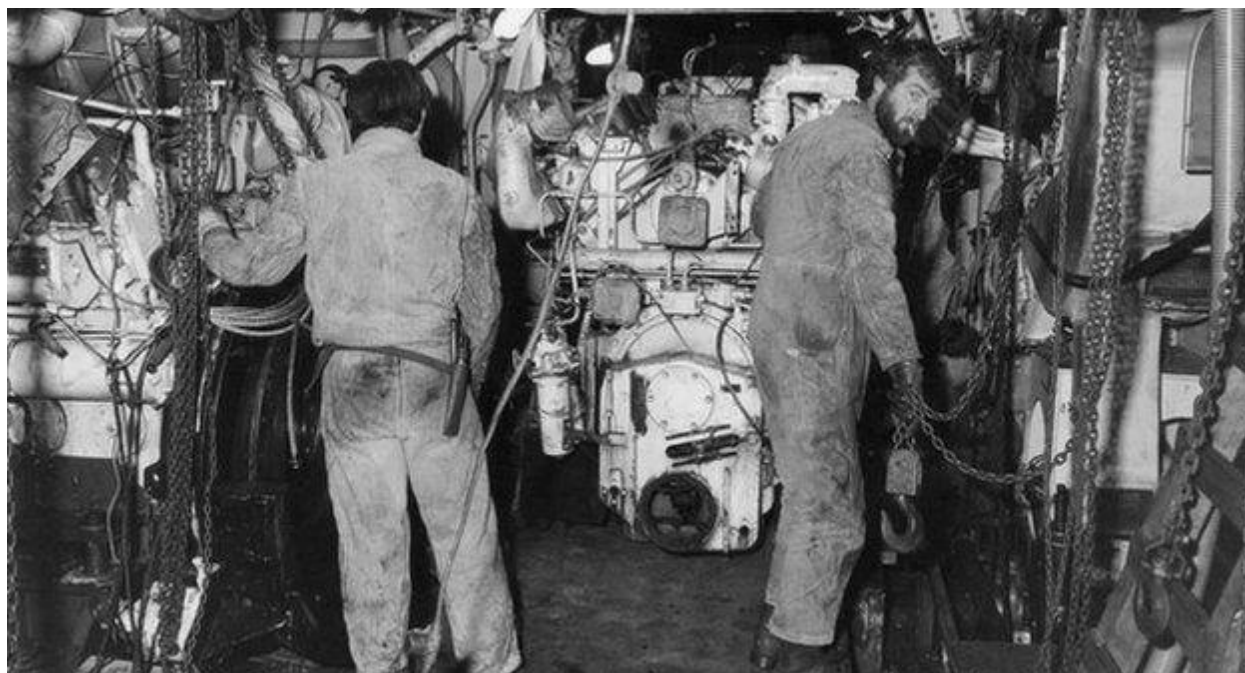
The dockyard was wound down over three years, although it experienced a brief respite during the Falklands War in 1982.

The last nuclear submarine to be refitted, *HMS Churchill*, and the last frigate, *HMS Hermione*, left the dockyard in 1983.

The thinking was that Chatham Dockyard was very vulnerable in military terms to an air strike, to the mining of the access to the dockyard, the tides and a threat from submarine presence in the North Sea. The UK was building hugely expensive facilities on the Clyde for Trident...



More than 7,000 skilled workers lost their jobs when the gates to the Kent dockyard finally closed



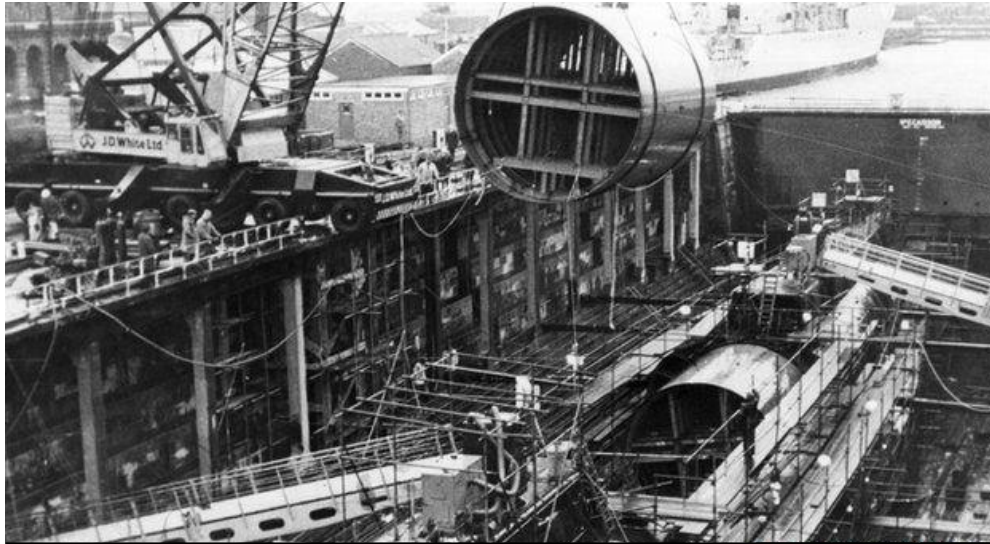
Hundreds of apprentices started their working lives at the dockyard, learning a variety of skilled trades

There had been 7,300 workers employed in the dockyard - 2,300 were compulsory redundancies, 2,000 workers were transferred to other naval dockyards, 1,500 retired and 1,500 took voluntary redundancy.

About 25% of the labour force were women, employed as skilled workers and in a variety of other jobs ranging from secretaries and seamstresses to cleaners and canteen staff.

There were another 10,000 people in supporting industries, with more than £4m a year spent locally from wages.

In a report commissioned by BBC Radio Kent to coincide with the anniversary of the dockyard closure, Professor of Sociology at the University of Kent, Richard Scase,



said after the closure of the dockyard, and with the loss of jobs from other local employers, about 24% of the workforce in the Medway towns was unemployed.

Shipbuilding evolved from wooden sail through iron and steam to destroyers and nuclear

His report concluded, however, that it had been good for the area and had eliminated unhealthy, unsafe and inefficient jobs, and destroyed bigotry and sexism within the industry.

"Some of the people I spoke to who worked in the dockyard gave me countless examples of unproductive activities, over-manning, people slacking.



Dockyard workers marched through Chatham in protest at the closure

"The unions controlled it as a closed shop in terms of who got jobs and the pace at which work was undertaken," he said.

But he argued that the closure was good for the area - economically, socially and culturally - and "forced" the government to invest in, and to encourage, regeneration.

So what has happened in the



last three decades and how has the area recovered?

The old naval base was split into three parts - the historic docks tourist attraction, the working port and a residential development on St Mary's Island.

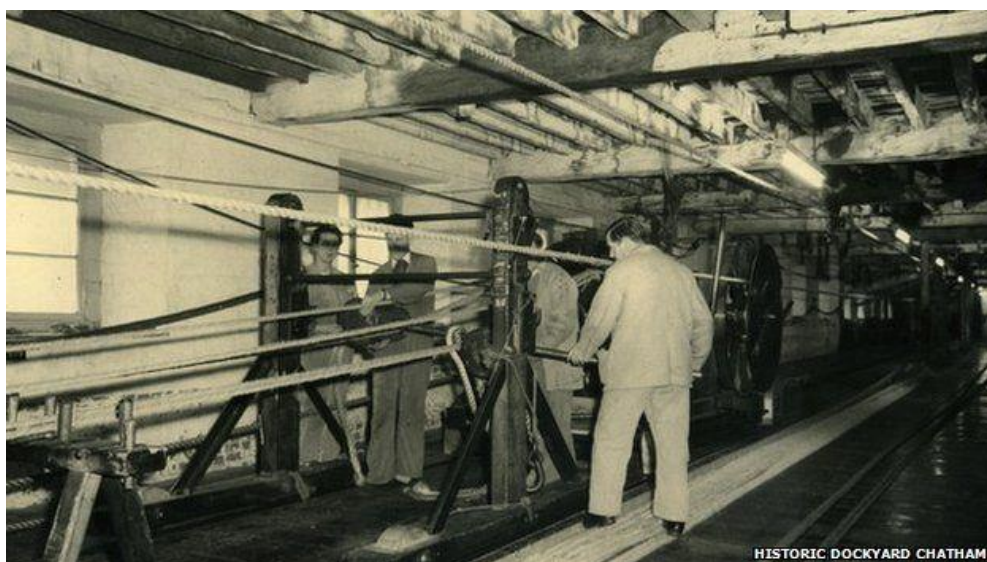
It is also home to the Universities at Medway campus, shared with the universities of Greenwich, Kent and Canterbury Christ Church and Mid-Kent College, the Dickens' World tourist attraction, and a shopping outlet.



About a quarter of the labour force were women, some of whom worked in the Chatham loft making flags

The **Historic Dockyard Chatham** contains more than 90 buildings and structures, of which 47 are listed, plus three historical warships in dry docks - *HMS Cavalier* (1944), *HM Submarine Ocelot* (1962), and *HMS Gannet* (1878).

It is now one of the most complete dockyards of the Age of Sail to survive in the world.



Still in existence is the Ropery - a quarter of a mile-long building where naval rope has been made commercially since 1618.

The dockyard's authentic cobbled streets, industrial buildings and Georgian and Victorian architecture have regularly been used as backdrops for film and television productions. "Call

the Midwife" being one such film

Prof Scase said unemployment in the area was now down to "a remarkable 2.7%".

"I can't think of another community in the country where the reduction in unemployment has been so rapid over a 30-year period of time," he said.



For the thousands of workers there is no doubt that the closure of the dockyard after so many centuries was a shock and a terrible loss.

"Closing it down was tantamount to criminal," said former apprentice Rob Wilkinson.

HAVE YOU A STORY TO TELL ?

We'd love to print your story so why not put pen to paper

It doesn't need to be a novel -
just some of your memories
which will eventually be lost
forever unless told now

Several members
have sent in their own
& they are available to read
on our website



MEMORIES FROM 1956 (PART 1/4)

(as dictated by Ted Hill)

Ted Hill was a Stoker and Leading Stoker Mechanic who served aboard *HMS Belfast* in the Far East, 1950-1953; then as Leading Stoker Mechanic aboard *HMS Cockatrice* 1954; a Leading Stoker and Acting Petty Officer Stoker aboard *HMS Tyrian*, Portland Flotilla, 1955; as Acting Petty Officer Stoker aboard *HMS Woolwich*, Reserve Fleet, 1955-1956; and as Petty Officer Stoker aboard *HMS Superb*, Eastern Fleet, 1956-1957

I'd been at Gareloch on the *Woolwich* since October '55 and the Reserve Fleet at Gareloch was manned by Chatham ratings and there were a fair few Chatham ratings up there and *HMS Superb* which was a cruiser had come back from the West Indies to re-commission and they needed a full ship's company that's 800 people so they virtually emptied *Jupiter* and a train load of us came back to Chatham overnight, and not without its drama because on Glasgow station we had to wait about 3/4 hour for a train and everybody disappeared into bars around the station, It was coming up to train time and the next day January 16th 1956 we joined the *Superb* when she was in Chatham Dockyard on Farewell Jetty in Number 3 Basin which is the last stop before you go out of the lock down the Medway.

Now, we were all delighted to be drafted to *HMS Superb* because the last three commissions had been in the West Indies and it's the best place to have a commission in the whole of the navy because you go all around the West Indian islands, you do the East Coast of America and Canada and you go through the Panama Canal and do the West Coast of America; places like San Francisco, San Diego and all those places and it was marvellous to have that draft.

Well, we all got on board and there was one P.O. on board called Shiner Wright who's still a friend of mine and who I see occasionally. He had been on the previous commission in the West Indies and although he was a married man with a couple of little kids he volunteered to do the next commission because he'd had such a marvellous time out there.

When we got on board they announced that we weren't going to the West Indies - we were going to the East Indies which included Ceylon!

Now the difference between Ceylon and the West coast of America is unimaginable and old Shiner tried everything to get off the ship. They wouldn't have it - you volunteered for the next commission, they said, and we need you. So off we went and we entered the lock, and you may have heard of a "pier head jump" (people who get a last minute draft and they jump on the ship as it's leaving) well, we were actually in the lock, they'd opened the inner gate from the basin and we went in the lock, they closed that gate and opened the one to



seaward into the river.

Well, in that period of us being in the lock another P.O. (ME), a stoker P.O. as we still called ourselves, joined the ship and it was old Smudger Smith, who'd been a friend of mine on the *Belfast*, got a pier head jump and off we went to the East Indies.

We went through the normal way, down to Gibraltar, Malta and did some gunnery exercises at the gunnery range at Malta, up to Port Said, through the Suez Canal and fuelled at Aden. We got into the Indian Ocean and we were having trouble with one of the propeller shafts, the bearings were going on one of the shafts. They actually stopped one propeller and locked it so we carried on three engines and three propellers.

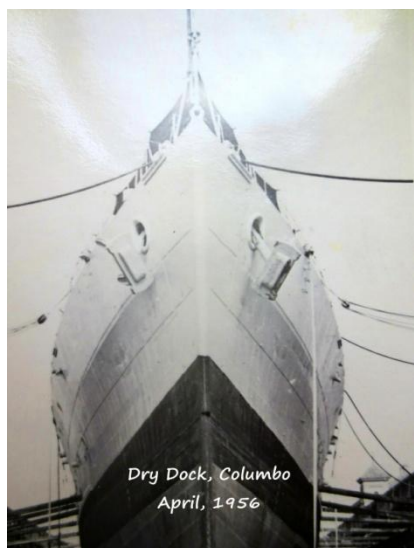


Photo donated by Bill Cook

We were sent to Colombo instead of Trincomalee because we needed to go into dry dock to sort out this propeller business. In dry dock we lived on the ship, there were toilets ashore but we lived on board. We took heat and power from the dockside while they successfully sorted out the propeller shaft. Although the ship was commissioned in 1945, by 1956 it was still one of the newest ships in the navy.

I was an acting P.O. straight in the boiler room and watchkeeping straight away because before a year was up I had to sit an exam so that I could become qualified to take charge of a boiler room.

In April 1956 I received my Watch Keeping Certificate and although I was qualified as Chief of the Watch I was still wearing

sailor's rig and mainly down B Boiler Room where the boilers faced each other and it's very, very cramped and claustrophobic as you're below the waterline when you're down there.

By 5th April, 1956, the anniversary of when I joined the navy in 1949, I was awarded my Boiler Room Certificate. I was on an accelerated promotion course and received the Certificate about 3 months before so on 22nd July I was confirmed so I could change rigs - go into fore and aft rigs, you know, peaked cap, buttons on my jacket and all that which the navy paid for and gave me a grant to buy a best suit made with barathea cloth.

We went up the Persian Gulf showing the flag around the Arab States, Bahrain, Kuwait and all those places. To East Africa, Mombasa and to Tanganyika. I think the first place we went to was the Persian Gulf because the Suez Crisis had started. I can't remember the date but we came out of dry dock went up to Trincomalee and picked up the Admiral as we were the flagship.



We relieved the cruiser up there and carried a company of the Glorious Gloucesters (famous from the Korean War) who were very friendly towards those of us who had the

Korean Medal ribbons because we had been there with them.

The soldiers were accommodated throughout the ship as there was no single mess big enough to cater for all of them so there were two or three soldiers attached to each mess. The Stoker P.O.s had a lovely little mess which was up in the Bridge structure and we had the Company Sergeant Major who was a smashing bloke but you wouldn't believe he was the same nice bloke when he was out drilling the ordinary soldiers. He used to scream and shout at them to get them into line and we weren't used to that sort of behaviour.

As there wasn't enough army personnel to cover all the oil fields affected in the crisis they organised Naval Landing Parties and each department on the ship had to supply an officer, a petty officer and six hands and I was selected as the petty officer of the Engine Room Landing Party.

They picked a very junior sub-lieutenant (E), me, the petty officer, who was still pretty junior and six stokers. The six stokers were issued with rifles, I had a Lanchester sub-machine gun and a pistol and the officer had a pistol. When they first formed all these types of units we were in Bahrain and it was decided we ought to have some practice so they took us all ashore in different parties. We were at anchor and we had to go ashore in boats and once we landed there were trucks to take us into the desert to practise handling the weapons.

Well, it started off on a bad footing for the Engineering Department because the sub-lieutenant decided to have a look at his pistol while we were on the boat deck and while he was playing with this thing it went off.

And, being an iron deck, the bullet hit the deck, pinged off of that then the bridge superstructure and then pinged off of that. It was just like you see in the cinema films with the bullet pinging around and half of the men laying in the deck and the rest scrabbling around trying to get out of the way of this bullet flying around.

The Commander gave this subby such a rollicking that they took his pistol from him and gave it



Photo donated by Bill Cook

to me with an order not to give it back to him until we were in the desert.

So we went ashore and into the desert to practise with these weapons together with a Gunnery Instructor as we were the least trained for this sort of stuff. One by one the GI showed the stokers

how to fire the rifles and when it was my turn he said, "Look you've got this Lanchester machine-gun so when you pull the trigger just give it a little squirt and let go"

By now everyone was standing behind me and the GI said, "When you pull the trigger you'll find it very difficult to let go coupled with the fact that these weapons pull to the left". I think it was the left but anyway it pulled one way or the other and when you fired them.

He said, "Anyway be aware of that fact and try to push it back the other way". Well, I fired this thing and I just couldn't let go of the trigger and it literally spun me around. The stokers, by now, were all laying in the sand covering their heads and I managed to let go of the trigger.

The GI said, "Ok now you see what I mean" and told me to have another go which I did. The stokers were all safely hiding in the sand and I fired another clip and managed to control it better.

I gave the officer his pistol back and he had a go but none of us could hit anything we aimed at. One of the things I remember which was frightening to us was that naval landing parties have a set of rules of their own inasmuch as you could never fire your weapon at a person or a crowd to frighten them such as firing over their heads. You had to fire to disable them and you weren't able to disable them without a Magistrates' Warrant so you had to go to the nearest town to get a warrant signed.

Well, we're sitting there in the dessert with these six stokers discussing the fact that if a bunch of Arabs came charging across the dessert that one of us or all of us would have to go to the nearest town to get this warrant before we opened fire.

So it was decided that we'd all go into the town - including the officer. That was something that I couldn't understand at all.

Anyway it all went off very quietly and we landed a couple of times and there was never any bother where we were.

There was an oil field in the dessert and you get these images in your mind of these great gantries sticking up and with pipes everywhere but an operational oil field, where it's been drilled out and in production, is about 4 or 5 feet square of concrete with a pipe coming up and a valve on the top. When you open up the valve and attach a pipe to it, it pumps oil out and that's all we saw just squares of concrete with pipes sticking out.

Mostly we spent the days in the dessert and the nights back on board. I think we spent a couple of nights in army barracks in Bahrain. Then we went up to Kuwait where they were having problems but we didn't see anything untoward. The Gloucesters were involved in some skirmishes on a couple of times but not the navy.



From there we went back to Trincomalee for a week's leave. Left over from the war there was an army rest camp in the mountains and we were bussed there. Half the ship's company went for a week and when they returned the other half went.

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT MONTH



WORKING IN THE DOCKYARD

(by Audrey Nichols)

My Dad didn't want me to go and work in the shipyard because I was an only child you see and I was annoyed because I wanted to go into the WRNS and my dad wasn't very happy about that.

I was working in a shop and later on they couldn't defer me anymore so I said to the Labour Exchange that I'd like to do some work with ships. They said well you're too late to join the WRNS because they've filled their quota, the WAACS and the ATS they'd got their quotas too. I wasn't really bothered about that because I'd preferred the WRNS.

So she said well the only thing we can do for you is to send you to the Training Centre at Wallsend so my cousin and I, we were both the same age, we went together you see. We had a great time there - we were in digs in Holy Cross.

We both started out with bench fitting and I got on like a house on fire then they said that the instructor was leaving so would we go into the welding and we said we'll try it so we went into the oxyacetylene welding making tin boxes. It was hilarious because we seemed to be burning holes in them all the time so I think he gave us up as a bit of a bad job because the instructor kept saying "Oh dear Oh dear" There was four of actually, the other two ladies were called Ruby and Mabel and they were twins.

Then they said would you go and do some electrical work and so we did that and when our training was over they said well you can either go down south in a factory or you can go into Swan shipping yards at Wallsend and work on the boats and we decided to go there.

We wondered what kind of people we were going to work with, you know, respectable people looked down on lady workers there but honestly when we got there it was great. First of all we thought there were different types of persons there and we weren't going to be sheltered there and what were we going to get into working with the men. But we had a really good time there.

We came from a mining family so you see our parents were very narrow minded, in the war years especially, and they were frightened that anything was going to happen to us and they thought that anybody working in the shipyards were a little bit, you know! Of course when we went for our interview we were dressed to kill and they said "Oh dear. Would you go into the offices" and I said I don't want to go into the offices I don't like office work.



My cousin and I were separated because two ladies weren't allowed to work together -

why? - I don't know. I suppose it's 'cos we were working in the same places as electricians, joiners. We were tack welding and I was on an aircraft carrier, it was in the stocks at the time and it was *HMS Leviathan* and next to it was the cruiser *Superb*. They were making it through the war into a sort of luxury liner for peacetime. I think they were going to make it into a ship for war but it was too late in the day.

I was working with platers at first and then I worked with the electricians and joiners. Actually I think I worked with the platers mostly because I did the tack welding.

I got my release when I was 21 because it was the end of the German war but we were still fighting the Japs. I got eight pound fifteen when I was on piece-work it was a fortune.

Audrey Nichols was a British civilian who worked as tack welder at Swan Hunter shipyard, Tyneside, GB, 1943-1945



PHOTO ALBUM

1954

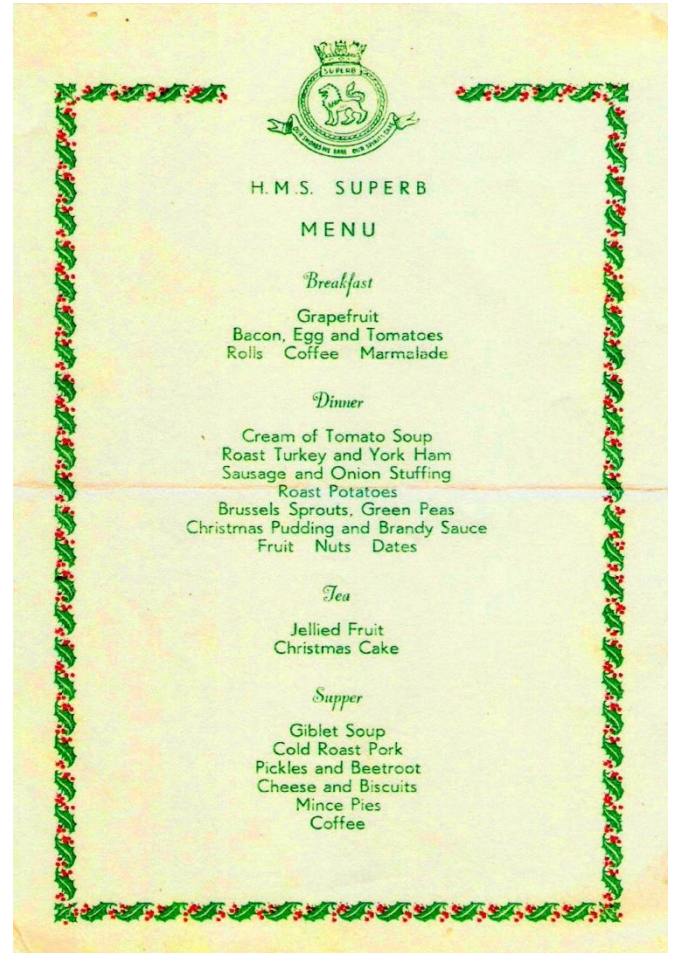
*Photo kindly
donated by
Emile Keane*



The holidays are here.



Lunch
Menu
1956



Christmas 1952

*Photograph kindly donated
by Debbie Richardson*



25 & 27 Messes Bahrein 1956

Photograph kindly donated by Joe Heaton



1956 Bahrein - Nobby Norman seated in front
(Photo kindly donated by Wendy Norman)

Have you a photo of the Superb?

We are endeavouring to collect as many photos or newspaper cuttings which relate to members of the crew (that does include YOU) or an image of the ship itself

The reason behind this is to help complete the history of one of the longest serving (by name) British Royal Navy ships

Contact Brian Saunders, if you can help, by email



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)

NO NOTIFICATIONS THIS MONTH



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

From previous issues

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 e 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



PERSONS WHO RECEIVE THIS MAGAZINE

Andy **Brierley** (1954) - Derek **Baldry** (1956) - Alf **Brown** (1954) - Bob **Butcher** (1951) - Ron **Clay** (1956-57) - Bill **Cook** (1956) - Jim **Copus** (1954) - Ted **Davy** (1945 Canada) - John **Eccleston** (1956) - Mark **Field** (Son of Charlie **Field** 1946) - Clive **Godley** (1954) - Maureen Taylor (Daughter of Ron **Gray** 1946) - Phil **Grimson** (1953 & 1954) - Tony **Hacket** (1953) - Terry Hall (son of Bert **Hall** 1946) - Alan **Harmer** (1955 - 56) - Joe **Heaton** (1956) - Brian **Hill** (1954) - Emile [Coder] **Keane** (1954 - 55) - Rita Keeler (Wife of Brian **Keeler** 1954) - Charlie **Kingston** (1956) - Sharon Goodall (Daughter of Fred **Kinsey** Co-Founder 1950-52) - Ray **Lambert** (1955) - Don **Lawrence** (1954) - Peter **MacDonald** (1949-51) - Arthur **Maxted** (1951) - George **Messmer** (USN 1954 - USA) - Malcolm **Milham** (1953) - Wendy **Norman** (Wife of David Norman 1956) - Margaret Norgan (Wife of Jim **Norgan** 1946) - Frank **Nunn** (1954) - Dave **Perrin** (1954) - Debbie Richardson (Daughter of Bill **Potticary** (1952) - Brian **Saunders** (1954 - 55 France) - Will Sherwood (Son of Bill **Sherwood** 1954) - Rob **Smith** (1956) - Jeff Stewart (Son of Jim **Stewart** 1947 Australia) - Pete **Tasker** (1954) - Paul Taylor (Son of Ken **Taylor** 1954) - Brian **Turner** (Associate) - John **Voak** - John **Ward** (1953) - Norman **Webber** (1956) - Jon **Willshir** (1953 Thailand)

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

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Our Chairman



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