

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

A MAGAZINE FOR THE MEMBERSHIP

*July, 2017*

**Nº 8**



**OUR SWORDS WE BARE  
OUR SPIRITS DARE**

**CHAIRMAN OF THE ASSOCIATION IS ROBIN SMITH**

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**Superb - Defending Britain Since 1710**

# ANDY BRIERLEY'S BLOG

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Hello Shipmates,

In my last letter I mentioned a 102 year old Engineer Officer crossing the bar. Another who crossed last month, also at the magic number of 102 years, Lt. R.N.V.R. Eric Worsley. He was science master At Thetford Grammar School. Called up in late 1940 to be told he was now a bomb disposal officer.

Training for that expertise was a ten day course, during which he watched a German bomb being dismantled - disarmed. I would hazard a guess that's no longer than the current course by Health and Safety Exec. on how to clean a paint brush in a can of solvent! Immediately thrown in the deep end making Pompey safe following the spate of air raids, plus many within the barracks proper!

One pierced a shelter full of W.R.E.N.s who tiptoed round it when Eric arrived, to thank their lucky stars. A heavy work load saw him decorated twice within 8 months - George Medal + M.B.E.. Issued with a Norton motor bike as personal transport was stopped by police for speeding on several occasions.

An order was issued he be given a 'white painted helmet' denoting he was on an urgent mission allowing him to proceed with 'the utmost dispatch' (R.N. speak). He survived to be de-mobbed then lectured in physics at Hull University. He is recorded as playing tennis at 100, a Yorkshire man from Hessle and an acknowledged man of the first order.

I learn that July 25th is that annual day of seafarers. - their motto 'Seafarers Matter'. They do make a unique contribution to world economy, International trade and Civil Society. The slogan says everything about the Merchant marine who, I believe, initiated that date.

Made me wonder about a recent sinking in the South Atlantic of a vessel, cargo 260.000 tons on iron ore, out of Brazil for China. Vessel was South Korean with officers from that country and Malaya, bulk of the rest Philipinos. Only 2 survived.

They would be on long hours with little leave at home, paid a pittance. The two survivors said the hull 'simply cracked open'. Size of load is breath-taking, over length of vessel. It was of 19 other V.L.O.C.s built in 1993 that began life as tankers 'before conversion.

One cannot escape the thought that conversion was a major contributor to the disaster, and more can be expected at such loads.



Cruise liner owner, Fred Olsen stretched three of his small liners by, I think, 30 meters. I've been on two and could not resist walking the quayside to find the joints, see weld quality; not scared, just interested. No sign of modification was visible on the inside!

To me Chatham Dockyard was better than Aladdin's cave. One could disappear for hours and days on end into workshops - seeing who was in dry dock etc., visit the shipwright's cavernous shed with a memorable smell of high quality wood being worked. one dock of major interest was where Cavalier now sits.

The Guppy programme for subs. (greater underwater propulsion) was getting underway. Sub. was severed, a short distance before conning tower, and pulled apart on blocks for insertion of a 'double battery space' - hence the programme name. Was a mind-boggler at the time, to witness. Have heard say that, with advanced battery technology, the programme was a raging success.

The nuke sub. ear was well after my time but I ever wonder if the wonderful 'hammer head crane', over that pair of docks, was the one used to withdraw the cruisers 6 turrets at the St. Mary's Side of 3 basin, a splendid sight!

Many photos exist of dockyard work, but never seen one of that event. I feel that wonderful crane was reduced to scrap when D'YD closed. What an attraction it would make today if given the same treatment as the 'hammer head' that sat at John Brown's yard on the Clyde.

A lift to the top, which is modified into a 'safe walkway viewing platform, Glasgow's rival to the London Eye, at a fraction of the cost; the view, incidentally, would be looking over the scene of the Dutch raid on our fleet - breaking the 'chain boom' to Upnor Castle, towing our flagship back to Holland after burning the rest of the fleet. Kipling has a lovely poem of the incident, which had its anniversary only a couple of days ago. Celebrations in Holland of De Ruyter's victory was celebrated here also.

A magnanimous gesture I feel. Closure of the yard brought scenes of monumental waste and wanton destruction of priceless industrial artefacts, greed for scrap swamped all thought of preservation. This, in spite of knowledge that a large portion of that place was destined to be a 'National Heritage site. I say, if one kept a low profile, to show interest in a 'maties' job was always met with friendly response, a demonstration or explanation, not only the heavy stuff but 'upholstery', sign writing, badge casting or copper-smithing - you name it, Chatham did it.

The 38th president of the United States, Gerald R Ford did his combat duty on a 'Woolworth's carrier' in the pacific during W.W 2, U.S.S. Monterey.

First of a new design of proper 'super carrier', nuclear powered, weighing in at 1000.000 tons (U.S.), is named after that president (C V N 78). A weeks' sea trials behind it she appears a quantum jump ahead of all current stuff. They claim 25 more aircraft launches with 25% fewer crew. What excites me about it is the first installation of what's called E.M.A.L.S (electromagnetic launch system) - Catapults.

The big U. S. carriers have all had four catapults supported by a standalone 'steam generation system' to meet massive demand for steam when flying off at full tilt. The weight, complexity vulnerability and space demands high up in the hull could only be a design headache. Nukes makes electricity in abundance, so to run a cable up the decks to new system must make designer' builders feel it's Christmas every day, a massive bonus in weight, space, complexity of steam pipes all saved in one hit.

A shed load of years ago I recall seeing, on a B.B.C. science programme, Professor Laithweight of a northern university, demonstrate with a model, a wheel-less friction train that completely eclipsed Stevenson's Rocket - later years saw a development of an artillery piece (rail gun) that needs no powder explosive to eject the shell. This R & D is still on-going. The E.M.A.L.S system seems to have elements of both. I wish for its massive success. Another feature that pleases the eye for form and function is the 'uncluttered island' that is smaller and fitted further aft.

It would be most interesting to hear the design teams of G. R. Ford and our Rosyth offerings 'make their cases' for such radically differing bridge designs. Why our two monstrosities on deck edge?

Been off the pen and ink for a few days. Something I touched on in my last letter, namely oaths sworn by M. P.s. I found, in his young days, Benjamin Disraeli, later to become Prime Minister (1868) was not even eligible to be an M. P. as he was Jewish!, so unable to swear the M .P.s oath - i.e. 'on the true faith of a Christian'.

Must say that leaves plenty of latitude, which they exploit to the full.... This day, 11th June (1770) Captain James Cook of Whitby ran into the Great Barrier Reef holing the *Endeavour*. You already know J.C. was a superb seaman, saved his ship and crew to sail countless more thousands of miles.

It is a fact David Scott, pilot of command module Apollo 15 named his craft *Endeavour*, after Captain Cook's vessel, for the moon mission.

Whilst in the Culture section, my earlier mention of that Kipling poem made me go and look it out. Being all about Chatham & Medway, plus the navy's parlous state, it fits our situation this very day (copy below), hope you like verse.



## The Dutch in the Medway

If wars were won by feasting,  
Or victory by song,  
Or safety found in sleeping sound,  
How England would be strong!  
But honour and dominion  
Are not maintained so.  
They're only got by sword and  
shot,  
And this the Dutchmen know!  
The moneys that should feed us  
You spend on your delight,

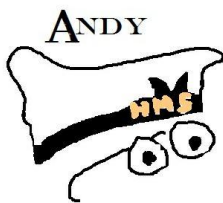
How can you then have sailor-men  
To aid you in your fight?  
Our fish and cheese are rotten,  
Which makes the scurvy grow -  
We cannot serve you if we starve,  
And this the Dutchmen know!  
Our ships in every harbour  
Be neither whole nor sound,  
And, when we seek to mend a leak,  
No oakum can be found;  
Or, if it is, the caulkers,  
And carpenters also,

For lack of pay have gone away,  
And this the Dutchmen know!  
Mere powder, guns, and bullets,  
We scarce can get at all;  
Their price was spent in  
merriment  
And revel at Whitehall,  
While we in tattered doublets  
From ship to ship must row,  
Beseeching friends for odds and  
ends -  
And this the Dutchmen know!

I wished to mention Cdr. David Repard, but fear you have had enough for any old bit of stuff - so, next time eh?!

**(There will be an article on David Repard published in next October's issue - Editor)**

Tatty Bye Shipmates, be aware of white van man!



## Sailors quit Navy as life on new £3billion aircraft carrier is too boring

About 21 seamen have quit the Royal Navy in the last few weeks while based on the flagship *HMS Queen Elizabeth* in Rosyth, Fife.



**Insiders claim the aircraft carrier's crew are bored**  
Fed-up sailors are walking off Britain's new £3.1billion aircraft carrier amid claims morale is at an all-time low. About 21 seamen have quit the Royal Navy in the last few weeks while based on the flagship HMS Queen Elizabeth in Rosyth, Fife. Sources claim depressed sailors are being forced to work longer hours while requests for

transfers are being declined. One insider said personnel are resigning as a result.

The "dull conditions" aboard the carrier are also being blamed for depressing the crew.

About 700 sailors have been living on the ship since May 2016 but its sea trials have been held up until later this year.



## **“Dull conditions” aboard the carrier are also being blamed for depressing the crew.**

One sailor, who did not wish to be named, said: “Morale is at an all-time low. People join the Navy to see the world and that does not happen anymore.

“Hence the dwindling numbers and continuous line of personnel walking out the gate for the last time. On board *HMS Queen Elizabeth*, personnel are submitting their notice weekly.

“The ship is tight for numbers as it is. People aren't being released from the ship to go on resettlement courses before leaving the Navy because they can't get anyone on board to replace them.

“People want to change jobs within the Navy but are being declined because that would mean them leaving the ship. Some have submitted their notice because of it.”

Another sailor said: “The lads are being forced to work longer hours and weekends. There's just no rest right now.”

But a Navy spokesman claimed morale is high on the ship. He added: “We're all very upbeat and determined to get ready to sail in the summer.

“We're working hard to deliver the most complex and advanced warship ever built for the Navy.”

### **Dull life on bleak grey behemoth**

After a recent tour of the *HMS Queen Elizabeth*, it's not difficult to see why some sailors have become disillusioned and depressed about living onboard.

Seasoned Navy personnel should be used to the kind of cramped, bleak conditions on warships.

But surely spending a long deployment on this grey behemoth is enough to drive anyone daft after a while.

Sharing your sleeping quarters - four bunks to each tiny room - means there is no time away from your colleagues.

Ships don't have many windows and it's claustrophobic. Even the mess for mealtimes is like a dreary school canteen.

Delays have kept the flagship aircraft carrier tied up at Rosyth. And let's face it, Fife's not the Bahamas.





# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Always appreciate and look forward to receiving the magazine.  
Really enjoyed reading it. A big thank you.  
S/m Derek Baldry.

First class newsletter once again Brian, nice one matey.  
Shipmate Ray Lambert

Thanks, Brian, This is one message I will keep to remind me of a wonderful passage in my life - with excellent companions, amazing destinations, and memories that will stay with me forever. Not many young men have these privileges nowadays - more's the pity.  
Shipmate Phil Grimson



# SCRAN BAG (FREE ADVERTISING)

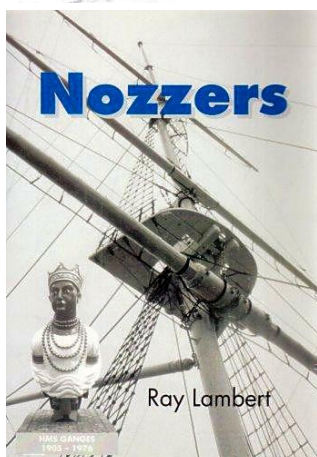
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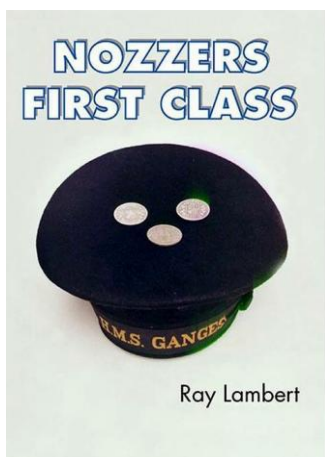
## Ray Lambert



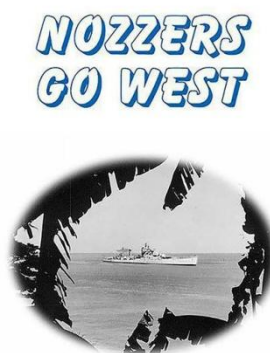
Has some of his books for sale which may remind you of how it was when we had wooden ships and iron men (well almost!)



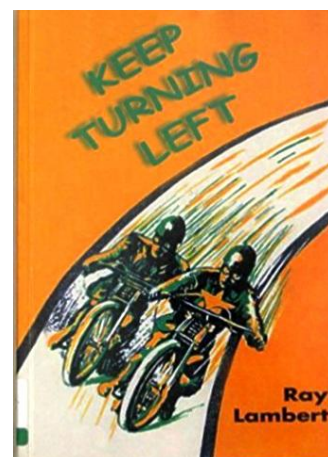
Ray Lambert



Ray Lambert



Ray Lambert



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.

Ray also knows his speedway onions - having reported on Canterbury and Crayford speedway clubs in the 1970s - and isn't afraid to ride his hobbyhorses in some style.

Each book costs £7.95 including UK postage. For more information contact Ray by email

Click [here to contact Ray](#) by email



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# SOME PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS OF THE FIRST COMMISSION OF HMS SUPERB 1945 - 1947 - PART 4/4

(by Ted G. Davy, AB - Seaman Torpedoman)

On our return to the U.K. we took part in various exercises with other ships of the Home Fleet. But we were really looking forward to early June for yet another Show-the-Flag trip to Scandinavia. ("Join the Navy and see the World" was the caption on a recruitment poster in the 1930s. Already the *Superb* crew had seen an interesting part of it.) We certainly weren't disappointed. Copenhagen was especially welcoming and the few of us who



had any money left also enjoyed our next port of call, Stockholm.

The two cities were an interesting contrast; the former had been under German occupation during most of World War 2, while the latter was one of the few major capital cities in Europe that had not experienced the horrors and deprivations of war. Later that Summer we visited Southend in the Thames Estuary where I had spent

several months in 1945. (With all due respect to Southend I don't think it would have won a popularity vote of the places we had visited in the previous eighteen months!)

In August that year we were "Guard Cruiser" at Cowes for the 1947 Cowes Week regatta. As far as we were concerned, it was a restful week. A private yacht that had belonged to one of the Nazi leaders, Hermann Goering, was there, and some of us were invited aboard.

It was now two years after World War 2 ended, and the RN began to step up discharging the Hostility Only ratings. Some of us had begun to think differently about this, which had previously been so looked forward to. Would there be a job for us when we were finally drafted for the last time? It appeared the only sure employment was in coal mining, which wasn't good news for those of us who lived in cities. There was a saying, "You don't get piped to dinner on the beach!"



My turn for discharge came in December, when a large draft was assembled. I can remember as if it were yesterday standing on a Portland jetty with all the others waiting

for transport, when a Regulating Petty Officer singled me out to take charge of this draft to Chatham, a cruel blow! As it happened, all went smoothly as everyone was thinking about Xmas at home and was taking no chances of being adrift.

### *The Old Order Changeth*

To backtrack, 1947 was to be a year of much change on board the *Superb*. When in January 1947 we returned from leave, it was now to a pretty happy, smooth running ship. By then we were almost down to our peacetime complement and it made a big difference in our comfort.

The majority had been aboard for over a year and were used to the routines and to each other. In the long term, the Torpedo Division would be affected by change more than any other, and although it would be some time before the change was noticeable, the introduction of a fledgling Electrical Division was obviously going to be an innovation of major proportions. I believe it was early in the year that an Electrical Officer was appointed to the *Superb*. A number of senior officers were also replaced around this time.

One of these appointments saw the *Superb's* Torpedo Officer, Lieut. Commander Steiner leaving to continue his naval career elsewhere. He had been one of the first officers to be appointed to the ship for several months while it was still under construction. On the lower deck, at least, he was the most popular officer in the Wardroom. A sudden thought about him: he had improvised a sizeable model of the ship, even having to use his wife's hair for the radio aerials. I hope the model has been preserved somewhere. I felt privileged to have been his Writer, as also for his replacement. Lieut. Commander George R. Heppel, DSO. When the time came, I gladly worked for him rather than work for the new Electrical Officer, not that there was any personal dislike of the latter on my part. The EO took over the office space between the 4" turrets on the port side, and the Torpedo Office then shared space in the Gunnery Office aft, an amicable arrangement.

In my opinion, the Admiralty had lacked foresight in respect to creating an Electrical Division, which probably should have occurred fifty years earlier. In retrospect I feel very sorry for the new EO. With but little naval background, he was the "new boy" in the Wardroom and his fellow officers were mostly individuals with long service. He not only had to develop his position almost from scratch, but had to put up with all the confusion created by the changes.

The Torpedo Division was further affected by another change that year, at least as far as the Mess was concerned. I think it was in the early Spring that about a dozen Chinese sailors were drafted to *Superb*, and were placed together in 43 Mess. They were on board ostensibly to learn their future roles (in electrics and electronics) in a light cruiser (*HMS Aurora*) that China had purchased from the RN. It is a pleasure to recall that for the most part the two groups lived closely alongside each other with little or no friction. For their part, the Chinese were very diplomatic. Most of them spoke English, quite a few almost perfectly. Many obviously possessed high IQs and I guessed that at least two or three would be officers on their new ship. Personally, I got along very well with them: made friends of two with whom I frequently enjoyed runs ashore.



## ***"Old Men Forget"***

The above account is what I remember but memory is apt to play funny tricks, and I won't claim this to be a reliable history. Yes, Shakespeare was right: We do forget. In any case, this has been only one man's personal experience, and of all the rest who served aboard *Superb* from 1945 to 1947 there would have different memories.

However, I have tried to focus on facts as much as I recalled them and have tried to be as accurate as possible in these reminiscences, but there are a few instances when I have been chronologically stumped.

For example, at one point we were briefly dry docked at Gibraltar to repair damage to the hull. I remember it clearly, but exactly when it happened is hazy. However, it must have been some time after the February 1947 escort run when we suffered damage to the hull.

Again, we spent some time at Invergordon, but when? I remember the lush turf there, ideal for sports, and the close football game we played against another ship's team.

Nor can I recall when we were in Aberdeen. It was there that a midshipman strutting the quarterdeck with a telescope accidentally dropped it over the side. His embarrassment was made worse in that the 'scope belonged to Rear Admiral A.B. Cunninghame Graham—it may have been they were related, not sure. A diver was sent down to recover it, I believe unsuccessfully.

Since starting to write these recollections, a surprising thought keeps crossing my mind. I can recall only once when we fired torpedoes, and that was off Weymouth in the Summer of 1946. If this is correct, it only goes to emphasize that the torpedo armament on surface ships was just about redundant, even so close to the end of the war.

An important part of my youth were the two years I spent on the *Superb*, and I don't regret a minute of it. The Torpedo Mess was where I slept, ate, and had social contact with my peers. The mess has seldom been absent from my mind as I have thought back to the events recorded above, so am adding a few notes of what I remember about it.

### ***The Torpedo Mess***

Some Torpedo men messed in one of the forecastle spaces. The remainder, however, were lucky to be located on the upper deck just forward of the torpedo tubes and immediately aft of the main galley. This space actually contained three messes. I was in #41, the largest, with over 20 occupants; #40 had 8; #43 about 16. I still think back in wonder that so many men could live, eat and sleep in such a small area; however, I cannot remember any serious rows because of it.



Indeed, especially in the second year, there could have been few happier groups anywhere. One of the few ongoing causes of general discontent in our mess was that the Regulating Office considered its location was ideal for "passengers", and if for example a half dozen Army or even civilian personnel needed transportation from one port to

another they would invariably be billeted with us, adding to our already overcrowded condition.

I believe that the occupants of the Torpedo mess were fairly representative of young Englishmen in the immediate post war (not the hoity toity types). As a Chatham based ship, most were from London and the East of England, though there were a few Scots among us. Mainly because of the war, few of us had then completed our education, though in my recollection there was no shortage of intelligence occupying that relatively small living space.

Inevitably there were "characters" and other memorable individuals there. Among some of these I recall after seventy years:

- a popular Welshman, "Taffy", who was a brilliant football player, generally thought to be of professional standard, and was the star of Superb's team.
- a Killick LTO who had an inordinate craving for onions; when he could get them, he lay in his hammock eating them raw, making the mess unbearably stinky;
- "Able Seaman Long," naturally the shortest man in the mess. "Able Seaman Short," naturally the tallest man in the Torpedo division.
- a cockney AB with a photographic memory; for several months he and I were in adjoining hammock spaces, and being a sceptic, I tested his extraordinary ability several times. To my certain knowledge, he possessed this rare gift, and I hope he was able to build a lucrative career around it.
- a mess-mate who wrote his fiancée every single day; long letters at that, and he received an equal number in return. I hope they eventually enjoyed lasting happiness. He was involved in one of the few tiffs on our messdeck over two years: someone had made an indiscreet remark regarding young women, and he mistakenly thought it was directed to his fiancée, and took umbrage.
- an albino. Poor fellow, his body could hardly tolerate being in the sun and I have often wondered how, with this condition, he had passed his original medical, let alone subsequent ones. He was one of the first of the commissioning crew to be drafted off.
- a Killick LTO who was a skilful whaler coxswain; he would frequently take the ship's whaler for a spin on Make and Mend afternoons, and never had difficulty recruiting a crew, the writer included.

The *Superb* Torpedo Mess was like others of its kind in the RN in that its occupants had access to brighter lamps than those installed for normal use. So on the occasion of Captain's Rounds, out came larger wattage replacement bulbs; the mess deck really sparkled and almost invariably won praise.



Lower deck humour is impossible to rationalise. One inane example exclusive to the *Superb's* Torpedo Mess was that of a certain Petty Officer who, when walking aft and going through or by the Torpedo Mess, would call "Shitbag" to an AB whom he knew from their training together as Boy Seamen. Routinely the occupants of the mess would shout "What bag?" and were answered "Kit bag." A rather childish ritual, but it went on daily for months! This apart, we did laugh a lot, a happy bunch of men for most of the time.

If you missed earlier chapters of Ted's Tale they can be read by re-visiting earlier editions of the Magazine - Go to the [Archive](#) Section at the end of this Magazine

**My thanks to Ted for the very interesting account of his time on board. It's thanks to all those who put pen to paper that Britain's history will be remembered for future generations. Brian Saunders Editor.**



### 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





# JOTTINGS OF A VERY ORDINARY SEAMAN

## PART 4

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(by Ray Lambert)

**W**ith about six weeks to wait while my new class was assembled, I was not looking forward to returning to Anson Block and the mind numbing tasks of sweeping leaves or whatever they could find to keep us occupied but fate stepped in with amazing



Would you like bangers with that Chiefy ?  
If you'll excuse the pun !

accuracy and transported me to the GI' mess on the end of Hawke Block. The reason was simple: their national service assistant mess man had a stay in RNH booked and - right on cue - I was free and, with almost split second timing, I slotted right in to relieve him. The mess man was Geordie, a three badged AB; Geordie had the situation well under control and didn't need much help. It was a pleasure to serve civilised meals at a leisurely pace and eat mine in comfort as well.

Unfortunately all good things must come to an end and, with almost the timing when he left, the National Serviceman returned and by the greatest of coincidence

my time was up and my course was ready to start. Having spent a very comfortable six weeks in the GI' mess, I was then ready to face the onslaught of the Gunnery School once more for the start of my second class course.

The course, or the beginning of it at least, was almost a repeat of the three's course making it a doddle and knowing the instructors from the last six weeks of eating and sleeping with them (Oh, hello sailor, no we were not that close, just sleeping in the same dormitory) , I could almost sleep walk through those early weeks. There appeared to be more emphasis on the parade ground this time but with Ganges having shown me the way and coupled with my earlier course, I found that a cake walk as well.

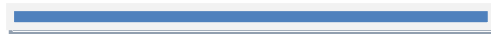
Things had to begin to get serious I surmised but no. After a while and during the summer, we were shipped down to Sheerness for the rifle range. During that period, summer leave came around and my class and a class of controllers, were kept back to man the place. I was deputy quartermaster with a fat Yorkie as QM. He was not any more interested than me and got caught dismantling the telephone to get the money out. I was also Postie on my watch which meant riding my bike to the post office each day. I don't know if it was part of the



curriculum or not but I got into my head to statch the bike behind the pub opposite and avail myself of two pints of their hospitality before returning with the mail.

Off duty, one of the controllers, a Norwich man and I used to go to Margate for a couple of days; all thoughts of QA's and FC's completely forgotten!

*By now we were half way through the course and not a lot had happened.- but changes were afoot.....watch this space!*



# JAMES OWEN NORGAN

## - A WIFE'S MEMORIES

---

(by Margaret Norgan)

Jim was born in 1927 in, Islington, North London and left school at the age of 14.

His first work experience was that of a tea boy which entailed fetching the men mugs of hot steamy tea and dripping sandwiches, plus any other odd job he was called upon to do.

He had joined the Sea Cadets earlier on and this led to an interest in the navy. and this is a brief glimpse into Jim's navy days including stories told to me and our children, and many friends over the years.

There is no chronological sequence to the anecdotes and I genuinely believe that some of the happiest times of Jim's life were those spent in the Royal Navy. Many years after his service he spoke often and fondly of the experience.

I didn't know Jim at the time so these are memories of his memories.

Jim's service in the Royal Navy began in the January of 1945 when, at the age of 17 years, he volunteered for a period of three years or until the emergency ended - the emergency being the Second World War that was still in progress.

He had no particular skills and signed on as an assistant cook. I believe he was hoping to see some action but it was not to be for the war ended in May of that same year, the same month that Jim had his 18th birthday.

He had to present himself on the 6th February to the recruiting centre, and on that same day he was assigned to *HMS Royal Arthur* - a stone frigate at Skegness- for his training.

The first talk given to the new recruits was about the 'Birds and the Bees'. I can just picture the faces of those young men as they waited in eager anticipation for the talk to begin. I can just picture, too, their faces at the end - perhaps wondering why an increased knowledge of the birds and the bees, not forgetting the rabbits, could enhance their future love life! I can imagine how those testosterone-filled young men must have felt.

Ever conscious of the men's welfare, when a ship was about to enter a port a notice was put up warning them of the dangers of sexually transferred diseases in the area.



Without wishing to denigrate Newcastle it was apparently one of the worse places in the British Isles. To help the men even further, as they left the ship for shore leave, they doffed their hats and three condoms were placed inside! Sounds like it was a short leave

to me. Obviously the men had moved on since the 'Birds and the Bees'.



After training Jim was assigned to HMS *Superb* in the October of 1945.

One of his tasks was to make the evening mug of cocoa for the officers. This was not made with the normal brown powder such as we use today. Oh! No! This was the genuine McCoy. Pieces were cut from a large slab of chocolate - placed in the mug and hot milk poured over.

Jim seemed to enjoy this as between the galley and the officers he was able to sample some of the softened chocolate lumps. I think the words 'seemed to enjoy' are a bit of an understatement! He often said, in later years, that he wished he could buy the 'best chocolate in the world'.

There was an occasion when he missed the last train back to his ship - called 'being adrift'. This was a very serious offence because being late, one ran the risk of being left ashore, should the ship have to sail. He had to sleep on a station bench and wait for the milk train! He was woken by a station guard who wanted to know what he was doing there.

When Jim explained the guard was quite sympathetic and promised to wake Jim at the appropriate time!

Arriving back at the ship the duty Petty Officer and Officer of the Watch informed Jim that he was 'On the Rattle', which meant he had to present himself the next morning at the Commander's Table to explain the reason for being late.

His punishment was to run around the deck a given number of times with a rifle above his head. He told us that 'This was easy-peasy'. Was he just showing off to his children? On the other hand, he was very young and fit at the time!

This particular punishment was probably called No. 9s of the King's Regulations & Admiralty Instructions; the punishment for excessive and repeated lateness a man could, in lieu of detention, be sentenced to 7, 14, 21 or 28 days Number 9s.

Jim never did divulge the reason for missing the train - I wouldn't mind betting it was a girl he met whilst on leave, and being a true sailor, saw her home for a goodnight kiss!

I think Jim learnt his lesson first time round.



My favourite story is about the Rum ration and I was given to understand that any surplus rum had to be disposed of. Sounds illogical but .....

Jim and his mates devised a scheme whereby the excess rum was not lost. I do not know who, amongst the group was responsible for the idea, but the plan was this: One of the sinks in the galley was sterilised, as was the pipe beneath. So too was a bucket. The bung was removed from the pipe and so the rum would travel into the bucket. I don't how it was stored, or even if they were ever discovered, but Jim certainly enjoyed the telling of this tale. There must have been some Jolly Jack Tars in the galley.



Can I touch your collar for luck, Jack?

It has been widely believed that to touch a sailor's collar brought good luck. I cannot trace where this came from but my daughter read in one book that originally a girl would touch a sailor's collar to make him stop and turn. The girl would relieve the sailor of all his hard earned cash whilst on board (it doesn't mention how this was achieved!).

I know that when Jim was out and about in town he would often get someone touching his collar. Initially he felt quite chuffed at this but it became a nuisance after a while. Who knows, I might have been one of those who touched his collar for luck!

## PLACES VISITED.

**AMSTERDAM.** ..... Like many of the European countries, Holland was occupied by the Germans during the war and, like other countries, the population suffered a great deal.



Jim is standing back row 3rd from left

'HMS Superb' paid a goodwill visit and the sailors were made very welcome. There were invites to homes, parties and dances.

I think the Dutch wanted to say 'Thank you' to England for their efforts in freeing them from the Nazi Regime.

## MALTA.

The island of Malta was an important strategic place during the war and the Germans were very anxious to have it for themselves. Malta was part of English territory. Due to its

importance, the Germans put Malta under constant attack. As a consequence the citizens were under bombardment on a daily basis. At the end of the hostilities the Island was awarded the George Cross by King George VI



**Valetta** the main port was full of English ships.

Jim always said he didn't like Malta but, years later, it was one of the first places we visited, at his suggestion.

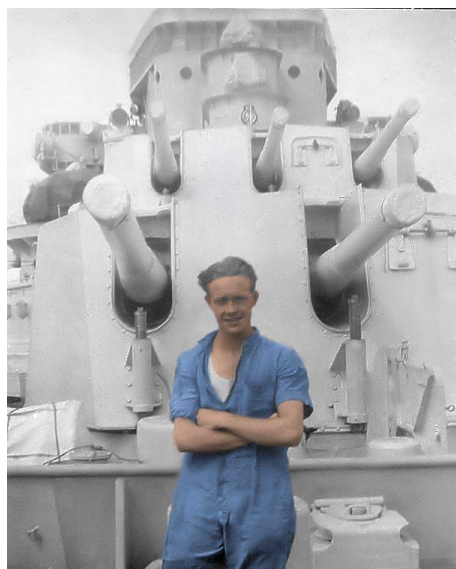
By that time Malta had gained its independence from England. I was treated to a tour of Valetta, and to one place in particular - a very narrow street called 'The Gut'. This was a

notorious place where the sex trade was prevalent. The girls would stand in doorways plying for trade and one way they did this was to try and grab a sailor's hat to get his attention. Losing one's hat was one of the worst offences - I'm sure the punishment for this was severe.

The men were made very welcome by the population - dances and invites were abundant. Not much chance of chatting up the girls at the dances as they were always accompanied by a chaperone.

### TRIESTE

Italy was on the opposing side during the war until almost the end when the population rose up against their involvement with Germany.



Stoker 1st Class Jim Norgan

Again, the ship's company was made very welcome with the usual dances and tea parties. They were warned not to take advantage of the generosity of the people as they had so little, but were anxious to share and also, in a way, to say 'Thank-you'.

### HAIFA

This was not a goodwill visit by the 'Superb' as Israel was in turmoil at that time. I'm not sure of its role in being there but it centred round the number of Jewish refugees from Germany and other parts of the world who wanted a State of their own.

The ship was fired on and, because of the concern for the sailors' safety, they were only allowed to swim near the ship and were guarded by two or more small boats with armed sailors on board.

These boats were also used for ferrying men ashore, or bringing guests for cocktails with the captain.

In the beginning the Jews were not allowed to land as the world was not happy with the situation. However, Israel eventually gained their longed for State.

### IRELAND

The first visit here was to accompany King George VI. He came aboard the 'Superb' to thank them for the escort.



To Jim it looked as if the King was wearing make-up. He found this to be true, as most of the Royals, including the men had to be clearly seen by the people.

The second trip was to take Princess Elizabeth to Belfast.

There were visits to ports around the British Isles, including Southend-on-Sea with its famous Kursaal, where the sailors enjoyed many an evening.

### **OSTEND, Belgium**

This country was also invaded by the Germans and suffered much devastation. The usual warm welcome awaited the ship and its crew and the usual entertainment was laid on.

During all the fun, and not so fun, times of Jim's service, his 'partner in crime 'was Norman Newman.

Norman came from Dudley - had a girlfriend to whom he wrote every night but that didn't stop him from enjoying the dances and entertainment during their foreign trips.

After their service they lost touch. I guess it was difficult as they lived quite a few miles apart.

### **FIFTY YEARS LATER.**

I had written a letter to a magazine and by happy chance Norman read that magazine and recognised the unusual surname. He contacted the magazine to ask to be put in touch. A letter arrived!



Margaret, Jim & Norman

Norman and his wife were off to Eastbourne for a holiday so we decided to go to Eastbourne for a weekend to meet up and so began a wonderful friendship. We would visit them and they would visit us. Such happy times - Norman was a wit and he tried to teach me to speak with a Northern accent! He always had a camera to hand.

Sadly Norman died around 2006/7. I know men are not supposed to cry but it was so sad a time, for Jim in particular. I still treasure those memories.



### **A POSTSCRIPT**

Within a year or so of leaving the Navy, Jim contracted tuberculosis. His condition was very serious and an operation was the only way to move forward. He was 23 yrs. old.

Tuberculosis was rife at the time - his brother had died during a similar operation and Jim's mother did all she could to persuade Jim against it. Jim decided he would take the 50-50 chance that was offered, rather than remain an invalid with a short life expectancy. He had two ribs removed for the operation and a collapsed lung.

He was extremely lucky in that he came through the operation thanks to the surgeon and his team, but also to the fact the Royal Navy Benevolent Fund paid for him to recuperate in Switzerland where he would sleep on the veranda to benefit from the fresh mountain air.

His mother died whilst he was there but he was not allowed home and on return to the UK, the fear of tuberculosis was great and many previous friends crossed the road, rather than speak to him. Not a good experience for a young man.

It all turned out all right in the end, he met ME and there begins another story.

*Photos in this article kindly donated by Margaret Norgan*





# MAN OVERBOARD !

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By Clive Godley

Looking back over my 84 years I can say categorically that I was proud to be a stoker on board the *Superb* and it was my favourite ship, maybe because I went there as a new PO and all the others in the mess were so helpful to a young sprog. I think I can remember the names of all of them. I still get a buzz as regards my boiler job

One thing that stands out was at the end of the East African cruise in 1957 I think it was about 3rd March. Having sailed from Dakar on the east African coast we were steaming up the Medway to Chatham, with our Paying off Pennant flying.

The Stoker P.O.s mess was on the port side next to the Bofors. We were always Stoker POs not POSM or POMES. I think it was early afternoon and I was wandering around, probably having a fag. I went over to starboard, looking at the scenery and thinking it won't be long before I see my wife again and admiring the view.

Suddenly my relative peace was shattered and I heard someone shout "Man Overboard " and I looked aft and because we weren't going very fast I saw a man in the water.



Clive Godley

I ran for'ard as fast as I could to the ladder up to the bridge and kept shouting at the top of my voice "Man Overboard", just before I got to the top a Marine appeared and I told him a man was in the water on the starboard side.

The Marine immediately turned away from me and darted quickly up another ladder then I then heard 4 loud blasts from the ship's horn and all of a sudden I felt the ship shuddering almost to a standstill and then lurched Full Astern, an order rarely given.

Just a little bit about how this effects engine and boiler staff. The engine room shuts off steam to the normally used turbine and opens the valve fully to the astern turbine which gobbles every bit of steam the boilers can produce. The boilers normal pressure is 400 and it went down to about 310 even with the boilers flat out.

Joe Ather was in the for'ard boiler room and I think Les Seeks in the after and they said it was like a madhouse. Both of them had been in the *Andrew* for many years and this had never happened before. Going astern seems a bit weird but we eventually got to him.

Glad to say the man was picked up, but I don't know who he was, must have been very upset about something!



# COCKLESHELL HEROES RAID COMMEMORATED

**B**ack in May this year a team of former Servicemen retraced the journey of the Cockleshell Heroes to mark the 75th anniversary of the raid.

Members of the Pilgrim Bandits Charity paddled from the Bay of Biscay up the Gironde estuary and river to the French port of Bordeaux from May 27 to June 2.

The eight were joined by former Wren Sarah Holmes, the great niece of one of the original WW2 commandos George Sheard.

Immortalised in the film *The Cockleshell Heroes*, *Operation Frankton* was a strategic attack on German shipping in Bordeaux in December 1942, carried out by a small unit of canoe-sculling Royal Marines.

Royal Naval Submarine *HMS Tuna* sailed from Holy Loch in Scotland with six clippers (canoes) and 34 commandos on board. In horrendous weather and, despite a previously undetected minefield, *HMS Tuna* surfaced ten miles from the mouth of the Gironde estuary in the Bay of Biscay.



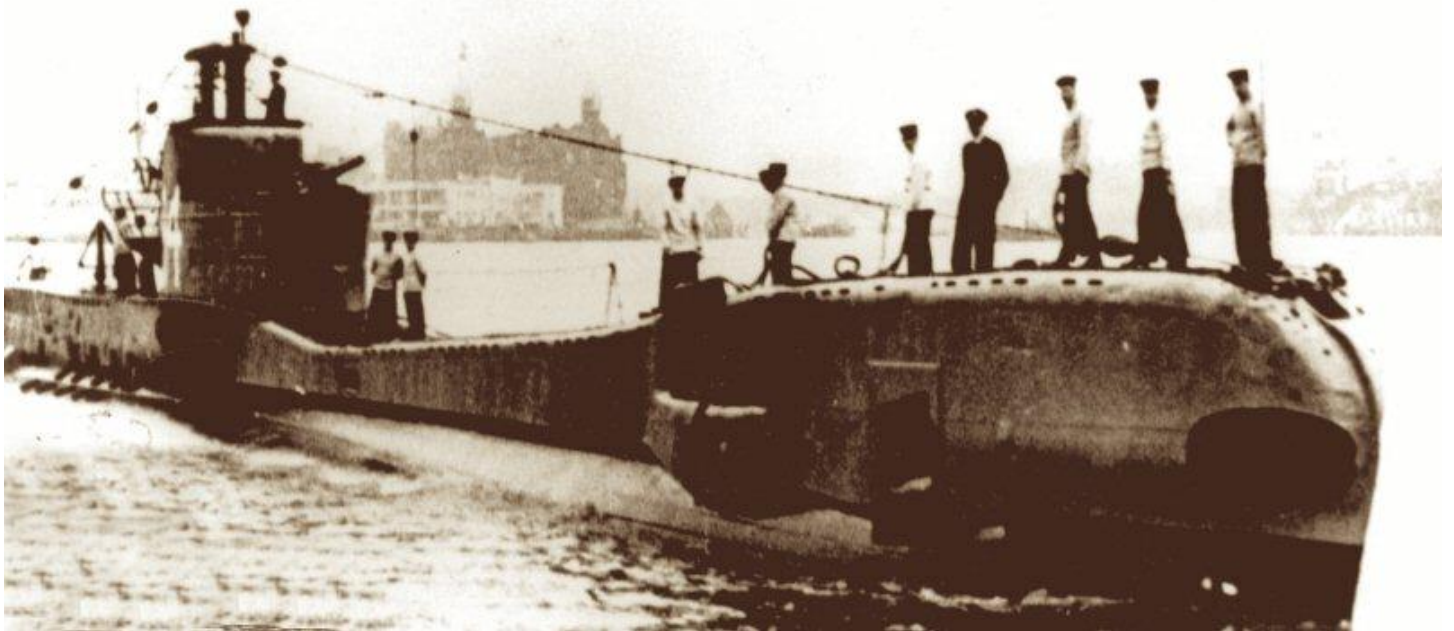
Whilst unloading one clipper was wrecked so only five set out. Fighting against strong winds and tides, which resulted in the loss of another canoe, the remaining four crews paddled non-stop for five nights (sleeping during the day) to cover the 60 miles upstream to Bordeaux.

With the arsenal of limpet mines they had carried, the commandos successfully destroyed two German naval trawlers, 12 E boats, 12 patrol boats and six M-Class mine sweepers. Just two men survived the mission. Eight were executed and two more died of hypothermia.

The Pilgrim Bandits expedition is designed to honour all the fallen of WW2 and commemorate the huge achievement made by all those that took part in Operation Frankton.

Those taking part included former Royal Marine and double-leg amputee Vincent Manley.

## H.M.S. Tuna



# PHOTO ALBUM

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Jim Norgan and an oppo having a swinging time on Hampstead Heath during the Easter Fair.

This photograph appeared years ago in the London "Star" newspaper and you can read more about Jim and his exploits in this Magazine by clicking [HERE](#)

*Photo kindly donated by Margaret Norgan*



circa May,1956 HMS Superb dry docked in Colombo.  
*Photo kindly donated by Clive Godley*



## 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

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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



# OCTOBER IN GILLINGHAM

This year our Annual reunion will start off with a short meeting, before the evening meal, of those members wives & friends present on **Friday 6th October**. At some stage during this meeting a short (12 minute) film will be shown of the cruiser Superb in San Francisco, Seattle and return to Chatham in 1955. The film hasn't been publically viewed before so although quite brief members might find it of interest.

**This year we will be having live music in the shape of a lady soloist who should keep us entertained.** Debbie, the owner, of the King Charles Hotel in Gillingham welcomes us once again for our October reunion and this is a little prompt for you to consider a night or two away.

For example the cost of a **double** room for Friday & Saturday nights would include the following

**Friday** night - 3 course meal

**Saturday** morning - Full English Breakfast (or several other choices including vegetarian)

**Saturday** night - 4 course Reunion Dinner

**Sunday** morning - - Full English Breakfast as Saturday morning

**The price for 2 nights is £130 per person**

If you can only make it for the Saturday night then the same **double** room would include the 4 course Reunion Dinner and breakfast on Sunday morning for £65 per person

Those of you who live really close might consider just coming for the Reunion Dinner on Saturday night and the cost for that is £27 per person.

Single rooms are also available - have a look at the Reservation Form for more information

If you'd like to discuss any other arrangements with the hotel please speak to Debbie





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THERE IS A LIFT TO ALL FLOORS

**PLEASE DON'T LEAVE IT TO THE LAST  
MINUTE TO BOOK**





# REUNION REMINDER

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A Note for Your Diary  
The next Reunion  
will be at  
The King Charles Hotel,  
Gillingham, Kent  
Friday, Saturday + Sunday  
6th to 8th October  
Be There or Be Square !

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 make it

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?





"WHICH PUB WE GOIN' TO NOW LADS?"



## 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) - Eleanor **Fochesato** (USA) - 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** (1956) - 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) - Paul Taylor (Son of Ken **Taylor** 1954) - Brian **Turner** (Associate) - John **Voak** - John **Ward** (1953) - Jon **Willshir** (1953 Thailand)

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

To send an email from this page

If you are using "GOOGLE CHROME" please right click with your mouse on the link above and select "open link in new tab" otherwise just left click on the link



# MEMBERSHIP

**WOULD YOU LIKE TO BECOME A MEMBER OF THE ASSOCIATION ?**

THE ANNUAL FEE IS £10 & YOU WILL RECEIVE 4 NEWSLETTERS PER YEAR &  
ELIGABLE TO ATTEND REUNIONS

TELEPHONE ROBIN SMITH AT 01634 362 379

OR EMAIL HIM AT [robinsmith173@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:robinsmith173@yahoo.co.uk)

An **Application Form** can be downloaded [HERE](#)



**Our Chairman**



## ARCHIVED CONTENT

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

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[April, 2017](#)

[May, 2017](#)

[June, 2017](#)

THE END

