

H.M.S. SUPERB (CRUISER) ASSOCIATION

A MAGAZINE FOR THE MEMBERSHIP

MARCH
2019



CHAIRMAN OF THE ASSOCIATION ROBIN SMITH

CONTENTS

Andy's Musings	<u>Click Here to Go There</u>
Navy News	<u>Click Here to Go There</u>
Letters to the Editor	<u>Click Here to Go There</u>
Jottings of a Very Ordinary Seaman	<u>Click Here to Go There</u>
Life's not so Bad	<u>Click Here to Go There</u>
Hard but Good	<u>Click Here to Go There</u>
Photo Album	<u>Click Here to Go There</u>
Slops	<u>Click Here to Go There</u>
Crossed the Bar	<u>Click Here to Go There</u>
People Searching for People	<u>Click Here to Go There</u>
Members who receive the magazine	<u>Click Here to Go There</u>



Superb - Defending Britain Since 1710



ANDY BRIERLEY'S BLOG

Hello Shipmates,

Bit of a mental block today. Spring is nearly sprung. One expected, by now, some news without and 'X' in it would be our lot. 650 members of the Commons plus near 1000 Lords, with droves of advisers and Civil Servants prove unable to bring relief/resolution.

One M. P. Fiona Onasanya imprisoned for 'perverting the course of justice' and out within a month, but still her £77000 per annum, plus expenses are paid. Her office manager, current drug dealer, convicted, accomplice in aforementioned 'perversion', also enjoys wages from the public purse. He is - wait for it - her brother. Fiona is aghast at calls to resign. A member of the 'opposition inner circle' she is adamant she will stay in office, passing laws for the 'great unwashed'.

Swan song of another politico, Frau Merkel, before she retires, comes loaded with dire threats to Brits. As an ex East German she, perhaps, forgets their plans to starve 2.2 million West Berliners into submission. No fuel to heat or cook, enacted overnight, it looked to be a *fait accompli*.

First aircraft to risk the hazardous journey up the legal corridor was a British Dakota from R.A.F. Gatow, loaded with essentials. A most dangerous undertaking, before Russia restrained their jets from close buzzing of loaded transports; spot lights shone into pilot's eyes when on short final to Templehoff airport. As a Shotley Boy I was fed by the 'powers that be'.

At home my family, and yours, still shopped with a war time ration book. I think 78 allied aircrew died in crashes during the airlift; cost, in today's dollars, approx. \$2-2 billion. 1000 British Tommies are currently based in Baltic countries to boost moral as Mr. Putin threatens their welfare. Am near certain R.A.F. still have their contingent in Poland, for the same reason. France and Spain refer openly to Gibraltar as a British Colony, with shows of open hostility in the bay outside. France, Germany and Spain made a point of not inviting their N.A.T.O. ally to join R & D, or construction for the next generation air superiority aircraft.

Mr. Higgins, prominent landowner on the Irish border, refers to us as 'the most hated state in the world' - that lets I.S.I.S. off the hook. President Clinton was of like opinion in '98 when Gerry Adams and his hitmen were hosted by him in the White House. They, on a mission to Noraid (Irish Northern Aid Committee) raising more cash, quite openly, for their terrorist activities. "Blow Job" Bill (our principle ally?) helped to murder more people in the United Kingdom, by the I.R.A. than I.S.I.S. and Al'Qaeda put together. What price for that trivial



political question the 'back stop', preached and pontificated on by petrified pygmies. Is my respect for that stratum of society showing through?

What I am trying to get at is; isn't it about time for the United Kingdom to assess who its friends really are? Please be aware I'm not parading my preferences one way or the other, it's a naked plea, for christsake (no blasphemy intended). Do not pass up an excellent opportunity to shut your mouths - and DO SOMETHING with a willing, flexible heart. The 'great unwashed' are, by and large animated, friendly to - and in - each others' company.

The Japanese were, in days of yore, big admirers of the R.N. The world's only 'pre dreadnought warship' built at Barrow by Vickers Armstrong in 1902 is preserved in Japan. Named *Mikasa*, open to the public, in pristine condition. It helped defeat the Russian fleet at Tushima, 4 x 12" main battery.

They may, also, have noted how R.N. got cash from the treasury by calling a new class of vessel 'through deck cruisers'. They became those splendid small useful Harrier Carriers. Japanese strict 'defence posture' would not sanction anything with 'carrier' in the title, they are offensive, by nature. Their new class was called 'helicopter destroyers'. Two have been in commission for a couple of years now, design gladdens the eye!

One could only think, like nature's creation, if it moves like a duck, quacks like a duck, it's a duck. The two 'flat tops' now enjoying a 'change of national policy' are declared F35 capable, permission to purchase same is underway. Two such carriers in the southern hemisphere are a step change in muscle available. I expect the pair of 'Australian assault ships', recently bought from Spain, will fall into line with their near neighbours and be flying F35's before any more of my teeth fall out.

China's building frenzy could experience a nasty backlash.

Whilst on carriers; "Private Pike", Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson, boasting about sending his 'half-baked carrier' minus an 'air wing' to curb 'Chinese expansion ambitions' down south.

It brought a backlash of its own; their 'Vice President. Hu Chunhua was livid, cancelled immediately a high level 'post Brexit trade mission' by Minister Hammond. Private Pike, a man of nil military experience, no knowledge of the world, strategy and power-play, sails serenely on, a prime example of the 'Emperor without any clothes'. The rest of his cabinet members are on par, contrast that with U.S. Government, more than 1/3rd of New Republicans were veterans, mostly of Afghanistan and Iraq, as were 12% of Democrat opposition, that's 95 members. They understand how to walk quietly and carry a big stick. Conscription ceased some time ago so that number comes from an 'all volunteer' military. That's a splendid show in a democracy.

A momentous decision was taken last month in Whitehall, by Joint Chiefs of Staff, to allow submarine crews an issue of 'white roll-neck jumpers'; news taken in the 'Media and Fashion

World' as on par with the 'relief of Mafeking'.

No such thing as Admiralty - all is now Jointery, tri-service group, run by the R.A.F. I can imagine any one of a shed load of Air Marshalls doing a deal with the plethora of Admirals. You will give the nod to ten more Tornados to pretty up our perimeter tracks at several £billions and we will allocate a bale of white woolly jumpers for each submarine on your books: let's see, that's seven bales! Delivery will not be immediate; order has to be processed in Beijing!

I am for giving submarine crews all that eases the monastic life when on station for weeks and weeks on end. No media pundit seemed aware the vast fleet of 'coastal forces' were also issued such a garment and 'Did not wear them ashore'.

You can see those woollies after a few buckets of dhobis, then dried in machinery space uptake, all looking various shades of grey; hardly shore attire. Admiralty then also issued the century's first edition fashion item; a Hoodie, in those dark days known as Duffle coats. Always a couple of sizes too big, no buttons but a series of toggles serving the purpose, made of 'fear naught', great for watch keepers and large enough to shed in a hurry if obliged to take an unplanned swim.

Writing that jogged the memory of a biography I read about twenty years ago. Item mentioned on fashion front were bow ties. They were to be allowed in Chief and P.O's messes on formal dinner nights This sop was part of privileges worked out to get over the cessation of rum issue to all those before the mast. Chiefs and P.O's were also allowed 'a bar', just like the wardroom, drinks to be paid for, consumption to be monitored by the Captain, as in the wardroom, by size of, so called, wine bill. Part of the equation was 'grog', of course; lower orders to be allowed a tin of beer at 4% which they also paid for. I do not think any of our members would 'be in' to experience that regime.



The biography mentioned is that of Admiral Sir Frank Twiss; I had not heard of him before. His brief as 2nd Sea Lord was 'social change' in R.N., main target 'rum issue'. I recall he laid out cost of rum, cost of distribution, number of bodies allowed it, large numbers of barrels handled, cost of many skilled coopers, officers and seamen whose high value time handling issue made for a disjointed day. Based on a 175,000 man navy at 2 pennies a shot it came, at that time, to the nice round figure of £3 million per annum. The Admiral was allowed to suggest to 'Treasury' that that figure paid into a welfare fund would take the sting out of 'rum stoppage'; he was allocated £2 $\frac{3}{4}$ million, much to his surprise: all that in prices that prevailed on the day.

Another thing alien to us old farts was all accommodation became chargeable, paying for food, rent etc. on an enhanced salary. Did that come about? Blessed if I know, as my knowledge never was enlivened by meeting a latter day seaman. All are banned, by fear of meeting an I.R.A. man in the streets!, from wearing a uniform ashore. What a travesty. I feel recruitment is such a

damp squib because young people never see anyone in a uniform to spark an interest or ask a question.

Booze on board reminds me, just following the Yangtze incident: a chap who had been on *H.M.S. London*. *C in C Far East*, said, when some muscle was required as a diversion to aid Captain Kearns of Frigate *Amethyst* make a run for freedom. Up the river went *London*, what hits it took I cannot recall. Its ability to hit back was compromised by *Y* turret being unable to fire a shot in anger. The *C in C* was not on board but his stores for entertaining foreign dignitaries were, *Y* gun magazine being chock full of booze, olives etc.. I pooh-pooed the tale at the time, how to authenticate it I know not, but the teller was adamant, and *ex-London!*

I return to Admiral Twiss who had a rough ride in early career but seemed to get his ticket punched by all the right people en route to the very top later on.

Back to the Battle of Java Sea W.W.2 1941. Twiss was gunnery officer on *Exeter*. A hit in the boiler room killed all power, directors unable to operate so *Exeter* was pounded and sunk by Japanese task force. Lieutenant Twiss spent a considerable time clinging to a full Carley float before being picked up by a Jap destroyer, was taken back to their homeland to enjoy their famed hospitality until release in 1945. A considerable number from *Exeter* were old hands from the Battle of River Plate against *Graf Spee*; they certainly had an eventful W.W. 2. All did not survive the hospitality, lower decks living a different existence from that in officer billets.

On the abolition of rum a valid point is made; R.N. is highly technical now - all systems operate under high electrical load as opposed to winding handles, looking over iron sights or footing a depth charge along the chute. The book records Dennis Healy, Minister of Defence, asking Admiral. Twiss if abolition would precipitate mutiny. As a conscript army officer during the Great Struggle there was no indication if he spoke in jest. His tenure did see post war O1 series of carriers given an emphatic thumbs down - fallout from that resulting in the crap we are saddled with in 2019.

I will cease forthwith.



SEVERE WEATHER WARNING!!

The AA have warned that anyone travelling in icy conditions should take a shovel, blankets/sleeping bag, extra clothing (including scarf, hat and gloves), 24 hour supply of food and drink, de-icer, rock salt, torch, spare battery, petrol can, first aid kit and jump leads.

I felt like a right idiot on the bus!



NAVY NEWS

A game of chicken: U.S. and China are risking a clash at sea



HONOLULU — From a distance, the Chinese warship warned the American destroyer that it was on a “dangerous course” in the South China Sea. Then it raced up alongside, getting perilously close. For a few tense minutes, a collision seemed imminent.

The American vessel, the Decatur, blasted its whistle. The Chinese took no notice. Instead, the crew prepared to throw overboard large, shock-absorbing fenders to protect their ship. They were “trying to push us out of the way,” one of the American sailors

Only a sharp starboard turn by the Decatur avoided a disaster in the calm equatorial waters that early morning in September — one that could have badly damaged both vessels, killed members of both crews and thrust two nuclear powers into an international crisis, according to a senior American official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to describe the encounter in



detail.

The ships came within 45 yards of each other, marking the closest call yet as the United States Navy contests China's military buildup in the South China Sea. The Sept. 30 encounter signaled what American commanders fear is a perilous new phase in confrontations in the disputed waterway, which are unfolding without even a Cold War-style agreement on basic rules of conduct aimed at preventing escalation.

During the Cold War, Washington and Moscow abided by an Incidents at Sea Agreement that more or less governed the way the navies of the two countries operated. But the naval contest between the United States and China is different.

Then, Moscow and Washington wanted to ensure freedom of navigation of the high seas to allow both powers to pursue their global interests. The rivalry between Beijing and Washington, however, centers on China's territorial claim over virtually the entire South China Sea and America's efforts to challenge it. The two sides have staked such adamant positions that any compromise to defuse or avoid confrontations seems unlikely.

he mission of the Decatur was to make the point that the high seas are open to all, and that the 12-mile zones claimed by China as sovereign territory do not stand up to international law. The Chinese argue that international law, as defined by a 2016 ruling by the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague, does not apply.

In 2014, the United States and China, along with other countries, signed the Code for Unplanned Encounters at Sea, which mimics aspects of the earlier pact with the Soviets and spells out protocols for confrontations.

But the code is voluntary, and it does not address the basic question of territorial waters and who can go where, said Collin Koh, a maritime specialist at the Rajaratnam School of International Studies in Singapore. "It's more like a gentleman's agreement," he said.

Admiral Richardson has urged China to "return to a consistent adherence to the agreed code," which he said would "minimize the chance for a miscalculation that would possibly lead to a local incident and potential escalation."

In effect, he was asking Chinese vessels to stop acting as lords of the South China Sea.



LATE & OVER BUDGET

IS NOT JUST A BRITISH PROBLEM

The U.S. Navy's Newest Carrier Finally Has The Critical Weapons System That The Navy Secretary Staked His Job On — And It Actually Works

The bigger and faster electromagnetic weapons elevator on the new aircraft carrier *Gerald R. Ford* is finally ready for use, an achievement the Navy called a "major milestone" for the program and other Ford-class carriers to be built in the future.

U.S. Navy Secretary Richard V. Spencer said earlier this month that he had bet his job on getting all the *Ford's* elevators to work, telling President Donald Trump that the project would be done by this summer "or you can fire me."

In a release last week, the Navy said the Advanced Weapons Elevator (AWE) was turned over to the ship Dec. 21 by engineers from Huntington Ingalls Industries-Newport News Shipbuilding, in Newport News, Virginia, where the *Ford* is going through its post-shakedown availability (PSA) to become the 11th carrier in the fleet.

The AWE uses electromagnetic, linear synchronous motors to accommodate heavier loads and swifter movement than the cable elevators on Nimitz-class carriers, according to the service.



With the new elevator, the *Ford* will be able to move up to 24,000 pounds of ordnance at 150 feet-per-minute compared to 10,500 pounds at up to 100 feet-per-minute on a Nimitz-class carrier, the Navy said.

The results will be seen in smoother operations and more flights from the carrier's deck, said Lt. Cmdr. Chabonnie Alexander, the *Ford's* ordnance handling officer.

"This will allow us to load more aircraft faster and, in the long run, increase our overall sortie generation rates," he said in the Navy release.

"To be able to finally push the buttons and watch it operate like it's designed to do was a great feeling," Alexander said. "Once these systems are proven, they are going to pay huge dividends for naval strike capability."

The *Ford* has three upper-stage elevators that move ordnance between the main deck and flight deck, and seven lower-stage elevators that move ordnance between the main deck and the lower levels of the ship.

Getting all of the elevators working was one of his main concerns, Spencer said earlier this month at an event sponsored by the Centre for a New American Security.

Spencer said he told Trump at December's Army-Navy football game that "all the elevators will be ready to go" on the *Ford* this summer "or you can fire me. We're going to get it done. I know I'm going to get it done."

"I haven't been fired yet by anyone," he said, and "being fired by the president really isn't on the top of my list."

The \$13 billion Ford was delivered to the Navy in June 2017, two years late and over budget. It was commissioned a month later without any working weapons elevators.

In the long process from design to delivery, the *Ford* has also experienced technical problems in its new Electromagnetic Aircraft Launch System (EMALS) and the Advanced Arresting Gear.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Hi Brian - Thanks for sending me the January issue of the HMS Superb magazine. I really liked all of the topics, especially the celebration of VE day in London. I remember celebrating in my neighbourhood and trying without success to disburse a roll of toilet paper among the crowd. I was 14 and just didn't make it unravel like you saw in news reels of the day. Also I relate to the old boys planning trips to their reunion, and of course the story of the USS Constitution.

George Messmer (Retired US Navy Vet)

Hi Brian - As usual Andy's article has given me a nudge, talking about aerial photos. I have a few of the area I used to live in during WW2, well in fact for the first 15 years of my life until I went to GANGES in 1951. I lived in an old Coast Guard Station, although it was originally built for the RN in 1820, it was then a Coast Blockade Station to prevent smuggling, with married pads included two of which we lived in during WW2, having to move out of one because of war damage. The R.E.'s managed to put a lump of hard mud through the roof when they blew up a Tank Trap just down the road. I will send you several items on it. **Malcolm Milham**

Brian - Great News Letter. I shall one of these days write something for the magazine. **Bill Cook**

Brian - On a sad note along with Andy, Jo and Jim, I attended Pete Tasker's funeral on Friday (11th January). A very big turn out as you can expect with the Royal Marine Association involved along with a bugler who played the last post note perfect plus large numbers of family and friends. **Brian Hill**





JOTTINGS OF A VERY ORDINARY SEAMAN

By Ray Lambert

The bane of my life has always been thin ringers, I`ve never met one that I could warm to not even a little bit. On the other hand I have never had any bad feeling toward GI`s. GI`s are a breed apart throughout the service, everybody knows them and everybody tries to keep out of their reach. I`ve never had any problem with them, I`ve not met them all of course although I did spend six weeks living in the GI`s mess in Pembroke (don`t ask)

Which brings me to the point of my story, which is the GI on the last comish of the *Cardigan Bay*. I think his name was Wakeling. He was a very nice man, far too nice to have ever contemplated a career in the 'gob `n gaiters brigade'. A three- badge PO, he was a slight man and, as far as early opinions were concerned, he was the bees knees and those opinions were proved to be correct during the following months we spent together.

Our first encounter was at a range outside Plymouth when a couple of us had been enjoying the sun after dinner and tot time when my oppo suddenly said - 'hey, they're falling in down there'. Naturally we raced down the grassy bank to join the others mustering on the roadway at the bottom. We weren't late really, others were still shuffling about but the new GI had to show who was the boss (and impress 'sir'); he strode over and tore into us like a man possessed, in typical GI fashion. We stood there while he let rip with everything in his arsenal, then as he walked away I said to the other miscreant: 'I don't feel the least bit told off or embarrassed,' he replied, 'Nor me' - that then was to be our new GI.

He certainly knew his job and during the whole commission, no-one ever took advantage of him and he remained just the same - not an idiot to be ridiculed or anything - just a very nice man. After we arrived out the 'far-flung' the first task was to detail jobs. We all mustered on the back end and the GI was there with a clipboard. 'So-and-so - you`ve got so-and-so job' - 'OK' and so it went on until some idiot had to have a skylark.

'Lambert',

'Yes' -

'Vegetable party'.

I hadn`t heard that term before and I wondered what was vegetable party, surely not carrying a few bags of carrots and onions onboard at various stopovers. What about



the rest of the time. I hadn't thought it through. 'What's that mean then?' my oppo (same oppo) said, 'Spud basher?' 'Sod that' I replied, maybe a little too convincingly.

The GI came running over (not calling me to him, such a nice man) genuine concern written all over his face. 'Why. What's the matter mate?'

With hindsight oppo saved the day because I would have carried it a stage or two further, maybe too far. 'He's only pulling your whotsit,' he said

I have never seen anyone change so quickly. His whole body took on a new persona; his face showed genuine pleasure; he couldn't have looked happier if he had just received news that he'd been reprieved from the hangman. For a minute I thought he was going to hug me! 'So that's OK is it then mate,' he said, 'you don't mind that then?'

What a thing for a three- badge PO to say to some scruffy erk but that was just his nature. Not a pushover in any sense but just a genuine man. He would have been the same in any walk of life.

Dear Ma and Pa,

Am well. Hope you are. Tell Brother Walt and Brother Elmer the Marine Corps beats working for the old man by a mile. Tell them to join up quick before maybe all of the places are filled. I was restless at first because you got to stay in bed till nearly 6 a.m., but am getting so I like to sleep late.

Tell Walt and Elmer all you do before breakfast is smooth your cot and shine some things. No hogs to slop, feed to pitch, mash to mix, wood to split, fire to lay. Practically nothing. Men got to shave but it is not so bad, there is warm water.

Breakfast is strong on trimmings like fruit juice, cereal, eggs, bacon, etc..., but kind of weak on chops, potatoes, ham, steak, fried eggplant, pie and other regular food. But tell Walt and Elmer you can always sit between boys that live on coffee. Their food plus yours holds you till noon, when you get fed again. It's no wonder these city boys can't walk much.

Marches, which the Platoon Sergeant says are long walks to harden us. If he thinks so, it is not my place to tell him different. It is about as far as to our mailbox at home. Then the city guys gets sore feet and we all ride back in trucks. The country is nice but awful flat. The Sergeant is like a schoolteacher. He nags some. The Captain is like the school board. Majors and Colonels just ride around and frown. They don't bother you none.

This next will kill Walt and Elmer with laughing. I keep getting medals for shooting. I don't know why. The bulls-eye is near as big as a chipmunk and don't move. And it ain't shooting at you, like the Higgett boys at home. All you got to do is lie there all comfortable and hit it. You don't even load your own cartridges. They come in boxes.

Be sure to tell Walt and Elmer to hurry and join before other fellers get onto this setup and come stampeding in.

Your loving daughter, Gail



LIFE'S NOT SO BAD

By Phil Grimson

IF YOU'RE OVER EIGHTY
AND YOUR KNEES HAVE BEGUN TO
SQUEAK
AND PEOPLE WALK AWAY FROM YOU
WHEN YOU BEGIN TO SPEAK;
SUSPECTING YOU'RE ABOUT TO
REMINISCE
OF DAYS NOW LONG GONE PAST
AND IF THEY START TO CHUCKLE
WHEN YOU GET UP TO DANCE.
REMINDE THEM, THAT AT LEAST YOU'VE
REACHED THIS AGE
AND THEY MIGHT NOT GET THE CHANCE
!

THE SUN SHINES JUST AS BRIGHTLY
ON OLD CRUMBLY, SQUEAKY KNEES,
AND CRUMBLIES CAN ENJOY A LAUGH
AS MUCH AS THOSE WHO TRY TO TEASE
AND JOIN IN ON ALL THE BANTER
AND COARSE UNKINDLY JOKES
AND EXTRACT THE URINE
AS WELL AS ALL THOSE GIGGLING

ALTHOUGH YOUR HAIR IS SILVER NOW
AND YOUR SKIN IS OLD AND CREASED,
YOU MAY BE AN OCTOGENARIAN
BUT STAND UP STRAIGHT AND TALL.
AND IF YOU CAN'T QUITE MANAGE THAT
LEAN UP AGAINST A WALL !
IF YOUR HAND TREMBLES WHEN YOU
SPILL YOUR RUM OR GIN,
DON'T REACH OUT FOR A MOP
HOLD A PAIL BENEATH YOUR CHIN;
AND YOU'LL SAVE EVERY DROP

LIFE'S NOT SO TOUGH WHEN YOU GROW
OLD
YOU STILL CAN HAVE A LAUGH.
WITH ALL YOUR OLD FRIENDS AND
SHIPMATES
WITH WHOM YOU SHARED MESSDECKS,
FORE AND AFT.
FOR WE HAVE SAILED AROUND THE
WORLD
AND SEEN AND BEEN TO PLACES,
FAR BEYOND OUR WILDEST DREAMS

This poem first appeared on Phil's Facebook site
"The Superb Banter Boat"
Have a look if you can and join in the fun



HARD BUT GOOD

Beautiful Dreamer lash-up and stow
Cooks to the Galley - he's gone long ago
Role on the Nelson, Rodney, Renown
This flat-bottomed bastard is getting me down

Old Sailors' Song

The following tale was salvaged from the website "Rum Ration" and written, in 2006, by an 18 year old Royal Navy Reserve matelot going by the sobriquet of Dunkers (perhaps his surname). It tells of a period much later that the one we knew but still seems to have some relevance

As some of you know, I was at HMS Raleigh for the past 2 weeks on an RNR basic training course. This is essentially the regular RN's 8-week course condensed into 2 weeks; an RNR recruit will generally have done 6 months' training (one night per week) at his unit before attending the course. Even so, the course is still very intense and tiring with everything that's packed in - parade training, PT, kit musters, lectures, doubling everywhere, the assault course, a hike on Dartmoor, the Damage Repair Instructional Unit, more parade training, lack of sleep... so pull up a chair and hear the yarn!

Sunday 25th June, Edinburgh station. A bunch of 4 RNR recruits, ages ranging from 17 to 40, jump on the train to Plymouth on their way to HMS Raleigh. Feeling tentative about what lies ahead (and sore at carrying a hell of a lot of luggage, half of which we were told to bring but didn't need) we sat down in the first class compartment - a standard rail warrant lets you do that at weekends on Virgin Trains by the way, it's worth noting that - and settled down on Britain's longest train journey.

The time passed slowly. What would it be like? What would our oppos be like? We were heading off on 2 weeks of what would turn out to be a very challenging (at times very difficult mentally) course. We chatted away about nothing in particular, discovering now and again by accident other matelots on the train (some noticed the ID card strap on my neck), the reason I say "by accident" is because the current security climate does not allow servicemen to travel in uniform, so we were all in civvies (bollocks, yes, but security is the supposed reason).

On the way we were amused by the train guard with a Hilarious West Country Accent (well I thought it was funny) kindly telling someone off on the tannoy for smoking in the heads and by us trying to get a free cup of coffee by using our "technically" first class tickets. But anyway, we eventually discovered that the train was being diverted via Newport due to engineering works. So what you might think, only it began to dawn on us that this meant we were going



to arrive late at *Raleigh*. About an hour late in fact.

Oh! S-H-one-T, I thought, we hadn't even got there yet and already were going to get a bollocking for being late. This worried me as I always try to never be late, but now we were going to be late on arrival to naval training. After my first sea time - on the Torpoint Ferry! - we arrived. Ominously, the man in the guardhouse told us we would be staying in **Ganges Block!** - but as it turned out, when we got there everything was fine, as the CPO instructor turned out to be quite a nice and reasonable man. "You must be the guys from Scotland" said Chief, and no sooner had we got in the door - absolutely knackered - than we had to dump our bags and gather together for the introduction brief.

This brief was really far, far too much to be listening to after you've just spent 10 hours sitting on a train and just want to go to bed.

Our PO instructor sat us down (there were just 10 of us) and aside from telling us a little bit about what lied ahead, she laid down the law: standard things like standards of dress and behaviour expected, fire escape procedure, no fraternisation, adherence to the Naval Discipline Act etc. However, she also had her own rule: swearing was absolutely forbidden. (I will come back to this later.)

Anyway, after this overbearing brief we were given a multiple choice exam with about 50 questions - bear in mind that it was about 2330 by this time and we were just about dropping off to sleep - after which we were finally allowed to go to bed. I was out like a light. Truth be told I felt a bit scared; I wanted to do my best and do well on the course, but would I manage that? Already we were being told in no uncertain terms the standards expected of us, and that a lot of hard work was ahead, which is a difficult pill to swallow when exhausted. I went to sleep.

Call the hands was piped at 0530. Here was the first day; we all got up with a strange mixture of lethargy and urgency (i.e. getting up fast because you know you have to, but still half asleep) and wandered into the draughty, lukewarm showers. I had my first and last cooked breakfast afterwards (in the galley which is decorated with old photos of HMS *Ganges*) - I'm absolutely convinced they lace the food with bromine - and for the rest of the day our PO instructor marched us all over the place; to slops, to the medics (where they sucked blood out of us to determine our blood type), to PT where we had to run a mile and a half... and no doubt we did other things which I have forgotten.



Unfortunately I failed to run fast enough on the 1½ mile test and it took me a couple more attempts (and DO's rollickings) to pass it within the required time. I hate to sound like I

am making excuses for myself but honestly - a constant state of tiredness, coupled with a continually present pressure to have a more "urgent" demeanour makes things very difficult. In hindsight it sounds reasonable enough but at the time it's tough.

Interestingly, our female PO instructor **insisted** on being referred to as PO Wren. This, she explained, was because she had joined as a Wren and liked having that female identity. This was the same PO who had the no-swearing rule which brings me nicely on to the subject of naval standards... "Have naval standards slipped?" some people ask. In my very limited experience I can say that they definitely have not.

PO Wren asked us all not to swear during our time at *Raleigh* and guess what? We didn't. She asked us for that standard, and she got it. So you see, I don't think it's a case of standards slipping, but rather some senior rates not enforcing standards tightly enough. Our PO Wren enforced them strictly and got them with no trouble at all. Perhaps society no longer holds the same standards it used to (for example with regard to swearing), but those standards can easily be upheld in the Service if the senior rates in charge merely command that they are.

Over the next couple of days we had a CPO's kit muster (we nicknamed him the BFG, the Big Friendly Giant, which apparently is some character from a Roald Dahl novel, and he looked like him, said my messmates) upon which several aspects of our kit were picked up. The items of kit presented have to be clean, dry, marked with your name (thankfully we could just write our name on in pen, not sew it in with red chain stitch) and folded to A4 size.

The ridiculous part of it is that you need to present shoe brushes and a yellow duster that you never use for a kit muster, just so that they are spotless and therefore presentable. Same goes for the towel which has to be clean, in good condition and dry (so you can't use the one you used that morning after showering).

Anyway, the chief, who had a friendly Sheffield accent, told us what items of kit needed improvement for our officer's kit muster on the second week. That would be the kit muster by Ma'am, and she wasn't half strict.

Very, very strict. Seemingly humourless and with very demanding standards (fair enough), but I got the impression she made us do half the stuff we did because she had to do it as a recruit "when she was in the Wrens". To be really quite honest with you she reminded me, slightly, of the 1st Lieutenant from "The Cruel Sea" - *the character that the crew can't fault, but who still can be a little tiresome at times*. (You will notice throughout I am using ambiguous terms like "our PO", "our officer" etc - this is to help reduce the possibility of personally identifying anyone. If you think you know who anyone mentioned here is, please don't name



names.)

Our evenings consisted with cleaning stations, rounds and kit preparation for the next day. We were supposedly meant to finish no later than 2300 and most definitely not be up any later than midnight. Getting to bed at 2300? I wish! We rarely got to bed any earlier than 0130 (for that is how long it took to only *nearly* finish everything) and then we were up at 0530 - then more cleaning stations and hurrying around like headless chickens...

I feel that the sleep deprivation was the worst part of the whole fortnight. I'm 18 so I found the lack of sleep particularly difficult. It was interesting at some times to speak to some regular recruits who had joined *Raleigh* at the same time as us - *Walker 10 Entry* - to compare how we were doing to them. They complained that piping down at 2230 and getting up at 0530 was hard. Oh, how I wished I could have gone to bed at 2230! We only had a very brief chance to speak to them however - i.e. when in the queue for scrans. Queuing up for our meals (which were rushed, we're talking 15 minutes maximum here) was really the only time we got to stand still for a minute - there were no stand easies in our 2 weeks. Like I said, the course was very intense indeed.

We had another fitness test, which involved press-ups, sit-ups and a sprint, plus a swimming test (in overalls) which they have recently made ridiculously easy - they now do the Army swimming test rather than the Navy one. This involves jumping into the water while wearing a boiler suit, treading water for 2 minutes, swimming 40 metres then getting out of the pool. If you can do breaststroke even at a very basic level you can pass this. Thank God for that, I worried about it beforehand but was very pleased to discover that I did not have difficulty in doing it.

After the swimming test we jumped off a high diving board in preparation for a one-day sea survival course. This involved going to Horsea Island, today the RN diving school but formerly a torpedo testing range, donning a once-only survival suit, jumping into a lake then swimming to a life raft. Quite good fun, even if the transport contractors cocked up and left us stranded for half an hour - yeah, they contract out the Service transport now, because they think it saves money (which it might do) but it causes a lot of hassle when the civvie firms screw up. The extent to which training and other amenities are contracted out now is quite surprising - sea survival/fire training, catering, slops staff, transport (you name it) is all done by civilian firms now. The Armed Forces have been Thatcherised and now rely on private firms to keep them going; there's something not quite right there.



The assault course was next. Dragging yourself along on top of a rope, running through

water, crawling through tunnels. Great fun! Oh, and now that the navy is now "pink and fluffy" (as PO Wren put it), it has to be safe too. In the last 4 weeks, some civvie health and safety types have looked at the assault course and told them that they need crash mats below the rope crawl, so if you fall off you don't break your neck on gravel, you break it on the crash mat instead: I must stress that the staff DID adhere to the health and safety rules, but they made sure we knew that they were somewhat disgruntled about them - it was new legislation, not naval policy, that was making the changes.

We were shown a video about bullying and harassment. This video had the message that in the modern, professional RN, any harassment (physical, mental or sexual) was absolutely not to be tolerated. Opinions on the rights and wrongs of this vary widely. On one hand you have those who say it should not be tolerated; others say that it degrades the ability of staff to prepare recruits to fight a war.

One real life example was shown on the video of a PTI taking a recruit aside and assaulting him, physically and verbally. His excuse was that the recruit might have to fight some day and needs to have a strong character. I am of the opinion that this kind of treatment will do absolutely NOTHING for a recruit's character or confidence; rather, it will undermine that and only hamper him. Constructive bollockings are one thing, but outright bullying is of course not acceptable.

During our course we came across our divisional PO Writer. It may interest you to know that he is an ex Ganges boy; he joined the navy in 1970 and is still serving today after 36 years. He retires next year. A very kind man, he must be one of the very few Ganges boys still in. We all liked him; I should have asked if he knew anyone called Nozzy, Nozzer or Nutty! (He even still referred to the regular RN recruits as "Juniors"!)

Another aspect of *Raleigh* training is a weekend hike on Dartmoor. Yomping, military style, in single file, trying to find our way from A to B. For this exercise I was designated as class leader, which meant I was ultimately responsible for getting the team from our campsite at Gutter Tor Refuge to the "Plume of Feathers" pub in Princeton, following a designated 11-mile route set by the instructors.

It was a test of leadership ability and personal qualities. After arriving on Friday we set up camp, got up at 2am for a half-hour watch patrol around the camp (every tent group did this - we were told to be on the lookout for Booties on exercise) before again getting up at 0530,



shaving in a muddy pool of a "stream", cooking a disgusting Lancashire hotpot ration pack for breakfast (even now the thought of it almost makes me feel sick),

before *eventually* setting off. Oh, I forgot to mention - the morning we set off, there was a thunderstorm and a low mist!

Fortunately the night before, I had briefed the team on the route and had planned who would be doing what jobs (navigator, timer and pacer) on each leg of the journey, so at each "checkpoint" it was just a case of giving the team members their tasks and setting off again. The team did very well indeed, conquering several tors in adverse weather and putting up with distant comments shouted by some staff watching us at a distance (they appeared from time to time but mostly left us to ourselves).

Later in the morning the weather picked up; we passed by Chiefy sitting by a Landrover smoking his pipe (it was a stop to let us get some water) before plodding on up the final, hardest leg of the journey to the top of a hill - by now in blazing hot sunshine - from whence we descended into Princeton and the pub.

At last! Nice, hot food and a pint of ale! This was heavenly. On the morning after returning to *Raleigh* I had some horrible blisters, which I went to sickbay with, and was quite amused when a baby MA tried to stick the label of a blister plaster on my foot rather than the plaster itself. Fortunately a leading MA corrected the baby MA (bless him).

By now we were over half way through the course, but interesting times still lay ahead. One of these was going into the Damage Repair Instructional Unit; DRIU (pronounced "drew"). Imagine the midships of a ship mounted on pivots which allow it to roll as if it were at sea. They put you inside this then simulate a missile hitting it. The lights go out, smoke appears and water starts flooding in (at the temperature and force of sea water) through ready-made shrapnel holes.

Your task then is to plug up the holes using wooden wedges and then to make secondary, more permanent repairs. (If anyone has a picture or a better description of the DRIU then please post it) It's great fun, and there's a huge adrenalin rush, but it's also a very realistic simulation of a sinking ship. In the exercise, the freezing water reaches your chin at which time you abandon ship. It is an excellent training tool; I can only hope I never have to do it for real.

So what else did we do? We went to Jupiter Point, jumped on a RIB and zipped up and down the dockyard for half an hour. This was brilliant fun, the idea was to give us some "sea sense"; in other words to experience being on a sea boat. Before setting off for this we fell in to wait for the coach to arrive. Just then some very lovely young Wrens passed by and my eyes inadvertently followed them and...



"DUNKERS!" admonished PO Wren. "Pay attention to the class leader, not to those girls!" A

smile began to creep across my face, but I wiped it off a millisecond later when I saw that she still did not look overly pleased. Later on, we also took a trip to the local HM Dockyard and had a look round a type 23 frigate which was interesting enough, but once you've seen one you've seen them all.

The course was drawing to an end and we were doing lots of drill practice for our passing out parade. We were told that the 2nd Sea Lord was going to come to this and inspect us. To cut a long story short, on Friday we were led out of the drill shed by the Royal Marine Band and had a Divisions parade with great ceremony commensurate with the Second Sealord visiting. 2SL inspected and spoke to us - he asked me what I thought of the course; but come on, on pain of death I had to reply "excellent, sir!"

And so, after an age of standing on the parade ground, we marched up the steps... "Passing Out Classes - Diiiiiiiis - miss!" bawled the Parade Sgt Major; dwelling a pause of 2 marching paces we then cheered and threw our caps in the air. That was it over! We were free!

And here I am, half a stone lighter than when I started the course, very tired, but very elated... at least I look fairly happy!

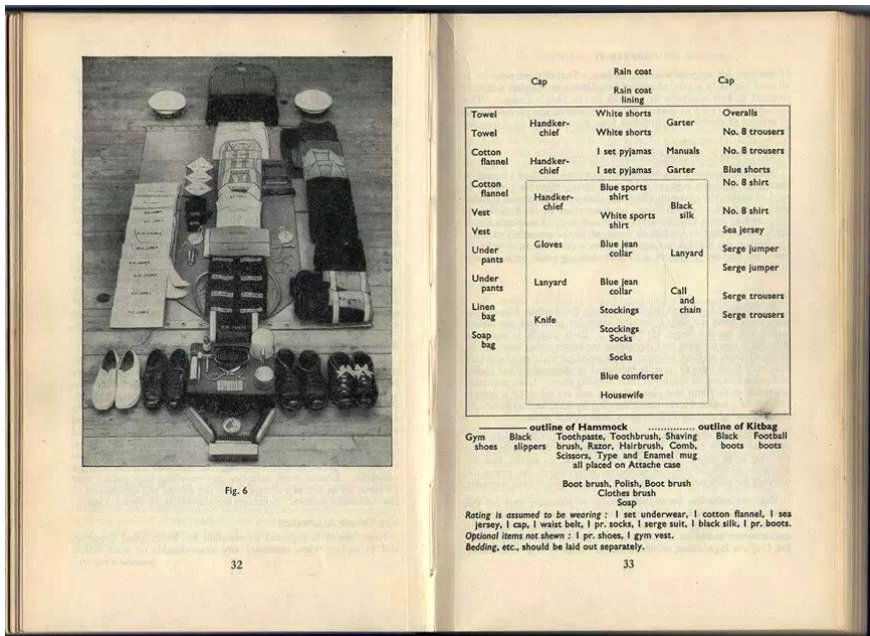
It has been mentioned before that "you forget the bad times". I now realise just how true this is. There were times on those 2 weeks that I found the mental pressure very difficult; maintaining a constant sense of urgency while exhausted is enough to bring you to tears. I think the regular RN recruits have a (slightly) easier pace than we do: still hard of course, but at least they get some downtime and some sleep, whereas we had precious, precious little of either.

All the same, looking back on it, I feel it was a worthwhile experience and an achievement to pass out. Hard, but good. You appreciate more what small comforts you have; I even found it genuinely heartening when someone referred to me by my first name rather than my surname.

Oh, and you know how we get duvets now rather than itchy blankets? Well we have to put a crease down the centre of the duvet cover. Don't you worry, all that bullshit is still alive and well!



PHOTO ALBUM



In the Navy of the 70's
 The beginning of the rot
 The day they killed the Andrew
 Was the day they stopped the Tot

Oh! They go to east of Suez
 Or west to Panama;
 When your belly's full of limers,
 You can't go very far.

The legend of the 'Rum Tub'
 Is still there to be seen.
 But the motto looks quite silly
 Stamped on a goffer machine

You'll hear old sailors saying
 "It'll never be the same"
 And when they talk of bubbly
 They don't mean French champagne

Did Jack flinch at Trafalgar
 As he faced shot and shell?
 With a tot inside his belly
 Our Jack would sail through Hell

At ten to twelve each forenoon
 Since the Andrew first began
 Jack drinks the blood of Nelson
 From Jutland to Japan

Their Lordships sip their Pink Gins
 And cry "more efficiency"
 But what works on paper
 Don't always work at sea

Now Jack's a humble sailor
 Who doesn't ask a lot;
 After Jutland and Trafalgar
 Who dares to stop his Tot?

He's always done his duty
 To Country and the Throne
 All he asks is fairness
 AND TO LEAVE HIS TOT ALONE!



Viña del Mar 9 February, 1955 Len Cottrell seated extreme right foreground - any other folk you recognise?



After Quasimodo's death, the Archbishop of Paris at the Cathedral of Notre Dame sent word through the streets of Paris that a new bell ringer was needed. The Archbishop decided that he would conduct the interviews personally and went up into the belfry to begin what he thought would be a long screening process.

After observing several applicants demonstrate their skills, he had decided to call it a day and would offer prayers for more success the next day.

Just then, an armless man approached him and falling flat on his face announced that he was there to apply for the bell ringer's job. The bishop was incredulous.

'But man you have no arms!'

'No matter,' said the man. 'Observe my technique!'

And he began striking the bells with his face, producing a beautiful melody on the massive carillon.

The Archbishop listened in astonishment; convinced he had finally found a replacement for Quasimodo.

But suddenly, as he rushed forward to strike the final bell, the armless man tripped and plunged headlong out of the belfry window to his death in the street below.

The stunned Archbishop rushed down the two hundred and ninety five steps of the bell tower. When he reached the street, a crowd had gathered around the disfigured fallen figure. They had been drawn to the Cathedral, by the beautiful music they had heard only moment before from the melodious bells.

They silently parted to let the Archbishop through and one of them asked,

'Archbishop, who was this man?'

'I don't know his name,' the bishop sadly replied,

'BUT HIS FACE RINGS A BELL'

WAIT! WAIT! There's more

The following day, despite the sadness that weighed heavily on his heart due to the unfortunate death of the armless campanologist, the Archbishop continued his interviews for the new bell ringer of Notre Dame Cathedral.

The first man to approach him said, 'Your Excellency, I am the brother of the poor armless wretch that fell to his death from this very belfry yesterday. 'I pray that you honour his life by allowing me to replace him in this duty.'

The Archbishop agreed to give the man an audition, and, as the armless man's brother stooped to pick up a mallet to strike the first bell, he groaned, clutched at his chest, twirled around, and died before he hit the floor.

Two monks who were saying their Matins, hearing the Archbishop's cries of grief at this second tragedy, rushed up the stairs to his side.

'What has happened? Who is this man?' the first monk asked breathlessly.

'I don't know his name,' sighed the distraught bishop, 'but....'

'HE'S A DEAD RINGER FOR HIS BROTHER.'

CROSSED THE BAR



Further details of ex shipmates (but not necessarily members of the Association) who have crossed the bar can be found on the appropriate page our website.

To go there please click [HERE](#)



Crossed the Bar (Recently Notified)

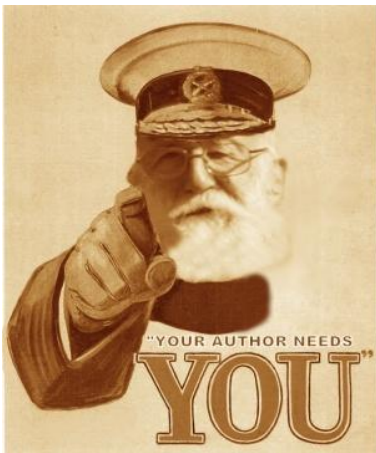


SLOPS

This section contains adverts from members. If you decide to purchase an item from them please note you deal directly with the member selling.

If you have something to say about this section or advertise an article please email Brian Saunders at brian@hmssuperb.co.uk

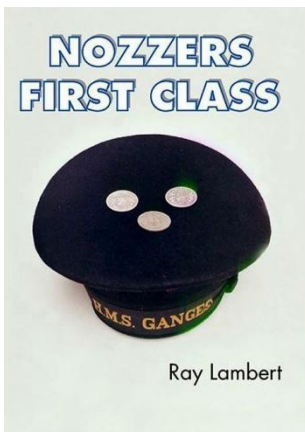
Journalist & Best Selling Author



OUR IN-HOUSE **BEST SELLING AUTHOR** IS OFFERING THE FOLLOWING BOOKS AT A SPECIAL PRICE FOR MEMBERS OF THE ASSOCIATION.

Ray Lambert

Follow the author when he was a handsome young man in *Ganges* and as he joins HMS Superb at Chatham. Go with him as he begins the "Luxury Cruise" of 1954-55. Join him from Punta Arenas to Vancouver and much in between. Learn of Guantanamo Bay and the Falklands before they became headline news. Each book costs £7.99 including UK postage. Click **HERE** for more information & to contact Ray by email



NOZZERS GO WEST



Something for the Youngsters

Phil Grimson

DOGBREATH the Dragon



Shipmate Phil Grimson offers his latest book for sale targeted at children from 8 years upward. It is a magical tale of chivalry which should enchant most youngsters and lead them into a make-believe world where there's fierce and fiery combat when a princess is captured by a dragon.

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

KINDLE DOWNLOAD £5.59

PRINTED VERSION £13.99 + P&P*

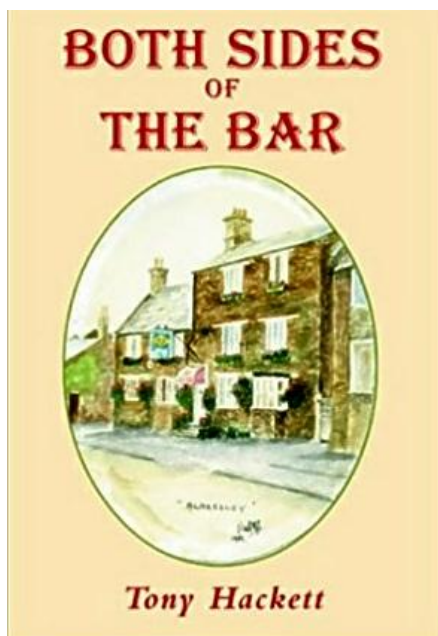
Phil can be contacted by email by clicking on this [LINK](#)

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



Life After the Navy

Tony Hackett



Tony, the son of a police officer, joined the Royal Navy aged 15 and spent the next 10 years travelling the world. He entered Civvy street in 1959 and went into the pub trade. This book relates Tony's endeavours in balancing his life between his love of rugby, managing often run-down pubs and his love of the sea and finally his successful ownership of his own free-house.

An interesting insight into the trials and tribulations of being self employed.

Available as a hard back book from Amazon at £12.99

A CRACKING READ



For a couple of days I was transported through the years and found myself back in 1955 on board Her Majesty's Ship Superb as we travelled through the ever changing seas of the near Antarctic wastes of southern Argentina to the balmy waters of the West

Indies, and beyond to the west coast of the United States and Canada.

"Nozzers Go West" continues the story of a Ganges lad and vividly recalls the 1955/56 America & West Indies adventure when the ship spent just over a year "Showing the Flag" and should be required reading for all who were privileged to be on board. Lambert, in metamorphosing from Boy to Ordinary Seaman, brings back to life all those happy memories that those of us who served may well have forgotten over the ensuing years.

Already a published author, Mr Lambert has the gift of excellent memory recall and I frequently laughed out loud at his descriptive prose; my mind, in one instance, filled with an image of a line of boy seamen snaking towards the M.O., hands on hips, in readiness for their "joining ship" medical injections.

Written in the third person with a tongue-in-cheek ironic look at both sides of navy life, these 142 pages will stay on my bookshelf to be brought down from time to time in order to re-visit the days of my youth. Pure nostalgia.

Brian Saunders



PEOPLE SEARCHING FOR PEOPLE

If you can assist with any of these appeals please contact Brian Saunders in the first instance. No details will be passed on to third parties without express permission. These appeals will be left in the magazine for a few months

From previous issues

Derek Baldry (Killick Sparker) would like to contact Ginger Dunne from 1956

Stoker Clive Godley would like to get in touch with old shipmates - I have his telephone number and email address so if you'd like it get back to me. (BS)

Larry Boudier who was in the Chatham field gun's crew in 1955 would like to know if anyone knows of others in that crew

Eleanor Ingalls Fochesato from New Jersey, USA would like to contact John Stevens, from the 1953 cruise to Maine, USA.

Bob Butcher known to many as "Butch" & who served on Superb between Nov 1950 to July 1951 wonders if Curly Watson is still around. He would like to make contact.

Laura Kardo researching her grandfather, Charles Harris, who served around 1951 & 1952. would like to know more about him.

Jeff , the son of Jim Stewart who was on board as a Telegraphist between 1947 & 1951, would be happy to receive any information re his dad. Jim was also on HMS Vidal in 1955



MEMBERS RECEIVING THE MAGAZINE

Andy Brierley (1954) - Derek Baldry (1956) - Alf Brown (1954) - Derek Baldry (1956) - Bob Butcher (1951) - Ron Clay (1956-57) - Bill Cook (1956) - Jim Copus (1954) - Nick Crump (USN 1954 - USA) - Phil Grimson (1953 & 1954) - Tony Hacket (1953) - Alan Harmer (1955 - 56) - Joe Heaton (1956) - Brian Hill (1954) - Charlie Kingston (1956) - Ray Lambert (1955) - Peter MacDonald (1949-51) - George Messmer (USN 1954 - USA) - Malcolm Milham (1953) - Frank Nunn (1954) - Dave Perrin (1954) - Brian Saunders (1954 - 55 France) - Rob Smith (1956) - Brian Turner (Associate) - John Ward (1953) - Norman Webber (1956)

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

ARCHIVED CONTENT

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

[December, 2018](#)

[January, 2019](#)

