

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

A MAGAZINE FOR THE MEMBERSHIP

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**CHAIRMAN OF THE ASSOCIATION, BRIAN SAUNDERS**

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Superb - Defending Britain Since 1710



# ANDY BRIERLEY'S BLOG

A chilly autumn greeting Shipmates,

**D**id write a bit about the Baltic Pipe Line in my last letter... U.S. President Biden's policy over, what is now called Nord Stream 2, turns out to be toothless. It was initially meant to go through Poland and Ukraine - it now passes through Sweden, Denmark and Finnish waters - E.E.Z.; hence Russia no longer depends on being reasonable to a pair of nations they harass and intimidate mercilessly, trying to twist their arms on any possible occasion to advantage Russia, the latest and poorest members of N.A.T.O. It is not hard to see N.A.T.O. - E.U. will suffer energy threats in the future as cable meter price of gas spirals upwards; Mr. Putin's only source of riches.

Should the west want an arms race - prepare to lose.

I still feel Merkel as bed fellow with several other high Germans of Putin's Russia. Their nuclear capacity vanished in short order when gas was discovered a-plenty in Russia; they know how to play the long game.

President Joe Biden, author of Total Withdrawal Chaos in Afghanistan is now glossed over less than one month later.

In 1975 President Ford, lumbered with ending the Vietnam war, went to congress for a relief package - get allies and U.S. personnel evacuated in a seemly manner, not least to look after 'good name' and the prestige of the U.S.A. One senator opposed any such support; scenes from the roof of the U.S. Embassy in Saigon must be etched in all thinking peoples' brains. The 'one' senator embarked on an all out campaign to leverage it politically against President Ford, who nevertheless managed to rescue 1500 South Vietnamese up for execution as U.S. stooges.

U.S. President Ford again requested a package to assist their settlement and integration into society. The 'one' senator torpedoed any support. President Ford recruited Christian organisations of volunteers to help; the 'one' senator belittled even those efforts at humanitarian aid for the dispossessed who had stood by the U.S. in that tragic mess of a war. Now, check the record of congress business shipmates; that 'one' senator - is now known as President Biden.

Our Boris is currently in Washington, doing business deals with that serial liar. Do we seriously imagine we will not be ditched, abandoned and/or stabbed in the back at his slightest whim? Example: At the White House reception for I.R.A. fund raising and a pointed slur against Northern Ireland before the entire press corp. - his sort of diplomacy.





New Blackpool Tower looked an interesting build. Very informative TV show seemed to demonstrate why our submarine programme may be in such a stew. The tower is a slender 162 meters and that dictated a pretty thick tube of 88 mm; my imperial head has that at about  $6\frac{1}{4}$ ". No U.K. contractor would cast a plate that thick so it came from Germany ! Who would roll it into that high spec tube? Holland !

Glass for viewing platforms had complex compound curves to give self-supporting integrity; had to be done in Italy then shipped to France for fitting ! Bet that makes you proud to live in what claims to be a world class industrial nation. Don't scoff as here is an example: Astute class submarines are £1.5 billion a copy - so far - massively over budget and five years late; who for the love of Nelly challenges or questions such fiascos?

Have you had a look at Halford's mega bicycle sale of late? All heavily discounted, made in that country of five letters that begin with C; nil points if you came up with Chelmsford, don't feel sad, I thought it was Colchester.

I had some idea what was paid for illegal channel crossing; all was put right last week by Q.C. Badenoch of Chelmsford, he represents the Crown case at court. H.G.Vs do it for 2 to 3 thousand pounds per head, inflatables charge 2 to 4 thousand pounds per head, last week a converted trawler with 69 migrants and a crew of 3, estimated at 1500 pounds a head. Where do these poor migrants get their cash? And the Q.C. says it's all cash. If that affluent why a reception organisation to issue social security numbers, free board and lodging with three hot meals a day, in hotels - not hostels! Testing for any malady that needs N.H.S. attention 'at once, a small cash hand out for immediate purchase of essential small sundries. A report in the marine press on August 4<sup>th</sup> states number of illegals crossing from France so far this year totalled 1,000, beating previous record of 8,500 for the whole of last year.

The culture we grew up in Shipmates is ever more alien from that of my grandchildren, already turned on its head, the common place we accepted and respected alas long gone. I confess to being a trifle delinquent, the local Bobby knew me and my brothers by name. He was a person who knew his remit to the letter and knew a sharp bit of local justice was appreciated by most parents. His boots shone, his uniform immaculate, brushed and pressed and a helmet that



conveyed as much authority as a lifeguard's, polished and plumed. Compare with today's scruffy, mostly unshaven, in whatever mix of uniform he fancies today, like duckbill hat or peaked issue, dirty boots or shoes, un-pressed slacks festooned with kit round the middle, I bet most stamped 'made in China'. Old films always showed the 'boss' inspecting his shift before they went on the streets.

Listening to the early morning world news on the wireless this morning I learned the U.S.A. are concerned about a very similar situation. A report on their census says the population made its first radical alteration, it tipped over the line for northern Europeans to be the types as the dominant block of U.S. population. What's commonly referred to as Hispanic has taken place and the gap is getting wider a pace. I thought many years ago when by popular vote California and Arizona changed to dual language states it may not take long. It used to be a rule; English was the only language. Last week President Biden chartered a nine plane fleet to take Haitian migrants back to their island, recently laid waste by an earthquake; thousands homeless with death toll unknown, it so horrified one of his key advisors he resigned.

I wonder, is the American dream over?

Found a tiny picture of India's latest carrier, out for the first time from Kochi, on trials. They say it is the first 'indigenous'; first designed by Russia and contract to build was given to Ukraine just before U.S.S.R. broke up that resulted in Ukraine's independence. Russia was broke, carriers cancelled with not a rouble paid. As we now know China bought one hull from Ukraine for good money then India bought the other, hence the word 'indigenous' designs is, to me, a porky.

The aviation fit and control being supplied by Russia - M.I.G. 29k, KA31 airborne early warning, with it is said a pair of U.S. H 60s helicopters. These carriers, of what I consider the same family, are full blown angle deck catapult wire trapping. Design appeals to my watery eye, lovely rolled deck edges, no stick-on sponsons; make our over hyped so called carriers that can only operate one type of aircraft, unsuitable for fleet use in emergency, no landing sight, no wires etc. a liability, designed by political committee. India is now a proper two carrier navy.

Here another example, read this very day, of respect for constituents by M.P. for Litchfield **Michael Fabricant**, known in the House as its arch narcissist. **He charged the public purse £4.98 for a selfie-stick.** Questioned he assured expenses scrutineer it will be used only to photograph his voters when public speaking. Never to be used on holiday with husband. What a miserable, penny-pinching turd to offer such an excuse to his grown up flock.

Thought I had exhausted my submission for next month just when Jo told me the October Magazine was on the ether.

**FIRSTLY;** the wreath to sit with Robin on top of his coffin I thought was the most splendid I've ever seen, to my eye a classic original. Who chose it and where from I know not, but it hit the spot for Jo and me.

**SECOND**; readers letters of thanks for keeping us afloat successfully with assistance from the 'sisterhood' says it all.

Was surprised to read it had been steaming along for twenty years after Fred Kinsey first got the urge to float our boat with the aid of his daughter Sharon - who sent her condolences to the family.

Now Miz Libby sits on Monsieur Brian's elbow, it shows graphically one thing I feel, without 'Les Girls' the Superb Association would have sunk into oblivion many moons ago. I recall the old saying: 'The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world'.

**LASTLY**: Shipmate Brian Turner's models; can only keep asking myself, where on earth does he get his inexhaustible patience for such detail? Cannot imagine Margaret calling out "Dinner is on the table sweetheart" when he's mid-way up that crane jib's construction, it alone must have taken weeks on end, a master class in detail. Have a few questions to ask when next we meet in the New Year.

As you may have noticed above I wondered about President Biden's reliability towards the U.K. Prospects of decent trade deals with Trump's trade rep receded rapidly since Joe Biden won the White House. An aversion to anything Trumpism killed that stone dead. Our Foreign Secretary, at her party conference, refused to guarantee one with the U.S.A. by the end of the decade! It did not take Biden long to revert to type, following I.R.A. advice.

News today tells trade to and from Europe is about to come to a crashing halt; senior French officials threaten to 'up their sabotage' by use of French fishing fleet, and cut off electricity supplies. Easy task enabled by our own dilatory political elite who wasted nigh on ten years of 'self-sufficiency' development time in pursuit of their own personal aggrandisement, precedence devoted only to the latter.

It made me think of a naval history lesson at Shotley - Lord Salisbury observed: "France always was, and always will be, our enemy". The great struggle had just concluded, naive; I saw us in an alliance with common cause, value. French acreage sufficient for a major city filled instead with crosses, three paces apart, marked the remains of my countrymen and those of our commonwealth. And now, what of our N.A.T.O. allies? I am certain you all know our nation is not only broke, but **broke, broke!**

To get out of N.A.T.O. would save a generous sum; to have major barracks, and caches of military hard ware in northern Europe today seems nuts to me. Politicians and cavalry-minded Generals speak of it in the 'long dead' language of 'imperial grandeur'. I am a devotee of the idea; if you cannot play with the big boys, you can certainly be a very smart little one.

The new type of asymmetric warfare ably demonstrated against the 'world's policeman' has worked twice in recent history; in Vietnam and Afghanistan.

Back to trade; it is claimed for creating the U.S navy. Following the war of independence U.S.



traders wished to do good business in the Mediterranean, it being an easy sail across to the Straits of Gibraltar. Alas Algerian and Barbary pirates had further progressed and had the North African coast firmly in their grasp, capturing, enslaving crews and vessels, many ransomed, they got mega rich.

A reported 1.5 million European and Americans between 1600 - 1780 suffered this fate, ransom being a favourite. Eventually the U.S. patience at breaking point, the corps of U.S. marines was assembled and well trained enough to do a flanking campaign along North Africa. Landing in Egypt and marching inland so taking by surprise towns and ports who had, by tradition, been assaulted from seaward, expecting things to stay as usual. They demolished strongholds, burnt towns and harbours, released countless slaves. You will be familiar with the U.S. Marine Corps anthem **FROM THE HALLS OF MONTZUMA TO THE SHORES OF TRIPLOI**; that campaign is its origin.

Found one record of Barbary pirates in their hay day. They landed at Baltimore, a Southern Irish port and town, carried off to slavery in one solitary night the entire population. The pirate problem was exacerbated by R.N. Patrols of the time being severely restricted, following the independence war, responsibility being no longer important. Crippling demands of ransom paid by the U.S. became reason famous poets, both U.S. and British, wrote serious pieces. Common name of ransom was *Dane-geld*. A favourite of mine, Kipling, published this last verse on the subject:

It is wrong to put temptation in the path of any nation,  
For fear they should succumb and go astray;  
So when you are requested to pay up or be molested,  
You will find it better policy to say: --

"We never pay any-one Dane-geld,  
No matter how trifling the cost;  
For the end of that game is oppression and shame,  
And the nation that pays it is lost!"

I see a version of this being used by China on Taiwan today. Is there a President Jefferson in the White House preparing his corps of marines to do a flanker?

I also wonder if the 'freed from colonialism, independent Americans' thought there was any parallel between Barbary holding hundreds of Americans and Americans holding hundreds of African black slaves under conditions that could not have varied a great deal.

Still with the U.S. navy; I saw a picture of part of a, recently found, sunken wooden vessel It was the remains of U.S.S. *Bear* which sank 260 miles off Boston U.S. in 1963. Why she sank is not reported. (In 1963, while in tow by the tug *Irving Birch* to Philadelphia, *Bear* foundered about 100 nautical miles (190 km; 120 mi) south of Cape Sable Island, Nova Scotia, at 42°40'N 065°11'W.





(She went down early in the morning of 19 March 1963 after a gale struck and severed the tow line. The mast collapsed and punctured the hull, causing the sinking. Her crew of two were rescued by *Irving Birch-( Libby)*).

Built in Dundee in 1874 and purchased by the U.S. in 1884 especially to help in search for the Greely Arctic Expedition *Bear* ended up serving in the Alaska area for 40

years. She was that navy's first black captain and did the job for 9 years until 1895, son of a plantation owner and slave. U.S.S. *Bear* was not decommissioned until 1944 which has her serving through two world wars. 90 years has me wondering what price was paid those Scots for her. Whatever it was Uncle Sam really got value for money.

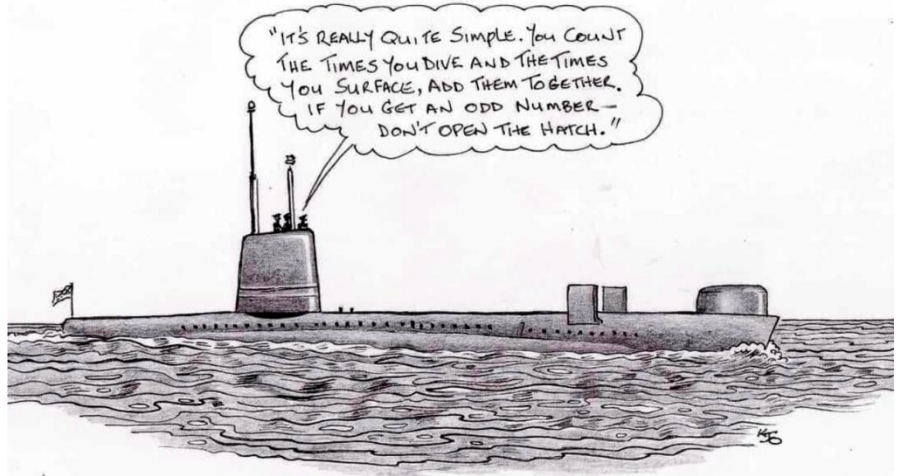
We homo sapiens certainly are a queer lot (old connotation). I watched the TV show that demonstrated the humble carrion crows ability to rapidly learn and make decisions based on that learning. I followed the general belief that all we had over the animal kingdom was the ability to reason. Now I feel the statement has 'qualifiers attached'. What degree of reasoning has one half of the world threatening the other with annihilation at a cost of trillions as large percentages of each camp go to bed hungry, cold, sick maybe, and homeless each night. School boy philosophy I guess, but I ponder, does Jim Crow have thought on eliminating half the world? if only we could communicate, maybe he could teach us a few basics.

I imagine rejoicing in large parts of the Royal Navy at the elevation of noble Lord Radakin from First Sea Lord to Chief of the General Staff is rather muted knowing the fatal result of his persistent desire to subordinate the Royal Marines to the limp wrist direction of his own naval command; naval rank, insignia being a small corner of his power grab. I tried to follow the noble lord's career highlights but ran out of places to look. His opponent to such vandalism of one of the nation's Elite Forces was major General Mathew Holmes, later promoted to Commandant General R.M. He developed a new concept of 'littoral strike' for the Commando Force. The tactic by Admiral Radakin was, in his own words to, 'kick him upstairs' to find a role in the 'dead legs repository of the M.O.D.', effectively removing him from close involvement with his Royal marines.

They were to be relegated to a more pliable, less senior officer, under the Noble Lord! Holmes' position as R.M. Supremo was dropped half way through his tenure by a reported email - vigorous defence of a national elite band, always in the thick of action was casting a shadow over the Noble Lord's lack-lustre performance. I would suspect he rode high on the back of his Masonic lodge, and don't snigger at that, there are pointers. In contrast the list of achievements of Major General Holmes on the way up is an eye opener, should you wish them itemised let our chairman know and I promise a list in my next news letter; it is not a figment of my imagination, a true warrior who led from out front.



I don't know but think the navy section that considers itself 'elite', - and rightly so - are the sea-going submariners; where they go and what they get up to remains a mystery to be revealed, perhaps many years later. I feel they will not be fiddled with by any Noble Lord, at his peril. Even their association, locally, is a step different; personally I feel they earn their title, I hope they live long and give their detractors many sleepless nights. Elite portion of the surface fleet was Fleet Air Arm, following recovery from the bi-plane three crew R.A.F. who had trashed it.



Sadly politicians got a foot in the door, Lords and Admirals milled about like headless chickens whilst the R.A.F. did a power grab and again, took it back without a whimper several decades later, after their WW 2 sparkling era under young, go-getting air-minded direction. F.A.A. is now a laughing stock, even Putin thanked us publicly for provision of such nice targets.

Better call a halt lest the publication date is missed, if it's a load of ill-conceived crap, do let us know- you will still be loved.

To conclude, I wish all y'all a calm collected autumn, with no contact to Covid bug or even a runny nose to spoil your cravat.

Jo and Andy Brierley.



REMEMBER - IF YOU'D LIKE TO COMMENT ON ANDY'S MUSINGS - DON'T BE SHY!



Thought for today  
To write with a broken pencil is pointless.



# LEST WE FORGET

Researched by Brian Saunders



Living as I do on the Mediterranean coast in the south of France between the seaside towns of Argélès and Canet, my interest in the historical local connections of the last world war was piqued. I knew, for instance, that thousands of Spanish fled their country in 1936 following the purges of General Franco during the civil war and spent years interned in fenced camps on the local beaches around here. Beaches where, nowadays, thousands of international holidaymakers flock to sun themselves on the mostly sandy shores.

About 30 years or so whilst scuba diving along the 'Vermillion Coast' I picked up several brass cartridge cases from ordinance probably used around that time. They were lying all around the scattered remains of a sunken wooden vessel roughly 15 metres down under the shelter of some cliffs and all dated appropriately. I subsequently had several interesting, much deeper, dives locally on Nazi seized French vessels all sunk by British submarines during the Second World War.

I have followed vertiginous paths in the nearby mountains imagining how escaping allied combatants must have felt and wondered on their future whilst local French members of the Maquis led them, mostly at the dead of night and often in stormy weather to safety.

What I wasn't aware of though were the clandestine operations by the Royal Navy in this particular area until I read in a local publication of ***Operation Rosalind - Escape from Canet Plage WW2***

For many escapees, evaders, and refugees, our nearby main town of Perpignan was one of the final stepping stones to freedom. It was also often the start of a difficult journey, across treacherous snow topped mountains, dodging German patrols. Resistance groups and escape committees provided guides at great risk to themselves.

Perpignan's position close to the coast also meant that British navy vessels could come in close to shore at Argélès-sur-Mer, Canet, Banyuls-sur-Mer and Cerbère and evaders had the chance of directly reaching Gibraltar by sea, avoiding the risk of being interned by the Spanish.

One such vessel, *H.M.S. Fidelity*, was assigned the landing of two agents at Canet-Plage to set up a two-way escape line over the Pyrenees. Their mission was also to collect twelve escaping Polish Air Force officers at Collioure.



In fact, the Polish Air crew did not turn up at the rendezvous point, and the rescue crew, disguised as local fishermen, were challenged by a local customs officer and taken prisoner.



Their leader, *Fidelity's* second-in-command, Patrick Albert O'Leary, managed to escape and ended staying on in France to help in the setting up of the successful escape and evasion route, this route was known as the *PAT LINE*

One of the largest and most successful sea escapes organised by the Pat line '*Operation Rosalind*', took place in April, 1941 at Canet Plage, when forty escapees waded into the sea, to be picked up and taken to the safety of Gibraltar.

Yorkshireman, Geoffrey Robinson was one of the escapees from Canet. In the 1964 TV show



'This is Your Life' honouring Pat O'Leary, Robinson described how the 40 escapees waited for a week with O'Leary, wading into the sea every night in vain, until O'Leary radioed London with the message "*Pas plus de bateau que de beurre au cul!*" (There's no more a boat here than butter on my arse!)

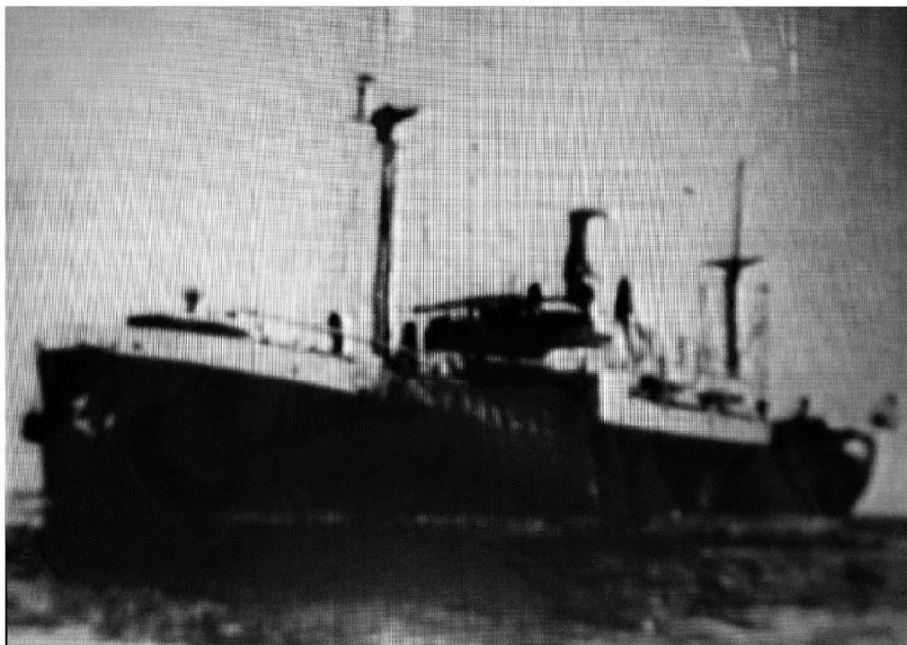
The rather rude message produced results and they were picked up 2 nights later.

By the end of 1942 the Germans took over this previously unoccupied zone of France. Sea escapes had to stop and subsequent evaders were obliged to escape across the Pyrenees.

The original French civilian skipper ('Lieutenant de vaisseau') of 'Le Rhin' in 1940 René Victor Cannebotin. He served in the Royal Navy on '*Fidelity*' under the 'nom de guerre' of Lieutenant-Commander René W. Doudet. However, the self-appointed



**Claude André Michel Péri  
alias 'Jack Langlais'**



**S.S. Le Rhin, the French merchant vessel  
In 1940 she became Royal Navy vessel HMS Fidelity**

commander of 'Le Rhin' in the summer of 1940 was a French '5e Bureau' agent ('Enseigne de vaisseau) Claude Andre Michel Péri. Photograph (above) shows Claude Péri (on the left) and 'Le Rhin' as a French merchant navy vessel (on the right). Claude Péri's 'nom de guerre' while serving in the Royal Navy was Jack Langlais (i.e. Jack of England!).



Most of the original French merchant navy crew left 'Le Rhin' after she put into Gibraltar. With the politically grave military situation of the time it had become a rebellious crew. The Frenchmen who remained were determined to continue the fight.

There was also a Frenchwoman on board: Madeleine Victorine Bayard. She was a saboteur 'par excellence' and romantically attached to Claude Péri. Unusually for a Royal Navy vessel, Madeleine Bayard continued to serve at sea on H.M.S. Fidelity as a WRNS officer (1st Officer) with the 'nom de guerre' of Madeleine Barclay.

Before S.S. 'Le Rhin' embarked for Barry, South Wales there were others who came on board determined to fight

the Nazis. A small group of Belgian officers arrived in Gibraltar about the same time, at the end of June 1940, after being evacuated from Sète which is further east from where I live on the French Mediterranean coastline. The small group of Belgians was about thirteen in number.

A number of this select group of Belgian officers went in to have a distinguished war service. For example, one of them was Captain Georges Danloy who joined the Commandos and immediately after the war became Commanding Officer of the Belgian Commandos. Another Belgian who evacuated from Sète to Gibraltar at this time was Baron Jean Michel de Selys-Longchamps. He was awarded the D.F.C. while serving with 609 Squadron of the R.A.F. after a successful, but unauthorised, attack on the Gestapo headquarters in Brussels in January 1943.

However, for the purposes of this article, it is a small group of three Belgian army officers we are concerned with as they went on to serve as Royal Navy officers on *H.M.S. Fidelity*. The one who was to become the best known of these three was Lieutenant Albert-Marie Edmond Guérisse of the Belgian Army Medical Corps. He became second-in-command of *H.M.S. Fidelity* for a time, serving as Lieutenant-Commander Patrick Albert O'Leary. After being stranded in southern France in 1941, "Pat O'Leary" he became the leader of the Allied 'PAT' escape and evasion line. After the war some of Lieutenant-Commander O'Leary was interviewed about his memories of *H.M.S. Fidelity*.

Below is a translation of Pat O'Leary's account of how he and his fellow Belgian officers first came across Claude Péri alias Jack Langlais, Madeleine Bayard / Barclay and SS 'Le Rhin' in Gibraltar harbour on 29 June 1940. It first appeared in the French language Brussels newspaper "*La Libre Belgique*" (November 1946):

*"It was at Gibraltar that my destiny was forged. A French Naval officer, Commandant Péri, was struggling against a rebellious crew. He called upon us to assist. We were happy to give him a helping hand; since his men wanted to make for an Algerian port and place themselves under the flag of a France that had surrendered.*

*This vessel of 20 tonnes, which was called "Le Rhin", had in fact been stolen by Péri at Marseille. Péri was the most splendid example of a pirate: steeped in bravado and vice. He was from Indo-China and had a lady friend on board, a young woman who, herself, bore a legendary name: Madeleine Bayard. The French Navy had entrusted to Péri with a mission that fascinated him: to sail on a harmless looking boat, he was to blow up German ships in neutral ports. At Las Palmas, he had done just this, by his own hands and helped only by his chief engineer and Miss Barclay, he had blown up an enemy vessel of 10,000 tonnes. His crew knew nothing about it.*



After the fall of France, he had found himself in Marseille; he was ordered to remove all the goods he could remove from the docks and squeeze them on to a boat so they were not taken by the enemy. He had convinced the captain of a merchant vessel, "Le Rhin", to collect up everything that was on the Canebière and set sail for Casablanca. But, when he was in sight of



**Commander Peter Painter, D.S.C., R.N.**



**Lt.-Cmndr. Pat O'Leary (Albert Guerisse), G.C., D.S.O.**



**Jack de Brabant, Belgian Army Officer  
(served in the Royal Navy on H.M.S. Fidelity)**



**Jean 'Pipitte' Peters (alias "Johnny O'Neill")  
(served in the Royal Navy on H.M.S. Fidelity)**

*Gibraltar, Péri gave the order to enter the British harbour. Hence the crew's rebellion and our fortuitous meeting!"*

In November 1963, "Pat O'Leary"/ Albert Guérisse was the subject of an episode of the BBC Television series "This is Your Life". His connection with SS 'Le Rhin' / H.M.S. Fidelity was discussed during this T.V. programme, not just by Lieutenant-Commander O'Leary but also by Commander Peter Painter, D.S.C., R.N. (Royal Navy attaché to *Fidelity* at Barry, South Wales) and two other Belgian army officers who served on *Fidelity*: Jack de Brabant and Jean 'Pipitte' Peters. Photograph No. 4 (above) shows Peter Painter, Pat O'Leary, Jack de Brabant and Jean 'Pipitte' Peters talking about *H.M.S. Fidelity*.

How did this trio of Belgian army officers come to serve on a French Merchant Navy vessel converted to a Royal Navy vessel?

According to Jack de Brabant: "You see, Claude Péri, the self-appointed captain - wanted to get to Britain to fight what he thought, what we all thought, would be the last battle. He was delighted to sign us on - although of course we knew very little about the sea."

What was it like serving on the same vessel as Claude Péri ?

Eamonn Andrews, the presenter of "This is Your Life", described Claude Péri as "... a regular Captain Bligh". Evidently, it was an almost impossible task to deal with Claude Péri. According to Jean 'Pipitte' Peters (who served in the Royal Navy under the 'nom de guerre' of Johnny O'Neill):

"... he was very big and very tough, and settled any arguments with his fists. Lieutenant Guérisse was the only one of us who could do anything with him".

Nevertheless, according to Peter Painter, there was one thing that united this motley crew that sailed into Barry docks after leaving Gibraltar: "... a burning desire to get on with the war and start fighting". In addition, according to Commander Painter, there was nothing regular about the ship and her crew:

"Well, everything about the ship's company was unorthodox - I'd never seen anything like it. There was even a female saboteur (Madeleine Bayard) on board who'd come back from Paris with some very secret plastic explosive, you know!"

How were they to continue the struggle and take the fight to the Nazis? According to Commander Painter: "Well, they said they were going to take the ship to sea and fight under the White Ensign. And furthermore, they were going to change their names and become British Naval officers. Of course, from the Admiralty's point of view this was quite fantastic and out of the question."

Despite this initial opposition of the Admiralty, the crew won its first battle. SS *Le Rhin* was renamed *H.M.S. Fidelity* and, as has already been referred to, the French and Belgian crew changed their names. Why did Albert Guérisse choose the name "O'Leary"? This is how Dr Albert Guérisse explained it to Eamonn Andrews and the "This is Your Life" audience in November 1963:

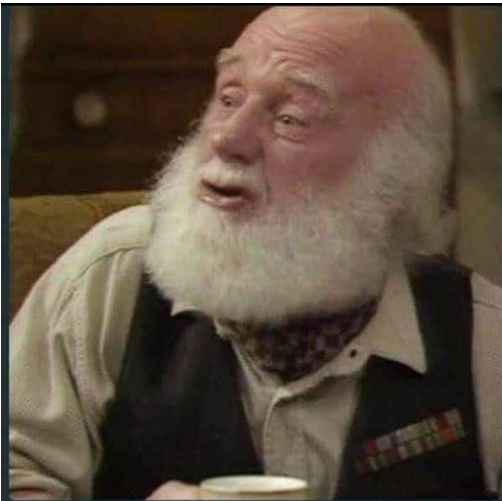
"Well, it's quite a story. I had known when I was at school, a boy who was a good friend of mine and whose name was O'Leary and he was a French Canadian, in fact. He was the son of a diplomat.

So, when I was asked to take a French Canadian name, my first thought went to my old schoolboy friend. And I said, "Well I want to be called O'Leary". So I was answered, "Well O'Leary - that is not a French Canadian name. That is a real Irish name". But I said, "No, no, that is certainly a French Canadian name". The chap I knew was a real French Canadian."



Thus, as Albert Guérisse was determined to have the apparently 'Irish' surname of O'Leary, it was suggested to him that his Christian name should be Patrick! Henceforth, for the rest of the war he became Lieutenant-Commander Patrick Albert O'Leary, R.N. It was under this name that he was awarded both the D.S.O. and George Cross.

THE END



So there I was on the bridge of this massive oil tanker chugging up the Suez Canal when I thought, "Hang on! I forgot me mask." So I decided to turn it round to go back and get it.

## Captain of the cargo ship stuck in the Suez canal finally revealed







# NOZZERS GO WEST Part 29

By Ray Lambert

*But as he headed for the quarterdeck and the gangway on the Monday morning, he was told he was not required because they were just about to put to sea at 0800 and that maneuver, as he knew only too well, made his job redundant. Why nobody had bothered to warn him the day before or even while he was engaged on the quarterdeck earlier, left him feeling a little annoyed. Everyone was in whites in readiness for leaving harbour so that was no real hardship but it brought home to him his true value as gangway staff. Not a single one of them had taken the trouble to keep him in the picture and make him feel one of the team.*

*Being aft to where he thought the gangway would still be made him late for his leaving harbour station but it gave him a grandstand view of the ensign staff getting caught under the headrope of the ship next to them and snapped off. They didn't want any help retrieving the broken pole so he took refuge in the after passages until they were clear of the harbour before returning to the mess deck. It occurred to him that the shipwrights would now have some legitimate work to do mending the broken ensign staff, the first work they had been called upon to do since they hastily erected those racks on the upper deck for all those extra potatoes that were brought onboard in Bermuda, potatoes that had to be thrown away soon after because the tropics had turned them all rotten.*

**T**he trip from Port-of-Spain, Trinidad to St. George's Bay, Grenada was only a small hop, skip and jump and they arrived there at 1700 on the same day where they were obliged to anchor out, off shore, in 13 fathoms of water. It was the first time they'd not been alongside since Port Stanley in the Falklands and the use of boats to get ashore was not a good omen for the place, a place that most of them had never heard of. The boats could only take a certain amount of liberty men at a time and took the edge off going ashore to such an extent that most people didn't bother. Those that had taken the trouble returned dejectedly reporting there was very little to do or see.

The following morning at 0950 they fired a fifteen-gun salute to the island Administrator. Still trying to figure out why they had fired a second salute upon leaving Rio, Ginger deduced it was another break with tradition - firing the salute the day after they arrived in port instead of as



they arrived. Nobody ever explained why the salute was fired a day late and Ginger couldn't be bothered to find out the reason, or if there was a reason.

Maybe the thinking was that an Administrator didn't warrant such an official recognition, one that was usually accorded presidents or governors. Maybe later they had a signal to say he was entitled to a salute and then had to fit one in as quickly as possible. As it was, he only got fifteen instead of the normal twenty-one.

The Royal Marines went ashore to perform their Tattoo and Beat Retreat with Ceremonial Sunset and the ship's concert party piece 'We ain't Sulkin' yet again, this time for the benefit of the local radio station who came aboard to record the show and although the Royal's Tattoo was well received, as it always was wherever it was carried out, to most people's thinking Granada was almost a non-event and a place to move on from as soon as possible. They were anchored off shore and, naturally, unable to see much of the town, plus not having set foot on Grenadian soil they were not really in a position to judge but, if confirmation were required, it came at the open-to-visitors afternoon when less than five hundred locals took the trouble to turn up.

Maybe Ginger was a bit overboard with his negative views of Grenada and in particular the St. George's bit of it, especially as he hadn't taken the trouble to check it out for himself and maybe it was better ashore than the impression it gave from the water, looking in. But nevertheless his best day in Grenadian waters was their fourth day and then his enjoyment was twofold. On that fourth day they up anchored and left Grenada early in the morning - and it was payday!



Their next port of call was Antigua and word was that it was only a day away but rather than have them waste the day, 'Fearless Freddie' decided to liven things up somewhat with an AA gunnery action stations. During the midday dinner break, the Tannoy sounded off with: 'Action Stations. Four inch and close range guns crews close up.' He couldn't even wait until the afternoon muster; he cut into the dinner break and all relevant crews were closed up and cleared away by 1300. Ginger's station was on the aftermost mounting on the

two starboard side; the one manned entirely by boys. It was also the one with the fastest drill times and the one credited with the most accurate shooting.

There was no particular point to the shoot and maybe the action stations had been called in error or maybe the noise and dust was disturbing the officers at their midday meal in the wardroom. Possibly a halt was called so that time for part-of-ship cleaning and scrubbing ready for entering harbour would not be wasted. But, whatever the reason the whole episode was over in twenty minutes, just in time for the regular afternoon muster for work.

Although the trip from Grenada to Antigua was only a day's sailing, they found time to make a detour to *HMS Diamond Rock*, a large lump of rock standing out of the sea and towering 800 feet into the sky. Once again the 'knowledgeables' came into their own imparting such facts as the rock was commissioned as a ship in 1802 when *HMS Centaur* landed a party of 120 seamen



who then repelled everyone for many weeks. The learned gentlemen's facts didn't extend as far as to why a piece of rock needed defending in the first place, or from whom. It must have been important at the time and still important enough for the *America* and *West Indies* flagship to make a special detour just to pipe the side and salute it - and salute it they did. The pipe was broadcast: 'Attention on the upper deck. Face to starboard', then the 'still' was blown on a bosun's call while they all stood rather self-consciously to attention saluting a lump of rock.

Despite the detour they arrived in Antigua twenty-four hours after leaving Grenada, slowing to a stop at an anchorage in St. John's just after 0800. It was Good Friday and although it was broadcast that they would observe Sunday harbour routine, they remained at half an hour notice for steam and both watches of the hands were delighted to learn that they would spend the entire day chipping and repainting. The following day they moved berth to a new anchorage and reverted to the usual four hour notice for steam. Whatever the anticipated emergency that required almost instant steam was it seemed to have gone off the boil during the night and dissipated with the morning mist.

Naturally, back in harbour, although rather a long way from land, Ginger was back in his job as a member of the gangway staff. He had spent the afternoon, his off duty time, helping prepare the quarterdeck for an officers cocktail party. He had rigged for cocktail parties many times before but all the same he had to concede that the time they had spent had worked miracles and it looked absolutely wonderful rigged out in red and white striped awning inside the canvas

awning with the side panels all in place. It was completely transformed and even the mushroom head air intake didn't spoil the overall effect; each of them had a purpose-made wood grating on the top of their highly polished surface. The electricians always strung up lots of extra lights, complete with Chinese lanterns and the quarterdeck took on an appearance of its own. The gleaming white wood decking that he had helped to keep in its current state on his hands and knees every morning, complemented the overall effect and even the triple six-inch gun turret didn't look out of place. It had been highly polished and seemed to fade into the background. It was doubtful if any of the guests even noticed it was there.

It had been his free time but there was no such thing for boys if there was extra work to be done. He was an old hand at rigging cocktail parties by this time due to all the experience he had gained and if he were truthful he would have to admit, if somewhat grudgingly, that he had enjoyed doing it. Old Joe, the quarterdeck petty officer, allowed him a certain amount of leeway to get on with things, particularly the finishing touches. Joe also allowed him the concession of finishing half an hour early so he had time for a bath and an early tea before his four o'clock duty on the gangway. Some concession but at the same time Joe was a nice man and the gesture was appreciated, otherwise there would have been no time for tea for the gangway dogsbody.



Joe Crane

Thanks to the kindness of the quarterdeck petty officer, Ginger had time for a leisurely bath and plenty of time for a cup of tea and a sandwich before changing into whites and heading for the gangway but this happiness was all upstaged by the officer-of-the-watch losing his telescope over the side just as the cocktail party started. That was the icing on the cake of a perfect day.

**TO BE CONTINUED NEXT MONTH**

**I changed my iPad's name to Titanic. It's syncing now.**

# HOLLAND 1

Over the years many had struggled in vain to make the submarine into an effective weapon.



**John Fredrick Holland.**

In the end it fell to John Fredrick Holland, an Irish man living in America, to put all the elements of the modern submarine into one hull and make it work. His preferred method of propulsion was the internal combustion engine combined with battery powered electric engines. After several prototypes he developed the *Holland Four* for the United States Navy and armed it with a Whitehead torpedo. Although he was not the first to do this, the reliability of his submarine combined with his engineering genius forged the two into the start of a deadly combination. The submarine as an effective weapon had finally arrived.

**H.M.Submarine No1.**



In 1901 the Royal Navy had ordered five *Holland* submarines. In April 1902 the very first, *Holland one*, was taken out for its maiden voyage under the command of Lt. Arnold Foster. Although quickly superseded by the A class of submarines, the *Hollands* acquitted themselves well and gave years of satisfactory service. In 1913 *Holland 1* was sold for scrap, and whilst on tow past the Eddystone she foundered and sank thus slipping from people's memories.



### First voyage.

However in 1981 Royal Navy divers stumbled across the wreck out near the Eddystone Reef and the Admiralty decided to salvage the submarine and place in the Submarine Museum at Gosport. Once the *Holland* had been lifted from the Reef she was taken to the sheltered waters just off Drake's Island in Plymouth Sound, where she lay over night waiting for the high tides that would enable her to be safely carried through the Hamoaze and up the River Tamar to the waiting Dockyard.



## First View

Once inside the dry dock the *Holland* was lowered onto a specially made cradle. Teams of divers were sent down continually to monitor her progress, whilst the engineers waited anxiously up top. They had prepared the cradle from the original builder's drawings of the *Holland*, and if they had got it wrong the Submarine could fall off the cradle once all the water was pumped out of the dock. At last everybody was satisfied that all was well, and as the last of the water was pumped out of the dry dock, crowds of people started to gather to see the Royal Navy's first operational submarine emerge. For a submarine that had not seen the light of day for over seventy years the *Holland* looked in remarkable condition.



### Coning Tower Hatch.

Even though her hull had one or two holes, there seemed nothing structurally wrong with her, and the engineers put this down to the fact that she had been lying in nearly two hundred feet of water and so had been out of the reach of the damaging turbulence that storms can so often inflict. Once the engineers were quite certain she was secure they had to

remove the thin coating of rust that had so far protected the hull from serious corrosion. As the water jets blasted off the rust the hull started to come shiny clean and gave a hint of what the *Holland* must have looked like when she was first built. The entire hull had to be scrupulously clean to allow the Fertan preserving chemical to be sprayed on to stop the hull rusting any further and for the metal to be stabilised.



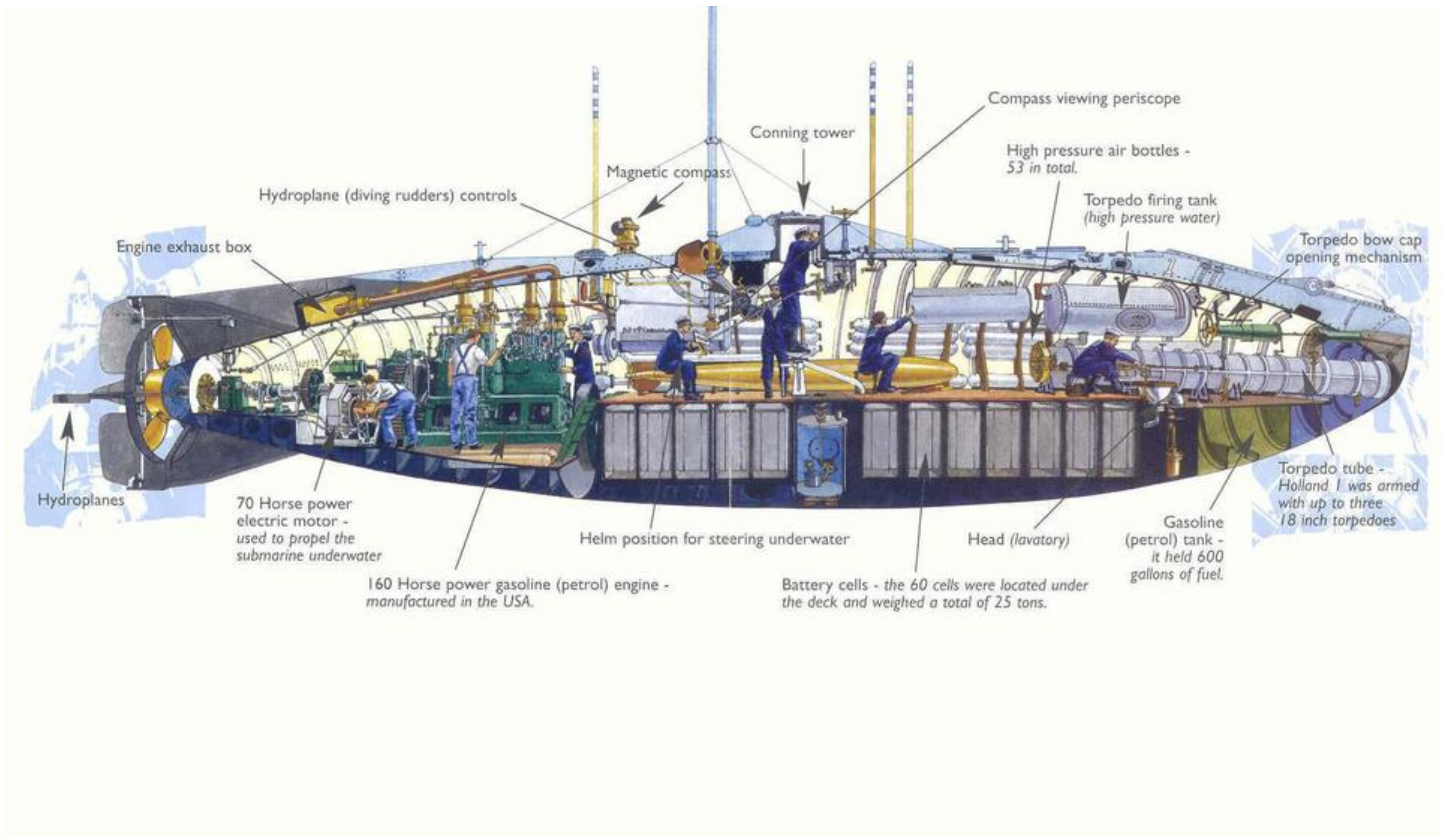
### **Holland at Gosport.**

This was very important, as further treatment would have to wait until she was re-housed at Gosport. Because the hull was so unwieldy it was cut into three and loaded onto separate transporters for her journey at Gosport. Here she was transformed into a superb exhibit. You could go inside and see everything. It was very impressive. Unfortunately it did not last. Something went wrong after a few years and the *Holland* started to corrode. Nothing the Museum could do seemed to stop it so in desperation the submarine was placed in a sealed tank until a remedy could be found. Because no satisfactory remedy was found for some years the *Holland* remained entombed in her own iron casket.

### **Good News:**

The problems with the *Holland* seem to have been solved, and she has now been restored to her former glory and is now once more on view at the Submarine Museum in Gosport.





# ANOTHER DOOR Part 5

by Tom Simkins MBE

## The Road to Palembang

**N**ext morning as the dawn broke red and gold behind us; the coast of Sumatra was silhouetted against a darker sky.

It could be argued that there should have been a cast-iron plan before we left Singapore. After all, we had had plenty of time during our long waits at the hulk at Bukom and while at wharf 50, to talk it over. I suppose we all thought that since Mossie had been the organiser so far, he would have a plan in mind. Well he hadn't. As he now said, except for heading in a direction away from Singapore on the agreed heading which would be northward and not southward, he had not given a destination any priority. The prevailing one that suppresses all other thoughts in that tense noisy existence, was a successful escape from Keppel. He would consider number two priority, and where we should go, after the successful accomplishment of number one.

Now, in the dim morning light, Mossie confessed that he had not dared think of the future with so much of the present around the previous day. If we had cleared Singapore and the tip of Malaya safely, he would make for the coast of Sumatra and continue Northeast. What he had not given a thought to, was whether or not the Japanese may be crossing the Strait of Malacca since they now held Penang and all the coast-line south. The Strait could be unhealthily congested.

In the long watch through the night hours, the situation as to what to do became obvious. To travel any further on our present course with the Japanese still within flying-time and with possible sea patrols out from the coast, would be pushing our luck too far. We might have put 85 miles and Singapore behind us, but the enemy-held coast of Malaya was still only 40 miles away.

At the same time as the sun was lighting up the east behind us, it was with relief we could see the 'Makota' happily bobbing along less than a mile away. We had slowed down considerably as the sea calmed about an hour before dawn and Sandy had kept pace with the 'Kulit' He said later that the small launch had taken the sea very well. What the 'Kulit' had ploughed through, the 'Makota' had just gone up and down with it and not a drop of water in-board, although it was a bit uncomfortable at times. When we had parted during the night, Sandy said that he had



taken note of our course, and since he knew that Mossie would stick to his, he wasn't a bit worried. As the sky had lightened, he had seen our larger silhouette long before we saw his.

By the time that the 'Makota' was sighted, and I had recovered from the inevitable sea-sickness that had assailed me through those rolling night hours, number two priority was being discussed. With the sky brightening rapidly and every one on deck where they had been since the rainsquall, there could still be the likelihood of reconnoitring aircraft spotting us.

So a decision was made. We would head west and make for the coast of Sumatra, now clearly visible, sail up the nearest river as far as we could, then make plans depending on circumstances. Sumatra was not so backward and there was bound to be some sort of transport that would take us somewhere. The port of Padang on the West Coast was a possibility. We would just have to hope that the Japanese had not already arrived.

After the sun rose and the morning progressed with Sandy and company following behind us, we pressed on in an inland direction via a wide river mouth and as the land on each side of us started to narrow, there was a general feeling of relaxation. Without a chart of the area we had no knowledge of how the river might snake about, so it was quite perplexing as the morning wore on, that our course was so constantly north and not westerly.

By mid-afternoon, the river had not narrowed as would be expected, in fact, quite the reverse, and we were still heading north! We had passed a settlement a short time before on our starboard side, and now it seemed that we were going out to sea again-and we were! Turning about, Mossie re-traced our wake back towards the settlement or village that was tucked away behind the greenery. By the time we reached it, Mossie and John between them with heads together had decided what we had done. The land on the starboard side just before we had turned about just had to be Benkalis Island, and the habitation we had seen was Benkalis itself. Instead of a river we had been sailing between the coast of Sumatra and the island and then heading out to sea again. This was soon verified.

Transferring the passengers from the 'Makota' to the 'Kulit', Sandy, having sailed the 'Makota' safely through the night, decided that he would stay on board and take her in alone and ascertain who was in charge, the Dutch or the Japanese - a very brave mission. Sandy disappeared from view as we lay a distance away.

Five minutes passed, then ten, and then ten lengthened to half an- hour as we all waited anxiously...then 'Burp burp burp on 'Makota's' groggy hooter as she came round the bend and into sight. All was well. The Dutch Resident was at home, and we were invited to come alongside.



I don't remember any of us slapping our brave envoy on the back. It was not a task that I would have enjoyed undertaking. Sandy said afterwards, 'Och, it wa nothin, I did'na think the Japanese wa there or I would'na gone'

Mind you, what we would have done if they had been there is debatable. We would not have got very far if they had. But we could not have been using our heads, for surely, if the Japanese had arrived by crossing the Malacca Strait which been in our thoughts during the night, they had would not have been just sitting around waiting for visitors, what is more, there would have been transport around.

Our navigational error was confirmed by the Dutch Resident Officer for Bengkalis. What we now had to do was to re-trace our steps and he showed Mossie the mouth of the river Siak on a wall map. The river would be navigable up to Pekam Baru, which was a small town in the centre of Sumatra. On arrival we could make arrangements with the Resident there concerning our next move. He suggested that perhaps Padang, a port on the West Coast could be best for us provided of course that transport could be arranged.

There were no plaintive songs of farewell as we left this island and I don't think that I would have noticed if there had, been I was more than anxious to keep moving. The Resident did say that he was not aware of any Japanese landings in the area, but he did confess that because of recent reconnoitring aircraft, he had been expecting visitors for several days.

It was late in the afternoon when we set off with the descending sun on our estimated 75-mile journey up-river to Pekam. Later as we pressed on into the darkening evening, there was a relaxed comfortable feeling on board as the river, this time, did narrow from the mouth and the jungle on either side snuggled up, wrapping us in anonymity

That night beneath the brightness of a million stars, we had a delightfully restful trip up the winding river, following a silver road in a tunnel of blackness - John relieving Mossie at the helm to enable him to catch up on a bit of well earned rest.

I found sleep very hard to achieve at first....I had been on the go for so long that I was all wound up and finding it hard to wind down again. As I lay down on the deck, looking up at the stars, I could not help but reflect on our last 24 hours activities, from the anxious hours at the Keppel harbour wharf and our departure west, when we wondered where the next bombs would fall or wat the next aircraft would do. We had worried ourselves stiff, probably grown a few grey hairs, searched the sky and horizons, imagined all sorts of catastrophic situations, and what had happened to us? Absolutely nothing! Surely there must be a moral somewhere. Perhaps

there is sense in what a certain learned gentleman said - although his name escapes me, 'There is no need to worry until you have to worry'

Obviously I did sleep otherwise I could not have awakened to the sound of birds, the loud chatter of monkeys and a conglomeration of noises (contrasting so much with those of the last few days) as the beat of our engine exhaust disturbed the early morning. It was delightful to stand up on deck and enjoy the lovely freshness of the morning air, and the thankful feeling that we now had a more than fifty fifty chance of survival, and what was more, we were on our way with a determined plan. There was still one slight worry - if it could be called slight, as I learned later. Mossie said that upon leaving Bengkalis, the Resident had added that the airfield at Pekam Baru had had several reconnoitring sorties by Japanese aircraft. Because of the airstrip, it pointed to a possible landing by airborne troops. We should approach with caution.

We arrived at Pekam Baru in the early afternoon of the 14th February. The number of small craft on the river and, the happy salutes of the occupants, told its own tale. Notwithstanding our relief at having arrived, it would have been much more of a relief if this had been the end of the road, and not another beginning.....

What next? ..If we were to keep ahead of circumstances, most certainly we would have to keep to our slogan 'keep moving', and without delay but how now that the river seemed to have healed up at Pekam?

As Mossie and several others set off to seek help from the Resident officer, we who were left on board anxiously awaited their return. Now that we had stopped moving, the urge to continue doing so was strong. I wondered how far it was to Padang and how long would it take to walk, and conjectured on the adage. 'He who travels fast travels alone'

As a few of us returned from a much needed river bath following Noel's remark to John 'if we are going anywhere, we might as well set off clean' -so did George with a small consignment of beer he had purchased "from the off licence wigwam down the road". A few minutes later Mossie and company returned bearing the awaited news.

The Resident had said that to attempt to take the mountainous route to Padang would not be wise because of the uncertainty of shipping calling there. If we did arrive there, so might the Japanese at an early date (well not exactly in those words) He had an alternative suggestion which he considered safer for us. It was that he would provide transport for us to proceed to Palembang in the south of the island. At Palembang, trains would be running from the railhead there that would take us to Oosthava (Telok Betong) and from there a ferry across the Sunda



Strait to Java. The Resident's offer was accepted with enthusiasm, despite the long road journey involved, but with the bonus that we would be travelling fast in the right direction. Furthermore, according to the Resident, in a recent BBC broadcast message, Mr. Churchill had emphasised that reinforcements were available and that Java would be held at all costs

Our two vessels were formally handed over with an exchange of documents, and we were provided with an ancient looking bus vehicle complete with driver. What I liked about the idea was that even if Jap infiltration behind us was imminent, we were bound to travel faster.

I didn't need to pack, I just grabbed the small duffel bag that I had acquired at Bukom containing essentially my skin-out bag, diary, and three bottles of whisky, I was ready for the road for I was as anxious as anyone to 'keep moving'.

By 11pm that night we had covered 80 miles when we drew into a village, possibly Taluk - after we had negotiated a fast flowing river via a man-powered pontoon raft. It had been an eerie and hazardous operation, getting our vehicle on board, secured and transported, but we were successful. We spent the night in a Sumatran longhouse with a rush floor which we shared with families of creepy-crawlies, and above, a vicious brand of mosquito with stings like spears. I had a couple of burra pegs of whisky to keep them away, and as I wondered why I had not stayed in the bus, it was suddenly morning.

By 5.30am we were away, (scratching our bites and discussing the possibility of malaria) bouncing along a dirt track road at break-neck speed - well perhaps more correct, rattling and bumping, for the springs on our vehicle had experienced better days. Our driver must have been taught at the same school as the Sikh driver who had driven me down the mountainside from Darjeeling. We spent the day hardly reducing speed for hairpin bends and various other obstacles. If he had been told that we were in a hurry, then he was certainly doing his best to oblige.

As we sped along, the terrain varied from drab to beautiful, flat to undulating ragged to desolate but mostly jungle and dense vegetation. It was such a pity that we were in hurry. Such a pity that I was not interested in where we were, but where I hoped we would be eventually. It was very hot and uncomfortable, and we were all suffering the discomfort of the journey. Nevertheless, nobody was in favour of slackening our pace, or stopping to rest, so it was with a mixture of relief and then consternation that, upon arriving at a small village, our driver disappeared. He was eventually tracked down in the village-eating house, and he was adamant.

'No more driving today Tuan. Tomorrow, early, yes. Today, no'



A few of us were not bothered anyway, but there was plenty of opposition. It did seem to me, that if the Japanese had landed in Sumatra -a thought that had bugged us in the Malacca Strait- and were behind us, then they would have to put their skates on to beat our mileage so far. Despite the road conditions and our rather senile vehicle, we had clocked up 200 miles since leaving Pekam Baru. Who could blame the driver for stopping? He had driven for nine hours. By 3pm we were on our way, wined well beered-and dined and hastened on our way by a very wet tropical storm. The Malay driver had been amply awarded with Malay money to relinquish his status and become a passenger; drivers in our party would take over his job and drive through the night thus avoiding further delay.

For the next few hours or so it rained real stair-rods. The road surface that had been steadily getting worse was getting narrower and steeper. In fact, at times, ridiculously so for a main road to Djambi and Palembang. Eventually, just before dusk, the weather cleared revealing a reddened after-sunset sky, which after while prompted a voice from the back of the bus to exclaim, 'Hey, that's a hell of a funny place for a sunset'. The voice had a good point, for, despite the many twisting around deep ravines, it was obvious that we had been generally moving westward. As was to be confirmed later, we had been climbing the Barison mountains that ran north and south down Sumatra hence the indication that the road was 'healing up'. Our route should have been generally southward, parallel to and not over the steep areas. We had, at some stage in the poor visibility, taken the wrong turn. A lot of valuable time was lost before we were able to turn ourselves round, including a nasty bogging down due to a mini-landslide.

At last we hit the main road to Djambi which made it seem so ridiculous that we had ever missed it in the first place. We now pointed southward into clearer weather and sky. In the darkness later, except for our sidelights and the stars that were now visible between large gaps in the clouds, we feasted on sardines and dry biscuits softened with beer - the latter as result of stocking up at our last stop, confirming that Sumatra wasn't so primitive. There were nostalgic remarks as the labels on the bottles indicated Singapore Tiger beer.

Notwithstanding our tiring experiences so far, and the few grumblers who were prepared to complain about anything that came in the way of our forward progress (well, understandably so) the atmosphere was that of a jolly barbecue to the accompaniment of croaking frogs. For most of us, with so many miles between us and the unknown hazard behind it was probably a matter of working off a bit of tension. There was a slight rocking of the boat as laments were voiced about the luggage left behind, but this was turned to laughter as one of the party slipped backwards into the mud and emptied beer over his face.



Because our resting driver thought that there were about 250 miles to go before reaching Palembang there was a general approval that that we should press on and stop when we got to Djambi later in the morning. It was then just after 1 am

Contented chatterers were wondering if there would be first or second class carriages on the train; would it go right on to the ferry, or would they have to walk and would there be toilets on the train, and so on. Then silence prevailed except for the roar of the engine as we rolled on through the night, stopping only occasionally to replenish water or fuel from our spare tins, and attend to the calls of nature. Then off again following the miles of empty road beneath an amazingly bright starlit sky, before the first tints of dawn coloured it. Then there was the occasional passing vehicle, then two's and three's with the friendly flashing of lights as from one lone traveller to another.

We made poor time on this last leg of the journey - no doubt due to the changing of drivers while our local driver still rested - so, as we rolled into Djambi, contrary to our instructions at Pekam that we should contact the Resident, it was decided that we skip this one and not waste time stopping and resting. So we bowled along through and out of Djambi, like, as somebody said 'schoolboys twagging it from school'

As we ate up some of the remaining miles southward towards Palembang, we came increasingly aware of the volume of travellers, varying in size and shape which was quite noticeable after the many miles of deserted road, but particularly since they were going North. Then as we progressed South they were replaced by pedestrians and handcarts, then later still, quiet deserted roads again and we wondered why? . .

One of the Malay speaking passengers said that while we were stopped some miles back to fill our petrol and water cans, the man serving had said to him 'Why you not go north Tuan?' He didn't say why he terminated the chat without pursuing the reason for the question. We were not to be kept waiting for long for as we rolled down a steep hill we could see a lone car coming down the opposite slope. By the time that we reached the bottom of the hill it was stationary and a Chinese lady was beckoning us to stop.

As our driver leaned out through his window she said, 'You must turn round and go back, the Japanese captured Palembang on Saturday'.

As this information was relayed down the bus the atmosphere in it became electric and there was silence for quite a few seconds as though the occupants were having difficulty in believing what they had just heard. By the time that our driver had explained where we had come from





and why we were speeding towards Palembang, passengers from the front of the bus had alighted; those from the rear had crowded forward so as not to miss a word.

Although shaking her head as though not agreeing with what had just been said, she did supply a slightly encouraging alternative. It would be very dangerous, but if we could get to Lubic Lengau little north of Palembang, -by turning west there was a railway station there where trains called after leaving Palembang on their way to Oosthaven. She said that the road we were on was the only road in and out of Palembang. It would be dangerous for us to carry on. 'You should turn round and follow me to Padang where I will catch a ship'.

The lady was duly thanked for bothering to stop and warn us and her concern for our safety, and in return it was pointed out to her that she could bump into the Japanese who may have landed in the north and already be at Padang.

She looked a very aristocratic lady, ageless features that could have just left Shangri-La. Departing, she said, 'The Japanese killed my parents in Tiensin, if they see a Chinese lady, they will not be very kind'. As her car disappeared northward, Sandy, who had been the last to get down from the bus, said 'Hey. did ya no see that bloody great banger she had on her front seat?'. Apparently her travelling companion had been an army type revolver.

We now had a problem: those of the party who had been speculating on such things as trains with first and second class compartments possibly with toilets were jolted back into harsh reality. Blame for our predicament was freely apportioned. Those who had been quite content not to stop at Djambi now complained we would have known the situation 50 miles back had we done so. Standing outside the bus in the baking heat arguing which way to go was an incongruous situation. Some gave up and sat down in what ever shade they could find as the pros and cons continued.

My mind was in turmoil. Going back seemed no better than going forward and the recurring pain in my middle as a result of that blow I received on the 'Pinna' was voting not go anywhere. If the Japanese track record were anything to go by, then once established in the Palembang area with all its available facilities they would not lose any time in expanding and occupying available ports and railheads. Somebody reasoned the Japanese were not magicians. The initial spearhead invasion would need backup support and most of all, transport. At the moment it was more than likely that they were consolidating their positions around the reason they were there - to ensure oil and airfield facilities for their further expansions.

Mossie was in favour of setting off for Lubic Lengau and not wasting any more valuable time. He emphasised his point by kicking a stone a dozen yards. That stopped a lot of chatter 'I think we ought to take a chance and set off for Lubic NOW. What the hell have we to lose?'

So finally there was a general agreement - what had we to lose. Mossie had ignored a small voice from someone, 'perhaps the Japanese are already on the way to Lubic' as we all headed for the bus. Climbing into it - another step into the unknown- the heat was almost unbearable until we started to move. I started to count the days since leaving Keppel. Saturday in Pekam Baru was February 14th. Today was the 16th; the Japanese had been in Palembang area for two days. (I learned later that the Japanese had dropped a large force of paratroopers on the 14th and by the 15th they had completely occupied Palembang the oil installations at Pladjoe and the RAF airfield.)

For the next 25 miles or so we were driving along the only road into, and out of, Palembang. According to the Malay driver who had now taken over his driving role again, there would be a right turn road junction, probably at Kluang or Betocong, he wasn't sure, and this would lead us to Sekaju where we could get more petrol, and then continue on to Lubic Lengau. After the turn off we would then be going west and away from Palembang.

As our ageing and uncomfortable bus ate up the miles and every mile was taking us nearer and nearer to Palembang it was very depressing in fact, down right worrying, for the road that had had the occasional vehicle or pedestrians loaded with bundles going northward, was now empty. The atmosphere in the bus was silently loaded with apprehension. This apprehension was one kind when we were going pell-mell south and away from possible danger behind us but another kind now that we were speeding towards it.

One could almost hear the intake of breath as we rounded each sharp bend, then the sighing out as the road was seen to be clear ahead. The deserted road had that eerie feeling like walking through a graveyard or a haunted house at night.

One of the last vehicles we had seen was an RAF one loaded with personnel and we wondered where they were going without so much as stopping or waving. What extra did they know that we didn't? Just before they passed us, we were advised by some passing pedestrians, that if we were going to Lubic then we should hurry, for pontoons and bridges were being wrecked to impede Japanese movements.

I began to have the nasty little worry...Perhaps that luck that we had enjoyed so far was about to run out? .. Had we been given all the signs and not heeded them? .. Perhaps we should have



gone straight to Padang from Pekam after we had abandoned the boats? .. Perhaps there had not been any Japanese landings in the north. Oh well, it was too late to conjecture now. All would be revealed one way or another.

At last we reached the turn-off road junction and headed west, and then for the next few hours, having left the road that went to Palembang, we breathed more freely. Except for several rivers that had to be crossed and the men in charge of the pontoons who so leisurely pushed us across, the journey was uneventful- well that is, ignoring the heat and the reckless pace of our driver as he sped towards Lubic.

We stopped at Sekaju and bought petrol patronised the Sumatran version of a loo dined and generally relaxed in of the shade after the mid-afternoon heat. Once again, tension had diminished and there were further chats as to the facilities expected on the train at Lubic Lengua, and if they ran overnight. The children who gathered around us couldn't have been more entertained at our presence had we been a travelling circus!

We were not very far from Lubic- probably 50 miles. We had been driving into the sun which was now descending down into the western sky ahead (this time it was in the right place) and enjoying at last the coolness of the late afternoon. The terrain which had been flat was now undulating and broken up by rugged areas as it stretched itself ahead into the start of the southern end of the Barison mountain range, when suddenly...Brrr brrr bang!

Our vehicle screeched to a stop as our driver stamped his foot on the brake pedal, and another vehicle which seemed to have joined us from nowhere, hit our rear with a metal bending ker-rump. Just visible ahead around the bend that we were negotiating, matching the dappled light and shade as the last of the sun's rays shone through the trees, was a single figure dressed in camouflage complete with the automatic weapon that had caused the noise.

Then, almost simultaneously from the grassy banks on either side of us, there poured 20 or 30 or so similarly dressed figures, all armed to the teeth. From the crashes on the side of the bus, it was obvious that we were expected to get out - which we did, quickly. By the time that a second single figure had arrived who had approached very leisurely down the road, we were all lined up hands high in the air looking down the barrels of too many automatic weapons.

A film hero may look very heroic and lantern jawed under such circumstances, but in reality would probably have felt stupid, I did. But that doesn't mean that I didn't feel scared too. Hell's bloody bells, I did, right up to my back teeth!



With the arrival of what turned out to be a Dutch army officer, all was revealed. He was in charge of a platoon of local military who had become a guerrilla group since they had left Palembang upon the arrival of the Japanese. He had given orders to his men to stop and examine every vehicle that came from the direction of Palembang. We just experienced them doing that very thing to the letter. The officer was very apologetic in delightful English.

From him we learned that trains had been running from Lubic station up to the previous day, but he was dubious about connections with the ferry at Oostaven. There had been a Japanese task force of naval vessels through the Sunda Strait and they had been operating in the region of Banka.

He went on to say that he had just received (I wondered how?) information to the effect that many people escaping from Singapore had been killed south of Rhio and Lingga islands, and that many small boats had been blown to pieces by gunfire and bombs. 'How very fortunate for you that you chose this route instead of the sea route to Java' he said.

He saluted and wished us a safe journey then joined his soldiers who disappeared into the trees as magically as they had arrived. It was many years before I learned more of the awful truth of what he had said.

It seems as though from that moment a curtain of secrecy came down over the sad plight of the citizens of Singapore. Men women children and army personnel found themselves trapped between an enemy occupied island behind, them and an ocean in front over which the enemy had complete control. In contrast there had not been any secrecy concerning the wonderful evacuations of our armed forces and civilians from Dunkirk twenty months earlier. The English shores were forty miles away with sea and air protection and organised welcome.

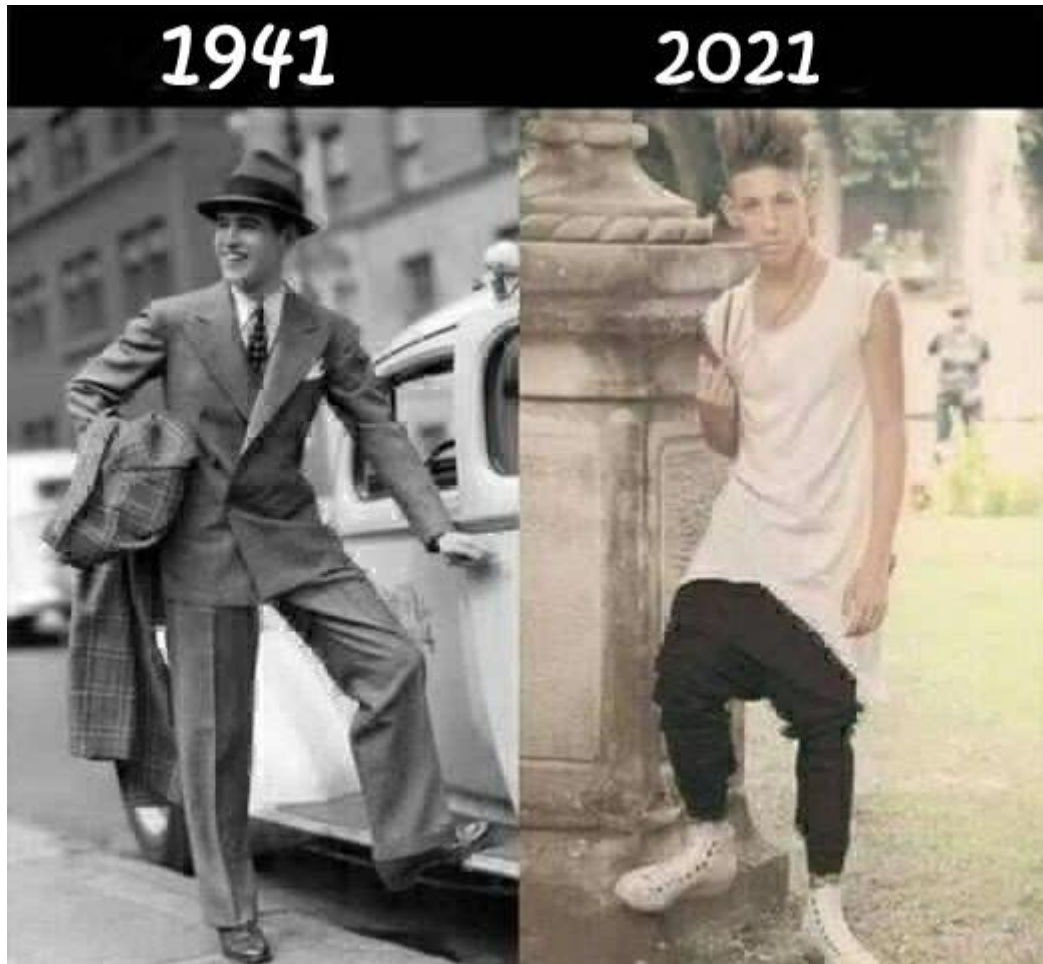
Alas, from Singapore to temporary safety was five hundred miles away with constant air attacks. Many died in the sea and on uninhabited islands from wounds, starvation or caught and murdered by the Japanese. Many found help and transport on the Sumatran Island only to be caught later and interned.

The sad story of the fall of Singapore, the plight of the people and the thousands of troops who were interned has now been well documented and readily available. We all climbed back into the bus, feeling better than when we climbed down from it and set off. The party of four, probably local people out of the car behind us, we left standing on the roadside by their car. We waved, but it seemed that they had not yet got over the shock sufficiently to lift an arm in



reply. Three hours later we rolled into Lubic in the evening darkness to learn that the last train to the coast had left at noon that day, and now, the railhead was closed and deserted.

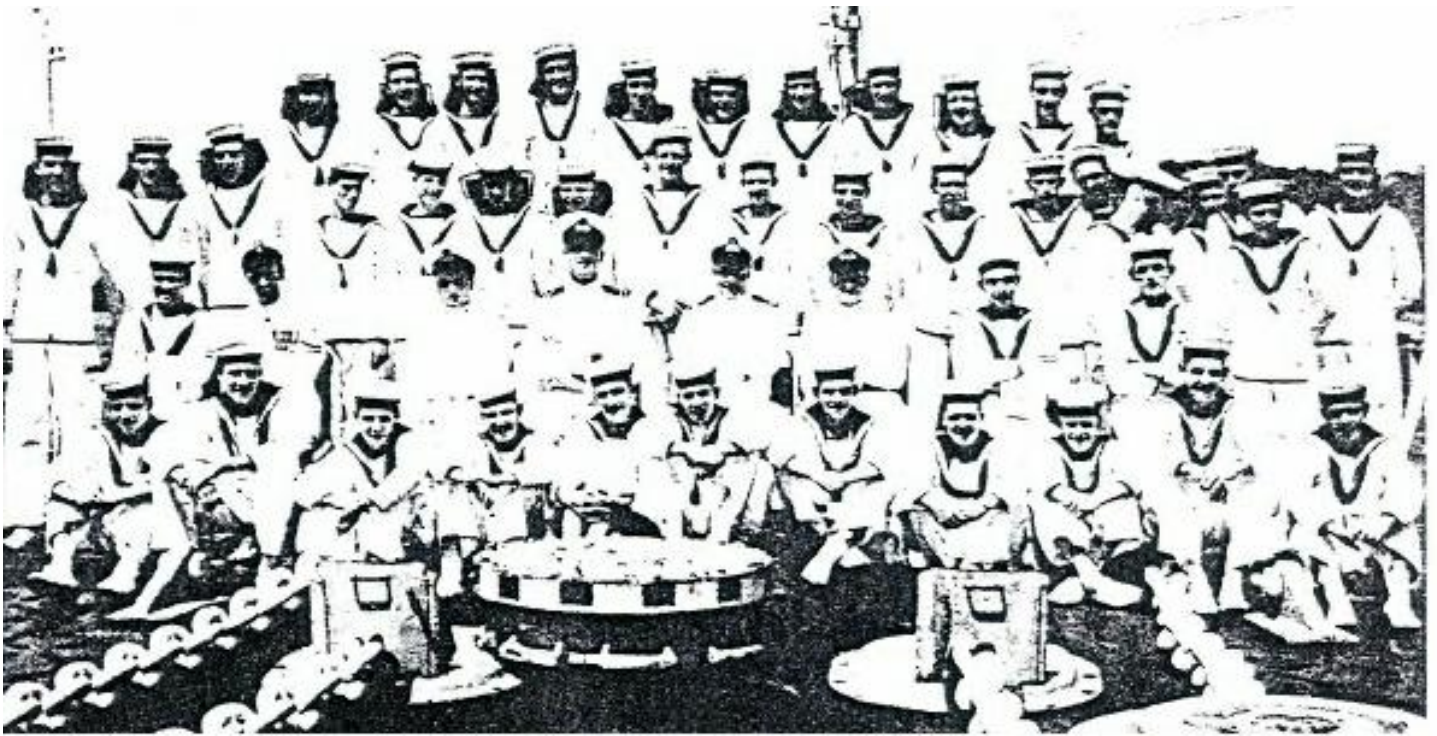
-- Next: *Another Door Part 6: Benkulen the Bottleneck With no compass to be found either on the prauw or in the town navigation would be precarious to say the..*



# BACK IN 1956

By Lt. Cdr. E. H. Chittleburgh

## JUNIOR SEAMAN DIVISION



**O**n sailing from Chatham, the number of 'boys' borne was 56 and with three rejoining in Trincomalee and another at Mombasa, a total of 60 was reached, making the largest seaman division in the ship.

On the 1<sup>st</sup> April, when the Division was being inspected by the Senior Naval Officer Persian Gulf, they were reported as Junior Seamen. It was not until S.N.O.P.G had covered the front rank, that his rather puzzled look gave rise to the question, "Who are these?". When he was told, "The Old Boys, Sir" he said, "When did this change?" and honour was upheld when he was told, "Today, sir".

One of the more obvious benefits of the change of title throughout the fleet was the abolition of caning as a punishment! Many of the 'old salts' onboard, however, said it sounded the 'death knell' of the Navy!

When the ship arrived at Colombo to dry dock, the whole division was lucky enough to go by bus for a week to the rest camp at Diyatalawa. After the morning cup of tea had been served in bed and the divisional Officer had rounded up everyone for the forenoon's school, the coloured shirts appeared and soon the roads were covered with bicycles and the golf course with

amateur golfers. With the easy routine and the cool weather, the week was a wonderful change from the hot, crowded conditions of the Persian Gulf.

Training started on 9<sup>th</sup> April for all Junior Seamen and it was completed in mid-June, with a second period completing in the New Year.

After leaving Seychelles a number of Hobbies Clubs were started, among which were Stamp Collecting, Handicrafts, Ornamental Rope work and Photography. The latter club under the Padre's direction flourished and soon had a large following from the whole ship.

In the field of sport, the division was always represented and entered teams for all competitions.

The most noteworthy effort was by the whaler's crew who reached the semi-finals, but due to the ship's movements, the regatta was not finished.

The following Junior Seamen represented the ship-Lott (swimming), Ramsden (boxing), Butcher, Crawford, Snelling (soccer), Parton (sailing) and two- Pearce and Winter-were part of the "Stat" act of the concert party.

A couple of Divisional Banyan Parties were held at Sweat Bay, Trincomalee and great difficulty was found in rounding up everyone when it was time to leave. Two sightseeing trips were arranged; one to Polonnaruwa and the other to Sigiriva, and there were always a good sprinkling of Junior Seamen in the other trips arranged for the ship.

Honours to go to the Division during the year were Buckler Legacy Award to Busby, Dominy, Jackson and Townley, while Crawford was awarded 2<sup>nd</sup> prize for the best junior from T.S. "Arethusa". Educationally too-five passed E.T.I making 100 per cent for the Division. 17 passed E.T.2 and four have sat for H.E.T and are awaiting results.

At the time of writing there are only six Junior Seamen left, all the other having been rated Ordinary Seamen, and I wish all member, past and present, of 37, 38 and 39 Messes. the best of luck for the rest of the Commission and throughout the Service.

## THE ENGINEERING DIVISION

**A**

n eventful year!

150 years ago the first voyage of the first steamboat took place in the Clermont, designed by Robert Fulton, with engines built by Boulton and Watt.

The boiler and engine took up half the ship and most of the other half was filled with coal.

Our engines and boilers take up about a third of the ship and most of the rest is filled with soot.

It is interesting to note how appropriate are the words of our song, "The Old Superb was barnacled and green as grass below".

In our year abroad a lot of water had flowed under the ship and an interesting collection of seaweeds, barnacles, sea-squirts and other soft-bodied animals have attached to us.

More underwater fouling goes on in one week in Trincomalee than in three weeks anywhere else. On that basis we had 18 months out of a proper dock, not counting two emergency dockings.

Another likeness to the song, "Round the world if need be, and round the world again". We have Nasser the 'thank' for making that line nearly true-we will have been the equivalent distance to twice round the world anyway. What's the next line "with a lame duck lagging, lagging all the way"?

Could that refer to the starboard inner engine?

There have been some big changes too. 120 years ago the junior grade of apprentices were called Engineer's Boys and received the princely sum of 14/6d a month for their pains. Now, the junior grade of Stoker is called the Engineering Mechanic and receives 11/- a day. He needs it too, if only to pay the fines after visits to Seychelles and Simonstown.

The temperature down below had been over 100° F most of the time and the Department has only been kept going because we have eaten 9,999 salt pills! We spent nearly a third of our time up the Persian Gulf to cool off.

On Christmas Day all the honours for the best decorated Messes went to E.R.S's and 25 Mess.

As usual the troglodytes did very well at any and every sport they entered when they came up in the fresh air and sunshine, once they had got used to the limelight anyway. The E.R.A.'s won the Inter-part Cricket and were well on their way to winning the Regatta before it was rained off.

We had representatives in all Ship's Teams, in fact, the 1<sup>st</sup> X1 Soccer matches always took place when Stoker's Port were ashore-possibly this was because Reg.Ch.-Stoker Taylor was such an enthusiast.

Even the Wandering Shield for Inter-Mess Challenge Games came to rest in 25 Mess for a very long time indeed.





64 M (E)'s have passed and examination of obtained a ticket and 34 E.R.A.'s have gone up a step.

Yes, we have progressed a long way since the days of the Clermont. Her boiler pressure was 2 p.s.i. ours is 400; and ours have steamed a total of 14,000 hours since we took them over. They complained once and had to be doctored. They've used a lot of water but we've made a lot too - over 3,000 tons.



### **BELIEVE IT OR NOT!**

During our first year we:-

Ate 474,000 lbs. of potatoes

Drank 2,115 gallons of rum

Received 38,124 messages on the Ship's broadcast

Deposited £38,968 15s 2d in the P.O.S.B

Steamed 42,600 miles

Smoked 4,700,000 cigarettes

Baked 169,864 lbs. of bread

Licked 108,500 ice creams

Guzzled 80,000 "goffas"

Slapped on 3,100 gallons of paint

Ran 2½ miles of electric cable

Were paid £246,876 7s 7d

Cooked in 140° F in the galley for 3 days in Trinco

Dhobied in 30 tons of fresh water PER HEAD

Used 21,500 tons of fuel oil

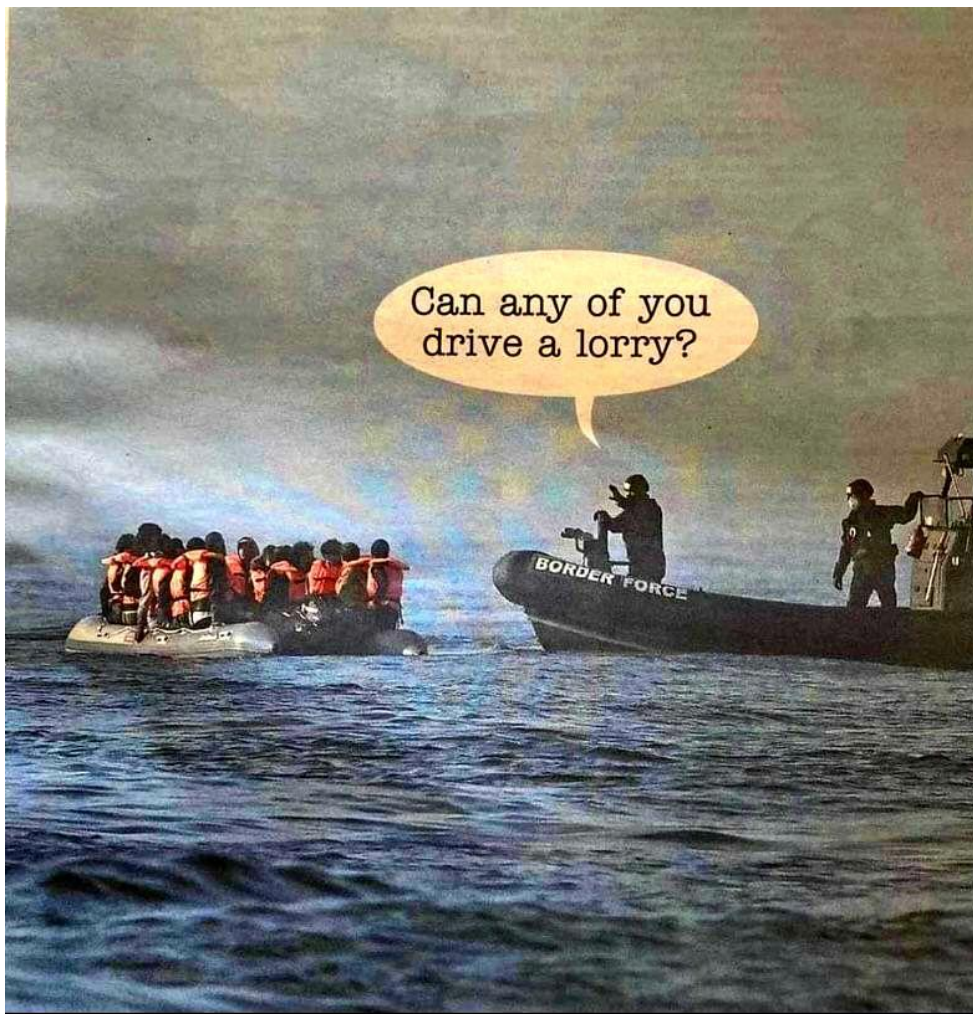
Burned 4½ million units of electricity- enough to supply the average house 600 years!

## -THE END-

Note;

Announced in the London Gazette dated Tuesday, 30th AUGUST 1966

Instr. Cdr. E. H. CHITTLEBURGH, M.B.E., B.Sc.(Eng.), A.M.I.E.E., D.I.C. retired on 6<sup>th</sup> June, 1966 and crossed the bar 16<sup>th</sup> January, 2016



# 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)

Shipmate Dick Riddoch, from Aberdeen, on 12<sup>th</sup> September. Dick was a Sick Bay Attendant on board between 1946 & 1948

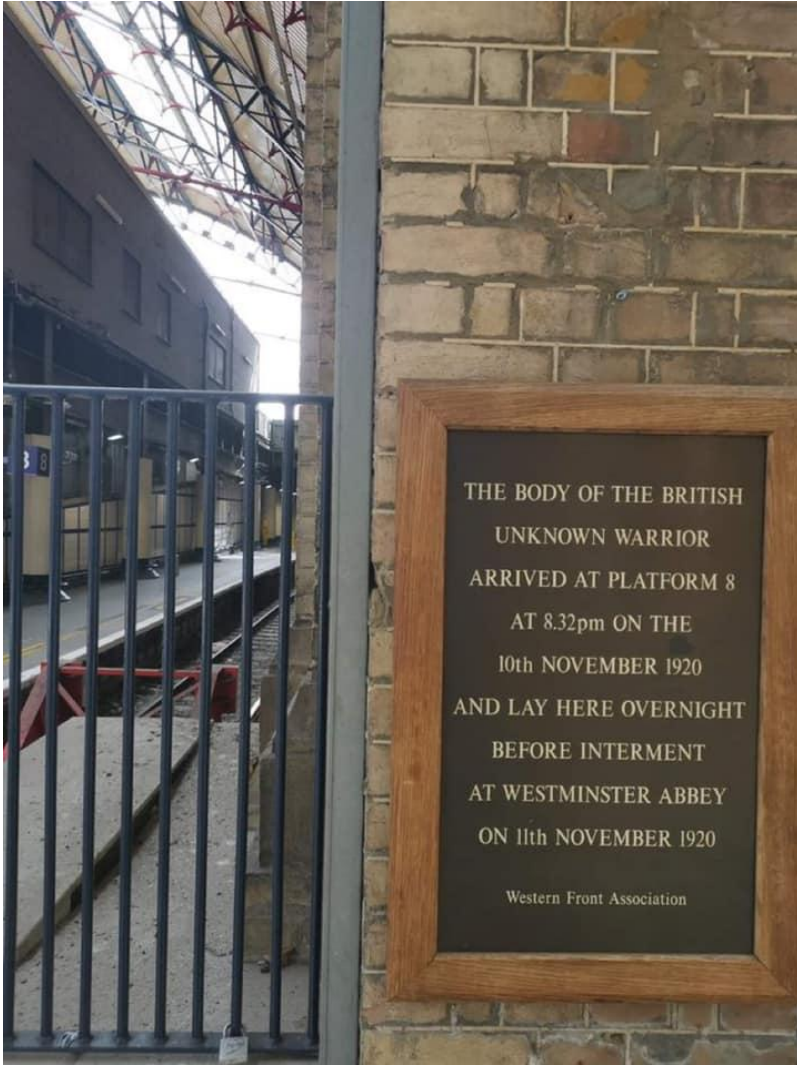


Shipmate Stuart Osmer (REA3) lately from Rye, East Sussex on 20<sup>th</sup> September. Stuart wrote an article about his cruise in 1952

Emile Keane lately from Worthing on 13<sup>th</sup> October. Emile was a Leading Coder on board for the 1954 - 1955 cruise.



# PHOTOS



Victoria Station,  
London. Platform 8



# WOMEN'S SAFETY ADVICE

This might be a step up from Cressida Dick's suggestion that women should flag down a passing bus if they are concerned about being stopped by someone claiming to be a Police Officer.

In the wake of the shocking Sarah Everard case, and the fears for safety of lone women in the open, the following suggested apps were posted on FB by a woman.

1. WhatsApp - not just a text app it offers live location sharing to selected contacts
2. Find my iPhone - can share your location with selected contacts for 1 hour, 1 day or all the time
3. iPhone Alarm - set up in emergency sos settings countdown sound sets off a 3 second siren which triggers a countdown. If it's not cancelled before it reaches zero it calls the emergency services
4. Hollie Guard - developed in memory of a murder victim. Set up an emergency contact and activate by shaking the phone. The contact will receive a link containing your gps location and if available audio and video footage
5. One scream - activated by the panic in your scream it identifies your location and sends help. It even works if the phone is in your bag or pocket
6. Kitestring - if you don't have a smart phone you can still be protected. Text kitestring before you leave and with a rough duration ie walking the dog 30 mins. After 30 mins you will receive a text and if you don't answer your emergency contacts are alerted you haven't made it home. It also has a feature called duress in which in the event you're forced to check in that you're ok it will say check in accepted but still alert your contacts secretly
7. If you're at uni or college check if your institution uses SafeZone. An amazing little app you can press the red button to alert security, summon a first aider or even request an escort to walk you to your car.
8. Life 360. This app allows you to check in places and sends messages to your app contacts. Friends and family on the app can check your location 24/7

I know these aren't going to save anyone from a psychopath or Yorkshire Ripper but a lot of women are very scared at the moment and need a safety blanket to stop them from becoming recluses. I have 2 daughters. We worry about their safety even though they are adults. I

cannot even begin to imagine what the Everard family are going through and will go through for years to come.

England has no kidney bank, but it does have a Liverpool

**THE END**

