

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



HAPPY NEW YEAR TO YOU ALL



ANDY BRIERLEY'S BLOG

A call from shipmate Ron Clay on our mutual orthopaedic experience got round to the Chairman's November news letter. He told of the Royal Navy's first submarine that sank off the West Country. I was surprised to hear from Ron on its recovery and restoration, in which he played a significant part;

Ron got in touch with Brian and the sequel to Ron's original story (with pictures) made interesting reading in last month's magazine.

I visited W. H. Smith's big store at Blue Water last week, usual extensive Xmas cards and calendar display was an example of rampant diversity. I know it's hardly the time to depict Arabs on camels in a mid-east setting, oasis, palm trees and the like, but a baby in a manger with Mum and Dad, cows and sheep looking on without malice or evil intent is adequate to pass the Christian message, but in an obvious minority. I am not the religious type but readily confer to being Christian, like a stick of Blackpool rock, if cut in two it would say it, all the way through.

There is a bit of the lapsed Buddhist in me. In the past I enjoyed a nice smoke, do like a sensible drink plus get satisfaction from swatting bluebottles. From where I stood viewing the display I could see a card with two nuns facing each other. I was curious and wondered what the caption said: Nun No. 1 to Nun No. 2 "Mother Superior, I have just heard there is a case of syphilis in the convent!" Nun No. 2: "Thank God for that, I was getting sick of the Beaujolais". You may assume I was telling you a joke; do believe me when I say that was the actual Christmas card.

It's a poor picture for UK/EU energy stability; Russia's ability to indulge in brinkmanship this last month as their main supplier has been demonstrated, no sabre has been rattled or word spoken, just tweak the valve down a bit to deplete reserves held by those customers, many totally dependent on that new pipeline will have pooped their lederhosen. We, in the UK, import L.N.G. (liquid natural gas) for 50% of our power, tankers from mid east and the U.S.A. arriving on a daily basis are critical. I notice Sunday newspaper says we hold sufficient storage for only four hard winter days. That sounds much like our predicament in 1941, '42 and '43 when each tanker of oil carried by Norway or the U.S.A. was literally our life source. The U.S.A. churning out the T2 type tankers serviced that need; today we have no fleet of anti-sub frigates to provide some safeguard for them. 80 years ago on the thirtieth of December, 1941, at



Baltimore the first of a class of vessel that numbered 2,700, on termination of contract U.S.A., was launched. Its name *Patrick Henry*, commonly called the Liberty type.

To backtrack, what the Dickens goes on at Westminster when this sort of predictable black hole has been apparent for ten years? One wonders if Russia and China co-operated in the scare. China as hungry for energy as the UK immediately opened its purse and bought out all others in that market; there is reason the price of gas to thee and me has taken a vigorous jump. The UK abandoned storage capacity that held 70% of our reserves in 2017, a stroke of government genius.

We are currently constructing, with partner Norway an undersea power cable to feed us with Fjord hydro electricity down the North Sea, capable of delivering 1400 mega watts; what do you think of our part of the deal?; to feed back our excess wind power -Ho-Ho-Ho!

Tales of our, and the U.S. submarines, finding and tapping Soviet Union's undersea cables was a spur to new Russia to build that trio of special vessels to do likewise, along with the ability to cut them; that's our power and communications gone in one hit. Germany, who abandoned their Nuke power generators under Merkel, used their own low grade coal for emergency energy security, coal is still used by them, would you believe, bought from Russia, in vast amounts. Ramifications of any of these events leads to one thinking "what a buggers muddle", it all is for the EU and N.A.T.O.. Conclusion- all self inflicted.

I moaned about Westminster sitting on its hands, it's like watching them arrange the deck chairs while the *Titanic* foundered.

Last week the new Speaker of the House let us into drug culture, rampant in that place. Cocaine openly snorted from certain desk tops, plus the regular offices where one goes to buy a spliff,

always on sale. Prior to that revelation I thought the only problem was members in their cups from several subsidised bars, casting their half pissed votes on national trivia. A prime example of their decision powers is sending our troops to assist the Polish protect their borders from illegals Not trying to knock the Poles, never met one who was not industrious or likable.



Mr. Speaker, in the film clip, had a dog at his heel; it was an explosives sniffer. One can see the historical significance in that; it had evidently been a regular resident for several years. What surprised was the introduction of another lively hound, a drug sniffer, that problem now so severe. Hound will be non-partisan of course, so accusations of political bias will not cloud the issue. I wonder if we will hear of any member seller, buyer or user going to court.

They like to refer to themselves as the 'Seat of Democracy', on occasions 'The Mother of all Parliaments'; a sure indication they are high on something in a state of a deeper delusion than I thought.

THE FLAT FOOTED MINISTRY OF DEFENSE

Ex First Sea Lord, Sir Tony Radakin, Britain's new Chief Defense Staff, for whom I had dubious regard and grave reservations, has given me a metaphoric kick up the bum by an open assault on what he called in his speech; 'the flat footed Ministry of Defense'. His speech, alas, was not on the floor of the House but to the Royal United Service Institute. Civil servants, he said, seem determined to block change and progress; the M.O.D. in every department too slow and resistant to change. It was a rousing speech which exhorted them to "Just do it" and do it in five months, not five years, with more focus on time and less on money. Will it have an atom of difference on the grey-suited blob? - Form tells us it will not. An indication of the M.O.D.'s methods is their fixation on processes instead of outcome. The noble Lord is the first naval type to occupy his responsibility for twenty years. I think it a wonderful start to returning the navy to the position of Senior Service. One can only assume he is ticked off about the eight frigates that should be in build at present, when in real life, only three are on order. It is the

end of your career Milord, do get in there and kick some butt - on a daily basis!

I am unable to forget those two Junior Officers from *Conqueror* (sinker of the *Belgrano*) who, when it became strikebound at Faslane with a civil service walkout and on their own initiative, decided to 'store ship' before a crucial long planned attempt in the Med to steal a state of the art Russian Sonar towed array. The pair went to the M.O.D. police station at air base entrance, told the duty officer they were about to 'break and enter' their naval store and use the fork trucks to transport goods. The police had



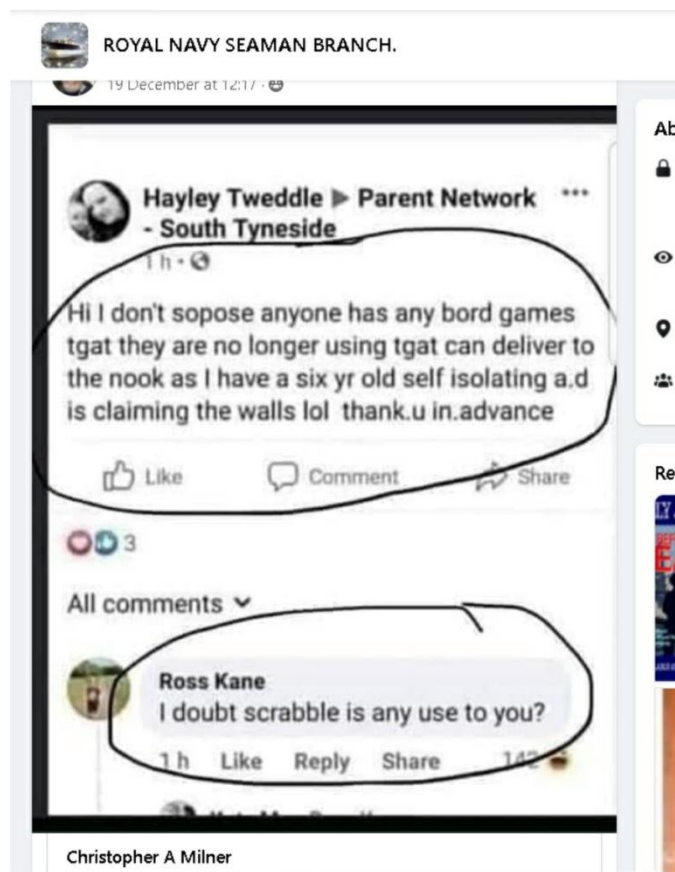
never met a situation like this before, accompanied them to the stores as padlocks and bolts were torn off; *Conqueror* sailed on time.

When the strikers learned of this you may recall the hell of a row that ensued; they "just did it"; that was in 1981 during strong militancy. Defense of the Realm was a factor here and I warm to such conduct; the navy "Just did it".

I had often wondered just what a nuke like *Conqueror* could do, being a hunter/killer; it was sprightlier than a missile boat, log had it doing 8000 miles - at 500 feet deep - for 21 days at full power, speeding to the south Atlantic during the Falkland War; 28 knots all the way. Not much need to ask why Australia decided to go nuclear instead of diesel electric.

Should you wish to make a charitable donation for Xmas - the M.O.D> may be struggling to pay Prince Andrew's £20,000 per annum 'naval pension'.

**HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL OUR READERS,
WITH A SPECIAL ONE TO OUR PRINTERS AND TYPERS.**



NOZZERS GO WEST Part 31



However Fearless Freddie did condescend to some small gesture of patronisation when that evening he allowed a cinema show to be held on the quarterdeck instead of the rather warm and confined space of the rec. room.

Although chipping and scraping rust and then repainting was standard procedure and a universally accepted course of action for every naval ship entering a naval dockyard and intending to stay for more than about twenty minutes, it seemed a rather pointless exercise engaging in such shenanigans the very moment they tied up alongside back in Ireland Island, because they had nine weeks ahead of them before leaving again and, by which time it would all need doing again.

But it all became clear or at least some explanation for such behaviour became apparent when, on Thursday, it was announced that it was the Queen's Birthday and all that repainting had left the ship looking in pristine order right on cue, particularly when at colours and the ensign raising at 0800 the ship was dressed overall. Even Ginger, always the cynic, had to concede that she looked a treat. Then, the icing on the cake came at midday when a twenty-one-gun-salute was fired.

Although the salute had been fired many times before, this time they were not busily scurrying round and getting ready for entering harbour. They were already in harbour and securely tied against the dockside wall. Anyone that wanted to watch the guns crew go through the routine twenty-one times was able to do so. Ginger loved displays and in particular the Royal Marines and Beat the Retreat and Ceremonial Sunset; this was not on par with that and it didn't even come close really but it was fairly impressive all the same. Although it was a formal occasion



it was, after all, a happy event; it was a birthday celebration. Ginger's steel resolve and determination not to get involved weakened fast and he was forced to admit, if only to himself, that for the first time ever he felt a sense of pride as he watched the proceedings from a safe distance. Pride in the Royal Navy, pride in his ship and some kind of personal pride although he was not involved and had played no part. There were ships from nine different nations in harbour that day and he felt he would have liked to go to each of them and explain, if possible, what his ship was doing and why they were doing it.

Despite such an auspicious occasion there was, as always, still work to be done and therefore, the rest of the day off was out of the question. Life went on as normal and later that day they took delivery of a DDB boat from the dockyard. To be used as a ship's boat. What DDB stood for no one knew, or at least no one on board knew although someone somewhere must have. Speculation was rife with the consensus of opinion among those taking the trouble to give it any thought at all, was that it probably stood for Dockyard Duty Boat. On this occasion even the 'knowledgeables', who always had an answer for everything, kept a low profile. As it turned out, it was not a great deal of use anyway because the very next day it was in collision with the ship's motorboat across the bay at Hamilton and sent packing from whence it came.

The following day, Saturday April 23 - St. George's Day - mentioned but not celebrated, three Canadian ships, Algonquin, Buckingham and page 81 Toronto, came into harbour and after formal introductions had taken place in the wardroom, thirty Canadians were shown round the ship. Luckily Ginger was on the gangway for the afternoon watch and had to forego the pleasure of showing the colonial cousins around.

A week later the tranquillity on the mess deck was shattered by the arrival of seventeen new boys direct from HMS Pembroke in Chatham, just as Ginger had done eight months previously. The mess had been gradually emptying as time went by, with boys being rated up and moving into the seamen's messes up for'ard. It had been a gradual transition and not too noticeable then; suddenly it was full again and appeared to be very cramped once more. It brought back memories of that first day when he had joined the ship in Chatham Dockyard. It was all hustle and bustle then and now it was starting all over again. Last time it was a touch more comfortable in that they all knew each other, having come through Ganges together but the new lot, although presumably they knew each other, were all strangers and it would take a while to get to know them.

With the arrival of the new boys came a change of 'instructors'. Out went Chinnery and Bates and in their place came a petty officer sporting a large black beard, who Ginger and the older boys could not recall seeing before, and a leading hand from the seamen's messdeck. Word was that the leading hand was a chief that had lost his rate before joining the ship, but that was never confirmed. Although he was friendly enough, he was quite a bit older and that helped to

give credence to the rumour. It couldn't be said that he was an example for the boys, if that was the idea behind having instructors living on the messdeck with them; his attitude and, his whole being suggested that he had found himself a quiet number and he was going to exploit it to the full. He was never any trouble to the boys and although he would impart words of wisdom or advice if asked, mainly he was nowhere to be seen and he liked to keep it that way. Maybe he was not doing the job he was appointed to do, or maybe he had a different approach and outlook on how his job should be done. Whatever the reason, he was a vast improvement on the previous two incumbents and the boys could relax in his company and didn't have to continually find excuses when they caught his eye or have to spend large amounts of time out on the upper deck, just to keep out of the mess and out of sight.

The changeover meant that they hardly ever saw Bates again; he went back to his radar and was nothing to do with them anymore. But Chinnery was harder to shake off. Undoubtedly he was glad to get rid of the responsibility of looking after the boys although he seemed to revel in the task at the time. There was the Admiral's inspection coming up, including an athletics meeting and a regatta to organise and as the ship's PTI those events would keep him busy and out of their way for a few weeks. But he had also been appointed the lower deck social secretary - the man to coordinate official invitations to corporate events, such as factory or brewery visits and the like and also to monitor individual invitations ashore, invitations from private people, who had asked for one or two or a few crew members to a party or dinner in their homes.

That's where he still had a hold over the boys. Because, being boys, they still had to obey anyone that felt like flexing their muscles and any time Chinnery couldn't fill his quota with volunteers for the 'up homers' invitations, the boys found they'd been volunteered.

It was during the changeover period that Bates lost his 'acting' status and was confirmed as a fully-fledged petty officer; the next time they saw him he was sitting proudly sporting his new peaked hat. He was always a bit full of himself and more so now that he had something tangible to crow about but he was no further trouble to the boys, he was out of their hair for good.

Suddenly May was upon them and Ginger reflected that two years had passed since he had joined up. It had been two long years but, at the same time events had somehow managed to concertina themselves and, looking back, it didn't appear that long.

He recalled all that struggling and trying to do their best for the final passing out parade at Ganges - and for what? Once clear of the place such things didn't matter anymore and attaining a high standard made no more difference to their later career; the moment their feet left Ganges soil they were forgotten. That is, apart from the personal satisfaction gained from doing their best and making petty officer Cyril Jury, their Ganges instructor, a very happy man. That was one thing that Ginger felt he would always feel a certain amount of pride in and,



although it was never put into words, he knew the others felt the same. In a way it was their way of thanking Jury for all his hard work and, although he had never said so in as many words, they knew it was the only reward he ever wanted.

They were top of the tree for a few days, back then and they wallowed in a certain amount of self-congratulation as they swaggered around but as they left the place for the last time, a door had closed on that chapter of their lives. From then on no one had been remotely interested in their achievements, good or not so good. They were boys and, as boys, they were underdogs, previous accolades counted for nothing they were simple boys again.

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT MONTH

**I have a friend who writes music about sewing machines -
He's a singer songwriter - or sew it seams.**

(Contributed by Bill Cook)



FROM OVER THERE TO OVER HERE !

Advice given to American military personnel billeted in Britain during WW 2

'Don't make fun of British speech or accents. You sound just as funny to them but they will be too polite to show it'.



'The best way to get on in Britain is very much the same as the best way to get on in America. The same sort of courtesy and decency and friendliness that go over big in America will go over big in Britain... They will like your frankness as long as it is friendly. They will expect you to be generous. They are not given to back-slapping and they are shy about showing their affections. But once they get to like you they make the best friends in the world'.





If you are invited to eat with a family don't eat too much. Otherwise you may eat up their weekly rations'.

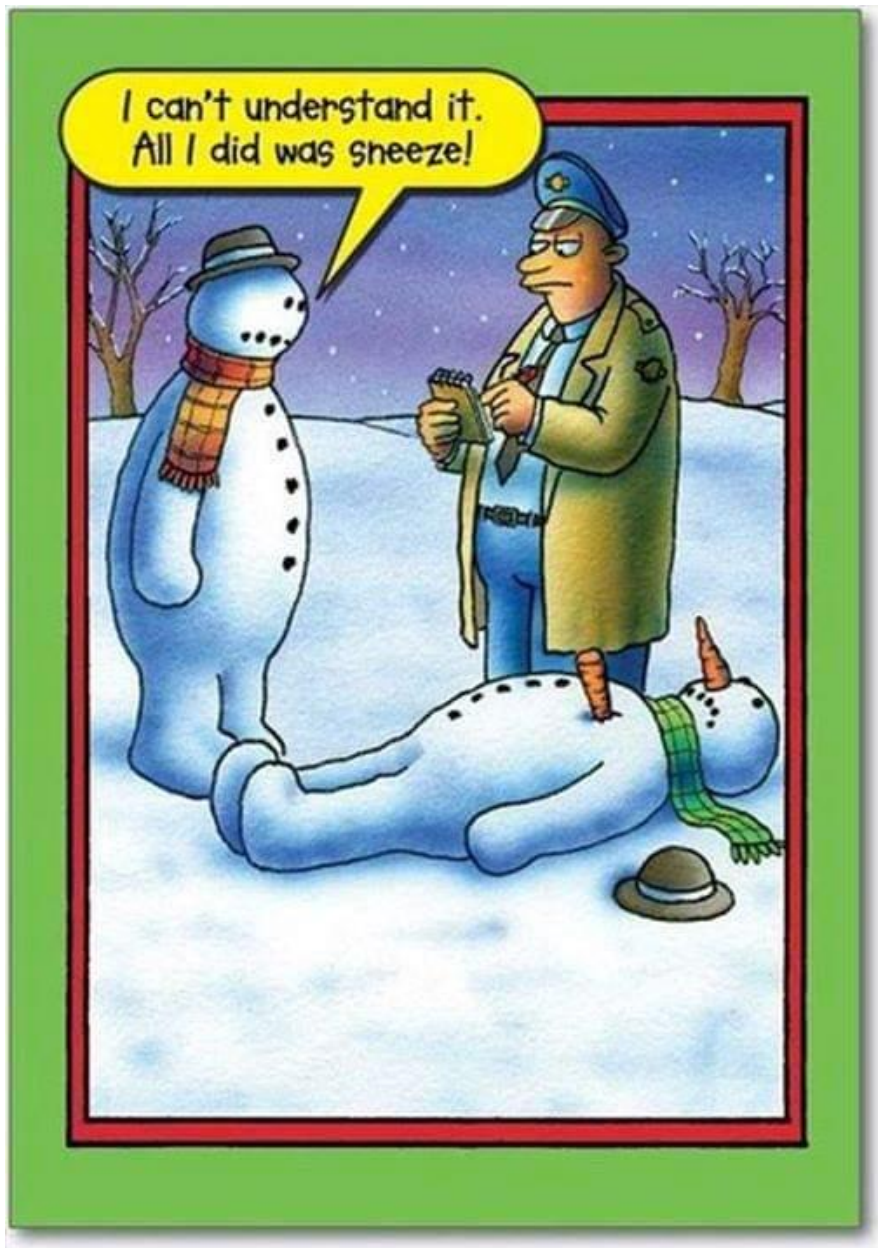
'Britain may look a little shop-worn and grimy to you. The British are anxious to have you know that you are not seeing their country at its best. There's been a war on since 1939'.

'For many months the people of Britain have been doing without things which Americans take for granted. But you will find that shortages, discomforts, blackouts, and bombings have not



made the British depressed...You are coming to Britain from a country where your home is still safe, food is still plentiful, and lights are still burning. So it is doubly important for you to remember that the British soldiers and civilians have been living under a tremendous strain. It is always impolite to criticize your hosts. It is militarily stupid to insult your allies'.





ANOTHER DOOR PART 7: Another Wrong Island

by Tom Simkins MBE

The voyage to Batavia - about 500 miles- from Benkulan was quite uneventful, discounting the food problem. It seemed that we all settled down as though we had joined a pleasure cruise that is assuming that sleeping on the hard deck was acceptable -without any thought that there was still the possibility of attack from the air and sea. I do not recall giving such possibilities any thought, although if I had thought about it, I might have remembered that we were sailing in the same area in which I had heard the 'Van Himoff' being attacked by a submarine when we were safely tucked away up the river near Palembang.

As we pressed on down the coast of Sumatra, there were smoke plumes and echoing rumblings like distant thunder as demolition activities continued. We never set eyes on the Dutch marines with our prauw. They should, with correct wind, have taken the exact course on which we were now travelling, and being in sight of land, their lack of compass would not have been missed . Adverse winds may have taken them further west.

We did however pick up some more chaps out of two small vessels who had done the very thing that we were intending doing had the 'Kheong' and the 'Pengar' not turned up when they did. They had put out to sea from the coast south of Benkulan to avoid an anticipated Japanese arrival behind them from Lahat. It was quite a surprise to recognise one of them, from when I was in Palembang/Pladjoe although difficult at first because when I knew him, he was clean shaven. He couldn't walk because of blistered feet, but he was more concerned about his unshaven appearance. The razor from my skin-out back solved Robb's problem.

With a safe arrival in Batavia anticipated in the next few hours, I was looking forward to what Batavia had to offer, but in particular, a convivial and relaxing beer and a large meal. When we first boarded the 'Pengar', we fully expected that we mariners would be well received by fellow RNVR officers, who in all probability would have been ex-Merchant Navy chaps. We didn't expect a "gin in the ward room treatment", neither did we expect to be called 'Singapore harriers' whom they were not going to feed - well, they would, provided we wash the deck or some other menial task, which might have been peeling spuds, I do not remember. We didn't do either, I think we had had enough of menial tasks to last longer than a meal would do. It didn't matter in the end. The chaps in the galley were more understanding. When the ladies of our company learned what hospitality had been offered to them, and not to the male "passengers", they refused what was offered and queued 'behind the galley door'.



I can appreciate that taking on a gaggle of unexpected passengers could have been a drain on their resources which would be needed to be in reserve for a more operational crisis, but we didn't think that the 'Singapore harriers' was at all nice. Well, that is putting it nicely now. Actually one of the party was nearly in the act of punching one of the officer', but I didn't record what transpired I wish that I had

We turned the corner into the Sunda strait, passing the island of Krakatoa that I had seen when passing in the 'Pinna' and duly arrived in Batavia late on Monday afternoon, Feb.23rd. I don't remember where everyone went to for effectively, it was every man for himself. We "Kulit" crew did stick together, well initially, and we ended up at the 'Oud Vasanaar' Hotel, arranged for us by the Oil Company's representative.

We had a very noisy welcome the next morning as a large number of Japanese aircraft came over and attacked the airport. I could see the bombers quite plainly, and it was interesting to note that there did not appear to be any aerial opposition or the sound of any ack-ack fire. I wondered why? The first thing I did that morning was to go along to the post office and send off the news home of my arrival in Java. I had written home just before the 'Pinna' was lost, but as I learned later, by the time that letter was received, Singapore had also been lost, in addition to the 'Pinna'. When my parents received the news that my ship had been lost, they received no indication whether or not there had been any survivors. Obviously, it was a very worrying time for them as week after week went by without receiving any more information. It didn't help to have a daughter in the WAAF with the many attacks on airfields, and another son also at sea. (Frank had followed in my footsteps, acquired a war time special PMG certificate and was at sea as a radio officer) Batavia, which had hitherto enjoyed peace, was now suffering air-raids. With the fall of Singapore, the occupation of Borneo, southern Sumatra, Sarawak, Celebes, and then the island of Bali off the eastern tip of Java the previous week on February 17th, things were looking grave. It was beginning to look as though, once more, we had come to the wrong island

That surmise became a reality. We had hardly had time to get ourselves organised, or receive any instructions or advice concerning our movements, when government orders were issued on February 24th (or 25th?) for the preparation and withdrawal of all the fighting forces from Java!

So much for the emphatic assurance from Mr. Churchill that Java would be held at all costs, and essentially the reason why we had originally chased down Sumatra to get to Oosthaven ferry (Telok Betung) in order to get to Java. I could certainly have done without that 'Welcome to Java' news. On the last leg of the voyage from Benkulen, and with Krakatoa disappearing behind us, I was nicely getting myself into a relaxed state for the first time in weeks.



Although I have detailed the encircling successes of the Japanese here at that time with no radio news for a couple of weeks, I had no idea how the local situation was changing.

With the prevailing situation in Batavia, it was understandable that we would experience difficulties in obtaining a 'get away chit', for unexpected late arrivals, like us, were not likely to be given any priority. We did, of course, have the oil company batting for us, but even they could not magically produce sailing chits immediately. Unlike our Singapore and Benkulen circumstances, we were not in the position to select our own transport so that WE could keep moving.

The situation that had reasonably been under control, now became abnormal with the news of the latest government edict concerning military withdrawal. It did not now require a crystal ball to deduce that Java was about to surrender at an early date. Hence it was now, every man for himself, and our slogan 'keep moving' could be added, 'he who travels fast travels alone'.

As will be appreciated, we did discuss the matter at length amongst ourselves, because here was a Singapore situation all over again, but this time, with added complications, one being that we did not have a 'Kulit' facility, and if we had, there was still a strict Naval Control.

Consequently we decided that we would press on individually. While the Oil Company may be having difficulty with a block-booking for evacuation, we as might as individuals just fit into a corner somewhere - even to stowing away. Early next morning, I hitch-hiked my way to Tanjong Priot docks at somewhere around 6.30am, where I also spent some time the next day. I didn't get anywhere. In fact I seemed to spend a lot of time ducking for air-raids and repeated rain squalls before returning to the hotel. It was because of the 'prevailing circumstances' referred to earlier in chapter 19 that I never saw Mossie again. I learned later from one of our 'Kulit' evacuees, that Mossie and Noel Green had been successful in getting on board a Blue Funnel line ship which was taking troops back to Australia. That of course was good news, but I was very sad that I did not get the opportunity to say goodbye to them, in particular, Mossie to thank him for his fortitude, skill, and understanding and his ever smiling face that helped us through the many worrying days. Looking back now, I might have done something about it had not circumstances forced upon me more pressing thoughts of self-preservation..

The difficulty of evacuees getting away, was not only because of the prevailing situation in the area, but because of transport. For people to get away, civilians or military, there had to be ships, and where possible, Naval escorts. Therefore it was natural that delays ensued until the right facilities became available - for instance by diverting ships at sea exactly in the same way that the 'Pinna' was diverted to evacuate Balikpapan.

Then, just like our previous experience, a door opened. We remaining ex 'Kulit' crew (my diary doesn't mention Sniffy Wilson I wonder where he went to?) returning to the hotel, having had



no success in locating transport that day, were approached and given the opportunity of volunteering to man a vessel that was at anchor in the harbour at Tanjong Priok. (The docks associated with Batavia). It had been abandoned and was destined to be scuttled before any Japanese arrival. Not only was this opportunity providing us with our get-away facility, but our participation would provide one more vessel that was urgently needed to reduce the swelling numbers of would be evacuees.

The next day, after our quick acceptance of the idea, we were at Tanjong Priok docks by 9am. Except for another air raid - although not much of one, that delay our arrival, but as it turned out, it wouldn't have mattered if we had arrived three hours later for we didn't board the 'Perak' (Perra) until around mid-day. She was an old Straits Settlements line of about 1000 tons and not unlike the 'Pengar' that had brought us from Benkulen.

While we were waiting for assistance to get us on board the 'Perak' where she was at anchor awaiting scuttling, we met up with our other shipmate volunteers; Captain Cleaver and two of his deck officers Durran and Dewsbury. Their ship, the 'Larut' which I had heard being bombed, while the 'Pinna' was in the Palembang river, had been lost. They were lucky in getting out of Singapore on the 'Empire Star', and although bombed en route, they arrived safely in Batavia.

For the next three days, my diary tells me, 'we worked hard on a variety of jobs through numerous rain squalls in humid heat to get the 'Perak' in a seaworthy condition. One of the tasks was finding and slinging only two lifeboats - a poor substitute for the ship's required complement. We were all dog-tired again. This activity of getting ships ready for sea was getting rather regular. John Wood said that we should put six notches in the funnel of this one, and a few other remarks appropriate to the occasion. The additional problem we had on this one was that we were also getting ready for an unknown number of passengers in the limited time that we had before the closure of the port, which was by then imminent.

Unlike our Singapore and Benkulen departures this one was subject to Naval Control. We were escorted out of Tanjong Priok as a three-vessel convoy by a small Naval vessel until we were clear of the north coast of Java and heading for the Sunda strait and the Indian ocean. We set sail with all passengers aboard about mid-day on the 27th of February into a very prolonged rain squall which we didn't object to at all.

We did not have enough life jackets or life boat room, in fact probably only probably 50%, but essentially it was hoped that we had sufficient water and fuel in our bunkers to get across to Ceylon. No doubt those deficiencies could have been avoided had we had more time. Captain Cleaver didn't think we had. Despite the thoughts of the voyage ahead that we had possible Japanese naval or aircraft to contend with, we had to accept those possibilities against the dead certainty that once again, we had the enemy coming up behind us'keep moving"

That dead certainty was very real, and had we known at the time, we would have had even more hurried thoughts about our departure. During the last days of February, the Japanese had sunk eight Allied naval ships (cruisers and destroyers) and had made troop landings at Wekan, Eratan and Kragan on the north coast of Java. The main objective being taking Batavia and the docks at Tanjong Priok

It wasn't until later that I learned of our sailing instruction between Captain Cleaver and the Naval Control, hence upon leaving Tanjong Priok I had no idea as to where we were going. At that time, I was only concerned with the fact that we were going to move, which we did. Apparently the instructions were after clearing Sunda, we were to meet up with another vessel that had left Tjilijap (southern Java, and destination of the 'Kheong' after leaving Benkulen). But after clearing Java Head there was no sign of it, so the Captain did what was expedient under the circumstances - full speed ahead in order to get away from the coasts of Java and Sumatra as fast as possible. Where the two other ships that left Tanjong Priok with us went to, I don't know.

Because of the reported surface craft and submarine activity, and anticipated aircraft reconnoitring out from the now occupied areas, it was with grateful thanks to Providence- that we experienced so many heavy rain squalls and accompanying poor visibility conditions. It was sometime later, when the bright orb of the moon dimmed and then dimmed again to near invisibility before slowly brightening. I really felt that 'Somebody' somewhere was still looking after us as they had done since the 'Pinna' this time in the shape of an eclipse of the moon, and total too! Looking back after so many years, I have thought about that moon, and wondered, if in my stressed state, my wishful thinking, albeit subconscious, had been turned it into memory. I therefore contacted Patrick Moore, the astronomer, and the reply I received was ' Total eclipse of the moon, March 2nd 1942, I was there' . . . Well, I know what I was doing in that area, but I would like to know where he was, and why? I did ask but did not receive a reply.

The bright moonlit nights with almost perfect visibility, were almost as worrying as the blue sky and dead calm seas in daytime as we left behind us a long trail of filthy black smoke - caused by the chaps down below pushing the old engine to its limit. However, not all the time, for our best speed was only maintained up to being well clear of the coast of Sumatra as we headed Northwest over the Indian Ocean in the direction of Ceylon. After that, the 'Perak's" speed was reduced in daytime to economise on fuel and to reduce our smoke output.

Twice we altered course away from something that was spotted, imaginary or not but whoever was on the bridge at the time altered course just the same, but then a real scare it was not imaginary a periscope less than a mile away!

It was one of those nasty moments that was always expected, while praying silently that it never would happen. On lookout watch on the bridge, I tended not to look at the miles of calm



sea in case I saw something - a sort of ostrich syndrome. We had been plodding along at four or five knots with the just occasional puff of black smoke from the funnel while the engineers below carried out some presumably necessary smoke reduction measures. I had been on my bridge look-out watch for about half an hour gazing out from the port side of the bridge, seeing nothing. Suddenly, Captain Cleaver shouted out to the third mate with whom I was doubling up. On not seeing him, he said 'Quick Sparks, get down below and tell them to give me all they've got and to hell with the bloody smoke. (There had been a bridge to engine room telegraph problem, and hence this verbal message) Halfway down the engine room ladder I met the third mate and passing the message on to him I shot back on to the bridge, still not knowing what was the matter. Captain Cleaver said, 'Get down there and stand where I can see you. If I wave, get down there again and tell them to give me full astern for a minute, then stop engine and every one on deck'.

He explained to us later that it was all he could think of in a hurry. If the submarine looked like surfacing and attack imminent we hadn't a chance of escaping and it would be easier to launch lifeboats with the ship at rest, or nearly so. The submarine must surely have seen or heard us, so why did it leave us alone, allowing us to go on our way? Could there be a clue in our sighting of a small southern bound convoy a short time later?

Two interesting points emerge from that experience. Before sailing from Tanjong Priok, the Captain was told by Naval Control that if we cleared Sunda safely and Northwest up to two days sailing, then after that, our next danger area would be two days out from Ceylon. At the time of sighting the sub, we were just two days out.

In Noel Barber's book, 'Sinister Twilight' he describes the ill-fated voyage of the SS 'Rooseboome', a small vessel which had sailed out of the Sumatran port of Padang (the port that we had been urged to go back to several times during our journey down Sumatra). She left Padang on the 26th February with a large passenger list of evacuees, some whom had escaped across Sumatra from Singapore. When the 'Rooseboome' was 36 hours out of Ceylon, their destination being Colombo, a party was being held in the saloon to celebrate their escape, the safe crossing and anticipated arrival in Colombo. They did not arrive. A submarine surfaced and its torpedo struck the ship, sinking it in four minutes. By the time that the only lifeboat reached a small island off the coast of Sumatra almost back where the 'Rooseboome' had set off from 26 days earlier -there were only four survivors left alive out of the 135 that left the sinking ship,.

After all these years since 1942, I wonder now; was it the same submarine that captain Cleaver sighted from the 'Perak' and why did we not suffer the same fate as the 'Rooseboome', and did the sub see that southbound convoy?

When we reached Colombo safely on March 10th without any further incidents, I learned that



Java had surrendered in the first week in March. Although it would seem that we would have had more time to prepare for our voyage, instead of our makeshift departure, the Port of Tanjong Priok had closed on the 28th February consistent with an extensive and prolonged bombing attack. That being so, then for us to have got away it would have necessitated an overland journey to the south coast port of Tjilijap, along with many others, where we would no doubt have had to join a queue for evacuation. During the first week in March, Japanese Naval forces patrolled the southern coastal area of Java to prevent evacuations and in doing so caused much loss of life and losses on our shipping. On March 5th aircraft bombed the port of Tjilijap, destroying the harbour and sinking 17 ships. I learned many years later, that one of our 'Kulit' passengers was obliged to leave Batavia and travel overland to Tjilijap, and there, joined a small vessel, the "Paelo Bras'. After a day's sailing, heading Northwest from the port, the vessel was bombed by aircraft. What pitiful few survivors that got away on the only usable lifeboat, drifted for over a week, arriving more dead than alive on the west coast of Sumatra not far from Benkulen. Upon arrival they were betrayed by local inhabitants and taken prisoner by the Japanese.

On 28th Feb/March 1st, after we had safely passed through the Sunda strait and into the Indian Ocean, Allied ships intersected a Japanese invasion fleet landing troops at Merak (on the western tip of Java). In that engagement, in addition to the losses inflicted on the Japanese, the American and British cruisers 'Houston' and "Perth" were lost, and later, the "Everton" Simultaneous with these landings were the landing at Eratan, Wetan and Kragen further east (as already referred to).

Relating those events above prompts me to say again, 'why were we so lucky?'

Well, after all those worrying times since Benkulen, and then in Java, finding that we had arrived at the wrong island, and then the anxious hours on the 'Perak'. nothing had happened to us - it had all been in the mind. It is a sobering thought that all our good fortune had been due to our grim determination to keep moving. If our departure from Singapore had been perhaps only a short time later or if we had taken the southerly course and not a north westerly one there could have been quite a different set of circumstances from which we might not have survived.

Many hundreds did not. Of the men women and children who did survive shipwreck, bombing and gunning, in an attempt to escape from Singapore via the fateful southerly route, and who managed to make the Sumatran coast or the many small islands scattered about between Rhio and Java, many were to perish from exposure, wounds, or as a result of capture and internment.

It is a sobering conjecture, that had we finally given in and succumbed to the repeated advice to make that return journey northwards up Sumatra to the port of Padang, we could have been on board the ill-fated 'Rooseboom'. The dates do coincide. And the Dutch sailors who



commandeered the prauw, and the 'Flying Dutchman', I wonder how they fared? If they had not taken the prauw and circumstances had placed us all on it instead, and excluding any problems that we could have experienced at sea, we could have arrived in Java to find the Japanese there' And the Chinese lady on the road to Palembang. I wonder if she was on the 'Rooseboome'?

None of those thoughts of course crossed my mind as we paralleled the coast of Ceylon (Sri Lanka now). Instead I had a lovely feeling of well-being that I had not experienced since that early morning on the 'Pinna' after the Captain had awoken me. And I was clean too, I had just had a shower - the first one since leaving Batavia, because of the water shortage - and then a second one with my shorts and shirt on because it was more convenient to wash them that way.

It is interesting that I should record such mundane actions as those ablutions, yet after spending fourteen days on the 'Perak' I cannot remember seeing a single passenger onboard arriving or leaving. As I dried out on deck in the hot sun, the Japanese war was 2000 miles away, and ahead, shimmering in the heat haze, Colombo looked beautiful, and this time, It just had to be the right island - and a safe one.

Having dealt with the usual port arrival formalities, my first priority was a telegram home; my next one was to buy some clothes, for although I was clean, I was in a very un-pressed and rather un-cared for state, but I had to shelve that priority until I procured some necessary currency. (As an evacuee/refugee, I had enjoyed the facility of a free telegram home)

I could have gone along to the Marconi company office which would have been the correct thing to do, but instead, I went with other Oil company employees. The first thing that I heard on walking into their office was, 'Sparky'... followed by a familiar bear-like hug. The last time I had experienced it, and not to be forgotten, was in the radio room before we lost the 'Pinna'.

For the next half an hour Arthur Greene and I were locked in 'how did you' exclamations followed by more detailed explanations. Arthur had been experiencing the increased tempo of Japanese bombing from his bed in the General hospital in Singapore, followed by one of the long-range artillery shells landing in the hospital grounds. With those foreboding indications of the situation, he had decided that he would be far better off out of hospital with tonsillitis, than in bed when the Japanese arrived. Hence why I could not reach him by telephone from wharf 50. Discharging himself along with another patient, he was helped from Ootram road to the water front where he joined other evacuees. Boarding a small vessel, the 'Mutiarra' all arrived safely in Sumatra via a short route south and then west of the Rhio islands, despite aerial activity around them. Like the 'Kulit', the 'Mutiarra' followed a river inland, and eventually all aboard were helped to get across the island to Padang. Here Arthur boarded a collier bound

for Colombo and duly arrived there a week or so before the 'Perak'. What difficulties he experienced on the 'Mutiarra' and then in Padang with so many would be evacuees requiring transport, my diary does not record.

-- Next: Another Door Part 8: Colombo and UK

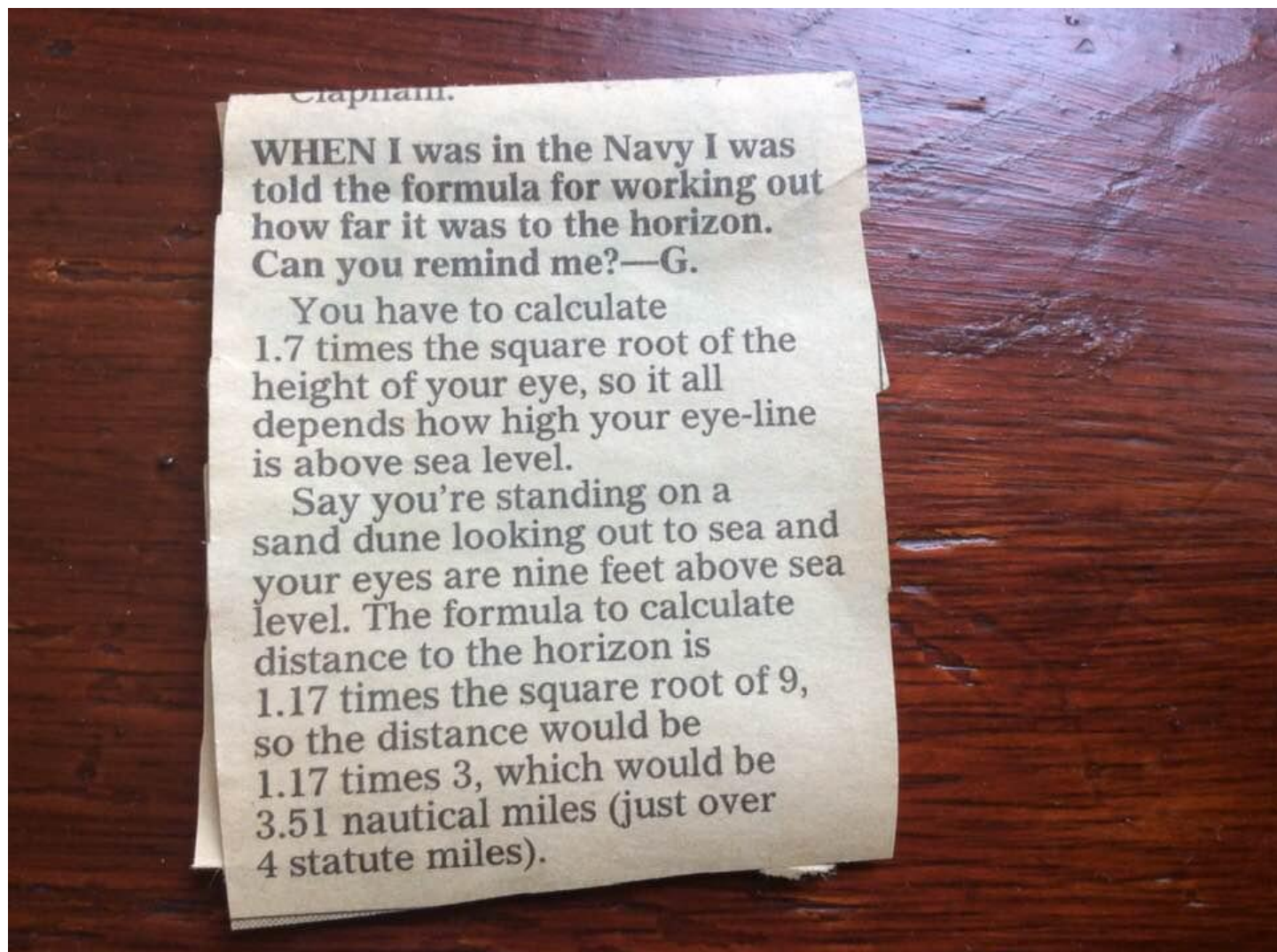


PHOTO ALBUM

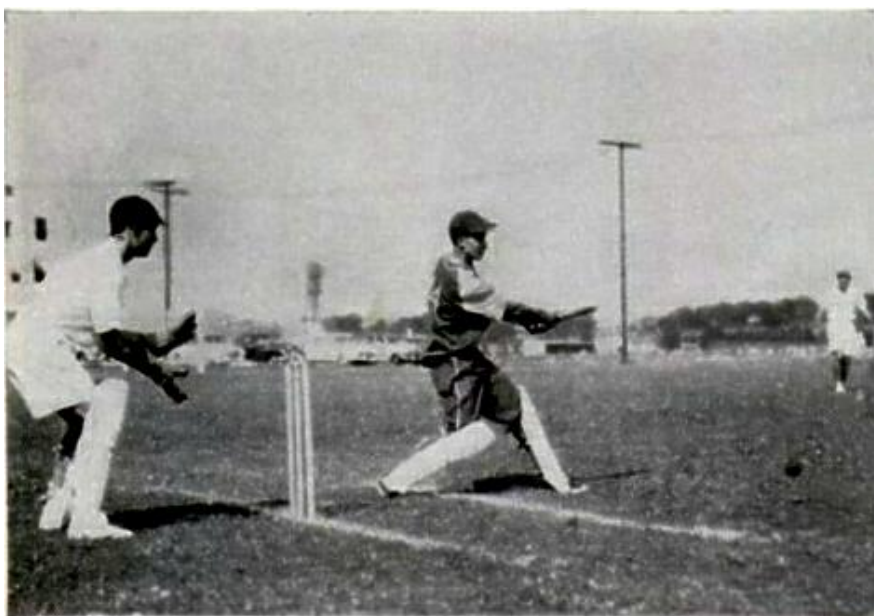
Reported in the US Navy Magazine ALL HANDS December, 1951

CRICKET-SOFTBALL

There were lots of laughs for the spectators when sailors from HMS Superb, British cruiser visiting Newport, R. I., and a group of Fleet Training Center athletes got together for a double-feature exhibition of cricket and softball.

As was expected, the Yanks lost at cricket and the British at softball. Accustomed to gloveless cricket, the British team found it a bit rugged playing softball with mitts, but it was equally as tough for the Newporters when they had to play cricket bare-handed.

The most confusing to both sides was the little matter of the bat. In cricket, the bat has to be carried by the runner in order for a score to tally. Falling to do this and instinctively dropping the bat after hit cost the Yanks many points. On the other hand, it was amusing to see the British hitters lugging the bat around the bases.



WICKED WHACK connects for E. L. Livramento,
YNI, of Newport,
in the U. S.- British cricket match.
Britons won at cricket 10-3, Yanks, at softball 20-1.



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)





LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

**An update on Shipmate Phil Grimson who served aboard the Superb as an A/SPO (V)
between December, 1953 and January, 1956**

Dear Brian,

Apologies for not sending an update for a while recent photo of Dad in the care home. He is very confused at times; he mostly likes the care home but sometimes gets muddled about why he's there.

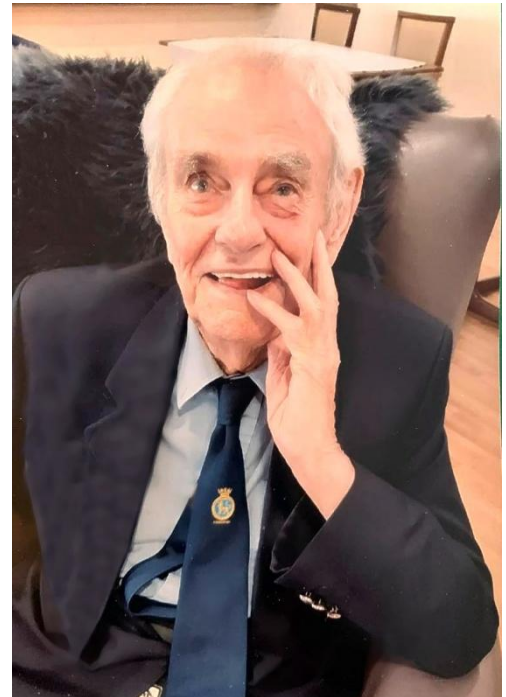
We have had a year battling with Social services about funding for his care; this has now been settled and is a great relief. I'm afraid his memory is not as good as it was he has forgotten that my brother died 2 years ago and doesn't recognise Richard's children or some other family members.

He has forgotten how to use the laptop so isn't using email at the moment. I can only see him twice a week in the conservatory at the home and for only 30 minutes.

It's not long enough but the restrictions are set by the homes owners because of the virus. When I can see him in his room again I'll try and help him use email.

His mobile number is 07984 431932. The signal is sometimes a bit iffy in this area.

Best wishes for a happier new year in 2022. Linda Williams



Posted on Facebook by Shipmate Malcolm Milham

23 December at 1450

Sorry if i have missed anybody off of the Christmas list. This is the worst Christmas of our lives, bar none. We got the dreaded phone call on Monday morning, telling us our eldest son, Sam, had died that morning, suddenly. Our prayers are for his wife Carol and his children
posted on Facebook by Shipmate Malcolm Milham



THE END