

TON Talk

Newsletter of the TON Class Association

Edition 204



June 2020

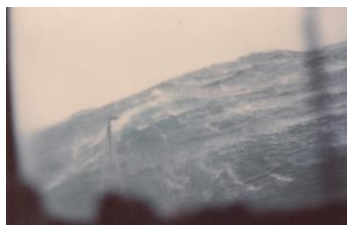


**Black Tot Day
50th Anniversary**

TON Class Association

Patron HRH The Prince of Wales

Contents



	Editorial	1
	Chairman's Corner	2
p 9	Coming Events & Who's Who .	3
	REUNION Sitrep.....	4
	Only Happen on a Fish Boat ..	6
	Black Tot Day	7
	MCMV News	8
	Al Rekkah	9
	Stockton Sea Cadets	11
P 15	KNM Alta De-commissioned .	14
	Act of Kindness.....	15
	Red Watch in the Gulf.....	16
	DURBAN's Return	18
	Welfare Info	19
	Stand In Chef	20
	ASHTON Fish Patrols	22
	Only Having a Laugh	24
	GAVINTON Storm	25
P 16	Membership Update	28
	Slops	30
	Post Bag	31
	New Treasurer	Rear Inside

TCA Membership
£15 per annum

£150 Life Membership
www.tca2000.co.uk

P 25

Front Cover:

Courtesy Stowmarket RNA

Founder: Jack Worth MBE

Editorial

PERHAPS it was the effect of the Lock Down, preventing all you authors from going to the pub as often as you might have preferred, but response to Editor's "Low Water" appeal has been magnificent. VMT to all the Scribes who have sent sufficient material for the content of June and August's editions to be assured. BZ to our printer, Gipping Press, for keeping going in the crisis.

Rather an International Flavour in this edition with contributions from Bermuda, Germany, South Africa, Malaysia and THREE from the Gulf. TCA really does have a world-wide reach!

Oddest Job I had in the Navy - At the suggestion of Harry Cartlidge, we are launching a new theme in TON Talk which we hope will attract many responses. First contributions on pages 12 and 20 from Harry and Tim Trezare

Please wrack your memory and sharpen your pencils - then post, or preferably e-mail, your dit, ideally with a photo, to your Editor. VMT. *Don't worry about spelling etc – that the Editor's job*

BLACK TOT DAY 31st July 1970 – 50th Anniversary of the end of the Rum Ration. There will be solemn commemorations wherever old sailors may gather. TCA may have to delay ours until the Reunion and local RNA events will be on hold due to Lock Down but we will Carry on and Raise a Tot in memory – even if it has to be on our own!

Pusser's Sandals with 8As Following up Peter Harrison's observation in February's edition, it would appear that different ships had different footwear codes as well as different cap tallies. In FISKERTON this Jimmy decreed that rig of the day on the sweepdeck was gymshoes to prevent the stubbed toes and twisted ankles that he had observed in other ships where flip flops were the custom - plus a rigging knife and marling spike if aft of the winch.

Barque PEKING - ex Arethusa TCA Member Hans Andresen sends us news that the restoration of PEKING is nearing completion in Hamburg and current plans – virus permitting – are for her to be moved, hopefully in late summer, to a permanent berth as centrepiece in the new Maritime Museum being constructed in Hamburg Docks.

Her yards have recently been installed. Follow the link below to see a fascinating 3½ minute video of how the yards, each weighting up to five tons, were craned into position and the agile work of riggers, wearing "tree climbing" slings and harnesses, attaching the yards to the masts via a form of gooseneck and flanges, each with four bolts which appear to be about a foot long and one inch in diameter.

<https://www.ndr.de/nachrichten/schleswig-holstein/Grossegler-Peking-Sanierung-geht-voran,peking1722.html>

Courtesy Nord Deutscher Rundfunk [NDR], the regional TV and radio station in Hamburg. *Editor regrets he was not able to capture an image from the video.*



Deadline for August's Edition is 20th July

pjd

Chairman's Corner

It is with great regret that Bob Dean has resigned from TCA for personal reasons. Bob has given great service to TCA for many years, since the earliest days of our Association. He was a tower of strength for Jeremy Stewart in building up the TCA Historical Group, taking on the daunting role of assembling the archive of photographs and documents. Bob made significant contributions to all three of the books published by TCA and took over management of the Historical Group when Jeremy was unable to continue.

This included preparing summaries on compact discs of documents and photographs for the Royal Navy Historical Branch. This demanding task has only recently been completed.

Bob continued to perform valiant service in sorting out the considerable amount of TONs-related documentation amassed by Jeremy.

There will be some re-allocation of responsibilities within TCA so that the key tasks of the Historical Group will continue.

Hon Sec will look into support for the website using skilled external technical specialists, with him acting as Editor, much as he already does for TON Talk.

The historical research aspect of the Group's activities has largely been concluded with the publication of our three books, copies of which are still available.

We wish Bob and his family well for the future.

Somewhat to my surprise we now have a volunteer for the post of Treasurer – David Woolgar. Naturally I am delighted we have a relief for Stuart Johnson. A short bio of David can be found on the inside back cover.

I was sorry to hear that Dorothy Preston, widow of John Preston had died. Dorothy was a strong supporter of the TCA. She had a great sense of humour. I was told to call her the "Duchess"!

I have initiated a review of our Constitution and Rules. Much has changed since the late 1980s. We are calling it the Way Ahead. The first part is to look at the current situation and then, probably the more difficult part, is to identify a way ahead for the TCA. More on this as we progress .

Peter Harrison

TCA Who's Who

President

Rear Admiral R John Lippiett CB. CBE. DL

Chairman

Peter Harrison,
151 Discovery Road
Plymouth
PL1 4PR
Tel: 01752 656 228
E-mail:
peterharrison@eclipse.co.uk

Chaplain

Rev. Trevor Filtress
24 Orchard Road
Brixton
Plymouth
PL8 2FE
Tel: 07785 568 056
E-mail: trevor@flitress.org

Welfare Officer

Robbie Reid-Sinclair
68 Brookside
Carlisle
Cumbria
CA2 7JR
Tel: 01228 542114
Mobile: 07791-908242
E-mail:
crofton1216@gmail.com

Vice Chairman, Reunion Secretary & Custodian Historical Archives Clive Dennison

25 Beech Close, Elm Tree Farm
Burstwick nr Hull
HU12 9HN
Tel: 01964 623 863
E-mail:
Clivedennison23@gmail.com

Hon Treasurer Stuart Johnson

30 Maple Close,
Chase Town
Burntwood
Staffs WS7 4RP
Tel: 01543 675 901
E-mail:
deezlandjohn@yahoo.co.uk

Hon Secretary, Editor, TON Talk & Website Peter Down

39 Anderson Close
Needham Market
Suffolk
IP6 8UB
Tel: 01449 721 235
E-mail:
peter.avoca@gmail.com

Membership Secretary Dennis Cook

5 Manvers Street,
Worksop,
Notts
S80 1SD
Tel: 01909 481 745
Mob: 07919 897275
E-mail: dcook1727@gmail.com

COMING EVENTS

		June meeting of the White Rose Branch has been cancelled.
September	Sat 12 th	13.00. White Rose Branch Lunch at Thomas', Lendal Bridge Meal at 15.30- Hopefully still on !
	Sunday 13 th	White Rose Branch - Eden Camp All Services Remembrance parade. Muster in NAAFI 1350. Parade musters 1415 For all the above contact Buster Brown a-brown35@sky.com
October	Fri 9 - Sun 12	Annual Reunion and AGM Toorak Hotel, Torquay - Hopefully still On. Keep calm and watch this space Booking Form from HonSec.

Sitrep on October's AGM and Reunion

Clive Dennison, TCA Vice Chairman and Reunion Organiser

As far as the TCA is concerned, the 2020 Reunion is still on and I continue to liaise with the skeleton staff at hotel, as best I can.

We will keep the situation constantly under review, taking into account:

1. What happens with government restrictions on travel over the coming months.
2. How the situation at the hotel may develop. The THL Group has temporarily closed all four of its hotels at the Torquay complex. They are running the offices on skeleton staff and are not taking new bookings till at least Mid-June.

We will need to be assured in good time that the hotel can continue to provide the accommodation and facilities that we expect, as defined in our contract with them.

3. Can we secure enough response from the members to make the event in this October viable? Currently we have bookings for approx. 55 people. Many members understandably may be holding back on bookings, so further bookings are likely be driven by the situation on travel restrictions.

Please be advised all deposits and payments received by TCA are held securely within TCA accounts i.e. any money you have paid so far is NOT held by the hotel.

Apart from the deposit of £3000 paid to the hotel last year, we are not contractually due to pay any further money to the hotel until early September, when balances are due to the hotel 28 days prior to the event.

Once these balances have been paid, TCA cannot guarantee to make refunds in the event of cancellation by individuals. Our August deadline allows clearance of any cheques in the TCA account before these monies are due hence we strongly advise members to have travel insurance to cover them should they have to cancel in the 28 days prior to the event.

Should the Reunion in 2020 have to be cancelled, or re-arranged for another time or place, we will consider how best to make refunds to members or switch deposits etc to any new event.

In the longer term, we need to be assured as to the ability of the THL Group to provide facilities for the Reunion due to be held in 2021, the deposit for which is due in May 2020. Again this will be discussed with the hotel and reviewed over the coming months.

Please be assured that I am on the case and liaising with the hotel in the best interests of TCA but both they and us are affected by Government Health Regulations and the situation is subject to constant review and possible changes.

Appreciation of the Situation

An "Appreciation" is a term used in Military Staff Colleges as an exercise requiring students to document their understanding of the implications of a scenario prior to working out strategic moves and tactical plans for resolving it.

*This Appreciation comes via TCA member Mike Critchley. **Mike's** wife is the daughter of a Soviet Admiral. One of her friends living in Russia has sent these thoughts and it seems appropriate not to change her wording ... **Editor.***

WE have forgotten how to live together with our members of the family
That's why the Coronavirios Shut us in our homes to "teach" us to live together again !

WE have stopped to respect the people of elderly age and that's why we got this disease to remember how fragile they are !

WE have stopped to appreciate and respect workers of health service and got this disease to know how irreplaceable they are !

WE have stopped to respect teachers and the disease closed our schools to make the parents themselves try to know what it means to teach !

WE spent all our free time at the shopping centres but the disease closed them too to make us understand that the happiness isn't in buying things !

WE paid too much attention to our "beauty" and appearance for comparing us with others, that's why the disease "covers " our faces with masks !

This disease takes much from us BUT gives a chance, perhaps the last one, to learn and understand a lot. WHAT is the most important in our lives !

We got the disease which was made according to our behaviour !

THE MOST IMPORTANT NOW

- TO MAKE THE VERY RIGHT CONCLUSIONS !

LORD, HELP US DO IT, PLEASE !

IT COULD ONLY HAPPEN ON A FISH BOAT !

Allan Graham, Elson, Northumberland

Leaving the BULWARK in 1963, after 18 months in the Far East, I had my minimum six months ashore before being drafted to WASPERTON. She was in the Fishery Protection Squadron and her patch was from Lerwick to Great Yarmouth. She was about the size of our mess on Bulwark and a bit of a shock; from being one of tens of EMs to being the only one.

I got married while in WASPERTON and had a week's leave for our honeymoon. I was due back onboard on the Monday morning but on the Saturday a policeman called at our house and told me I had to report back on board at South Quensferry, by 12.00 on Sunday, as we were sailing in company with four other sweepers and a destroyer in charge for a sweeping exercise of Denmark. We set two alarm clocks that night with one in a pan, needless to say, we did not hear either of them!

When we eventually woke up the next train from Newcastle wouldn't get me there until 13.30 and the ship was sailing at 13.00. I rang the ship and told the Jimmy what had happened, he told me on no account was I to leave home until I had heard from the Skipper and to ring again at 11.45. Jokingly I suggested that, as they would be heading south, they could pick me up at North Shields where we often called in. He said words to the effect "did I think it was a taxi ?"

I rang back at 11.45 and was told the skipper was still ashore at a meeting and they would sail as soon as he came aboard, so I was to ring Lochinvar at 13.30pm which I did. The Duty Officer to whom I explained the situation was not very understanding - in fact quite nasty and told me to report there as soon as possible, I then told him I had explicit orders from my First Lieutenant not to leave Newcastle until I had heard from my Skipper. The Duty Officer then told me to ring back in one hour. This I did and he told me to rather sheepishly to be on North Shields Fish Quay at 18.00 that night.

I duly did that and found WASPERTON waiting for me. As you would expect, I received a big chuck up from the lads.

Being the only EM onboard, and no replacement with sweeping knowledge available at such short Notice, the Skipper had to ask the destroyer captain, as Senior Officer, for permission to leave the squadron to pick up his only EM.

Of course I had to go in front of the captain (Lt Cdr Freddie Fox) who said that if he had got a recall on his honeymoon he wouldn't have come back either ! But as Lochinvar knew about it, I would have to be charged.

As I could have got back by 15.00, I would only have been three hours adrift. So if I remember right, I got stoppage of 3 days pay and 3 days leave.

I think this could be a unique dit and could only have happened on a fish boat with a great skipper.

He also said that he would dine out on this for years ...

Black Tot Day - 31st July 1970

Everyone knows that the Rum Ration was introduced in 1740 by Admiral Vernon, known as Old Grog, from the grosgrain cloak that he liked to wear. He had become concerned by the level of drunkenness throughout the West Indies station and the consequent loss of efficiency among his ships. He introduced an issue of rum to replace the brandy and local spirits then freely available and limited the ration to half a pint of rum, diluted with a pint of water, each day for each sailor. The ration remained at that level until 1824 when it was reduced to one eighth of a pint per man over the age of 20 or three (old) pence for those declared Temperance.



By the mid-1960's it was apparent that the rum ration had become somewhat of an anachronism. Sailors were no longer required to manhandle sails in raging blizzards and the high technology current in aircraft, submarines,

radar and weapons control systems made the mid-day tot of strong spirit a hazard for those who were servicing or using complex equipment where lives could be at risk. Many branches had already adopted "safety first" rules e.g. aircrew had a code of "four hours between bottle and throttle" and maintenance teams were often allowed to delay the issue until the Dog Watches, when most would be off duty.

Admiral of the Fleet Sir Michael Le Fanu, the First Sea Lord, made the fateful signal to the Fleet on 31st July 1970:

*Most farewell messages try
To jerk a tear from the eye
But I say to you lot
Very sad about tot
But Thank You, Good Luck, and Goodbye.*

Jack is a sentimental soul and clings to the cherished memory of his Tot.

MCMV NEWS

Rob Hoole

Sales of RN MCMVs

The Hunt class minehunter QUORN has been bought by Lithuania. The Lithuanian Navy already has the former RN Hunt class minehunters LNS SKALVIS (ex-COTTESMORE) and LNS KURSIS (ex-DULVERTON) while the Greek Navy has HS EUROPA (ex-BICESTER) and HS KALLISTO (ex-BERKELEY). ATHERSTONE remains decommissioned in Portsmouth pending disposal.

The Estonian Navy has the former RN Sandown class minehunters ENS ADMIRAL COWAN (ex-SANDOWN), ENS SAKALA (ex-INVERNESS) and ENS UGANDI (ex-BRIDPORT).

Operation KIPION MCM

Our MCM forces in the Gulf, based at the NSF (Naval Support Facility) at Mina Salman in Bahrain, comprise the Hunt class MCMVs BROCKLESBY (MCM 2 Crew 5) and LEDBURY (2/2) plus the Sandown class MCMVs BLYTH (1/2) and SHOREHAM (1/4), all supported by RFA CARDIGAN BAY. SHOREHAM and BROCKLESBY have been conducting the second MCM exercise of the year with the Type 23 frigate ARGYLL and the US Avenger class minehunters DEXTROUS and GLADIATOR. LEDBURY has undergone a short maintenance period before testing her systems. At the time of writing, BLYTH's ship's company had raised over £1,500 for charity by lifting the weight of their ship (over 570 tonnes). They then decided to carry on and lift the equivalent weight of LEDBURY.

Hunt Class

Since hosting the First Sea Lord in early April, CATTISTOCK (2/6) has been undergoing FOST training off Plymouth (renamed Freeport in their war scenario). Her crew deploys later this year. HURWORTH (2/7) has been exercising out of Portsmouth with her new crew. CHIDDINGFOLD (2/1) has been undergoing maintenance. MIDDLETON (2/8) is believed to be in refit.

Sandown Class

RAMSEY (1/2) has been weapon training in the Clyde areas while generating for operations. GRIMSBY (1/1) has returned from her deployment with SNMCMG1 (Standing NATO MCM Group 1) and paid special tribute to Capt Tom Moore in an upper deck demonstration by her ship's company. PEMBROKE (1/5) was spotted conducting man overboard exercises. PENZANCE (1/3) lined her upper deck to applaud the NHS. BANGOR (1/7) is still undergoing maintenance at Rosyth.

See the 'Latest News' page of the MCD Officers' Association website at www.mcdoa.org.uk for more recent updates and photos.

How Big is a Mine Sweeper ?

We all know the answer to that, Or do we?

David White, Hoylake

Early in 1977 I stood by a new build at the Mitsubishi yard in Nagasaki. The ship was the Kuwait-flagged *Al Rekkah*. She was an Ultra Large Crude Carrier (ULCC), not the biggest tanker in the world but at 405,000dwt and with a loaded draft of about 74 feet, she was well up the pecking order. During the next six years I completed a number of periods of service on her, finally leaving her in April 1983.



The war between Iraq and Iran started in September 1980 and lasted until a ceasefire under the auspices of United Nations Resolution 598 in July 1988. During this period, attacks on neutral shipping going into and out of the Gulf escalated. Kuwaiti tankers were especially liable to attack and the Kuwaiti Government sought to transfer their tankers to other flags for protection, with both the UK and the US Governments facilitating most of the transfers.

Ownership of *Al Rekkah* was transferred to a Kuwaiti subsidiary company in the US. Her name was changed to *Bridgeton*, she was re-registered in Philadelphia and she became an American ship with an American Master.

The first Operation Ernest Will convoy into the Gulf saw *Bridgeton* being escorted by three USN ships, the frigate *Cromelin*, the destroyer *Kidd* and the cruiser *Fox*. It looked quite splendid in the sunshine, with one warship ahead and the other two out on the port and starboard sides. When passing west of Farsi Island *Bridgeton* struck a mine alongside No. 2 port wing tank. As she was in ballast, this tank was already full of seawater. She slowed from her usual speed of about 16 knots to about 8 knots and carried on. The three escorts moved promptly to take up line astern of us !.

After initial assessment off Kuwait, *Bridgeton* returned down the Gulf to drydock at Dubai. While there, my former colleagues went off to the souk and returned with a large number of commemorative T-shirts. One T-shirt was forwarded to each of the three US warships as a "Thank You".



One news report referred to this damage as "a dent".

When the war eventually ended, most of the Kuwaiti tankers returned to their original flag but *Bridgeton* remained on the American register until being sold in 1997. She then became the Panamanian *Pacific Blue* until being scrapped at Alang in 2002.

In the subsequent very lengthy case brought by Iran against the USA before the International Court of Justice (1993-1997) no reference was made to the T-shirts.



TS Kellington - Stockton Sea Cadets

Sub Lieutenant Tracy Ahmed SCC RNR, Officer in Charge

This report was written before the Corona shut down ...

The unit is doing well from a training perspective, we have maintained cadet numbers in total, although we could do with more new entries for the Royal Marines section.

Photos from our award evening in December when the Mayor presented prizes to Sea Cadet First Class Sally and Marine Cadet Keysha.



During the winter we concentrate on shore based activities, due to weather and dark nights and cadets have taken part in 6 training weekends, covering subjects such as level 1 & 2 Seamanship, first aid & catering plus level 1 marine engineering, CIS, Navigation, meteorology and peer ed. CFAVs have been catching up with their training and have covered first aid, seamanship as well as core modules.

We sadly said goodbye to CPO Marie Brain who retired at Christmas and are always on the lookout for more adult volunteers to help us.

... with a Post Script after

Unfortunately we have had to lock up and secure the unit. I'm trying to keep Cadets interested by reposting quizzes and information on our Facebook page. I would like to offer more targeted training on line but my day job in the NHS has ramped up and I have very little spare time at the moment.

The Corps has pulled together some lessons which can be emailed out and I am reposting on our Facebook page anything which I think is relevant, messages to keep in touch, quizzes, jigsaws and lessons. We aren't able to commit to live virtual training unfortunately but we are doing our best.

The Most Unusual Job I had in the Navy

Coxswain Harry Cartlidge

Part 1 - JOBS FOR THE BOYS

After a commission out East followed by an RP2's course at Dryad I'm in RNB angling for a frigate or destroyer in the Home Fleet. Pompey Barracks were squalid: hammocks still slung if you could find yours, you lived out of kit bags, bathrooms grossly inadequate with sink plugs long gone, dhobi buckets at a premium and heating by pot stoves if you could get near one. Luckily I'd wangled the corner as Killick of the PO's Mess. The messmen's messdeck was a garret, three storeys up with 20 bunks, lockers and a stove that reached all corners - a haven amongst a netherworld !

I still had to fall in for general duties and joined a working party knocking rust off the bilges of a reserve carrier up the creek past Whale Island. Following Divisions I'd march the party, overalls and packed lunch akimbo, to Semaphore Steps, take a trot boat, board our Carrier, start the compressor for the windy hammers, the generator for lights and extractor fan as we plunged to the depths. The confined reverberating space amplified the noise of the hammers and the extractor fan couldn't compete with dust, so we had to resort to dustpan and brush before covering our sins with red lead as we worked our way out. My 2's course enabled me to plot our way from bilge to bilge! No goggles, face masks or earplugs, health and safety was yet to be invented ! We would plug our ears with toilet paper (remember the shiny stuff!).

Thick with dust and covered with red lead, our overalls could stand up on their own until attacked by a bar of pusser's hard and scrubbing brush - detergents not yet discovered.

Incidentally, no one ever inspected our work, the ship's caretaker was indifferent and the Carrier never re-commissioned.

Some Monday's were thankfully quite different and I'd lead an escort to collect weekend miscreants from Marlborough Street's Magistrates Court. These were presided over by the Recorder [junior Judge], an erudite character known as "Wiggy Bennett" because of his apparel. Subsequently all "Bennetts" in the Andrew enjoyed the same appellation.

Court procedure always followed the same routine: first to be dealt with was a long line of women;

"Call so and so" would echo down the corridor :

"You are accused of being a common prostitute and soliciting in Hyde Park on Sunday,

How do you plead ? Guilty or not guilty" ?.

"Guilty your Honour",

"Fined Ten Shillings – Next ..."

and so it went on for thirty odd minutes. If any poor soul asked for time to pay they were promptly jailed for 3 days without recourse.

Note that No "uncommon" prostitutes were prosecuted !

Other offenders were dealt with pertinently in rapid succession until finally the Matelots would appear and on this occasion there were five. 'Wiggy' would get on his high horse, the Court would settle, and he could be relied upon to exercise his vocabulary and knowledge as he dressed them down with a stern face whilst everyone else was trying to keep a straight one, a half smile or smirk would earn a withering look.

Appearing before 'Wiggy' became an accolade, consequently any parroting of his performance would stop an Uckers game.

This time he referenced Queen Anne's efforts to raise funds to build a hospice in Greenwich (the first time I had heard the story). It seemed she was embarrassed by the number of sailors without arms and/or legs littering the pavements with begging bowls as she coached around with her entourage.

'Wiggy' would berate those before him for disrespecting her initiative and sacrifice, whilst discrediting the reputation of a proud Service. His history lessons were enlightening but I thought him a product of his time. Money was scarce and service pay remained at 1936 rates (Churchill increased it substantially when he returned to power). Pubs closed at 10pm and if you didn't make it to a railway station to claim a bench you had to remain on the streets and were considered a nuisance. Many of those I collected were time served, and it seemed to me we were back in the days of Queen Anne again!

At the close the Clerk of the Court would present envelopes containing the Charges and 'Wiggy' would instruct us to deliver the "Prisoners" to their respective ships for Captains' punishments. We'd stroll to Waterloo and still be laughing when we reached Liphook.

TUESDAY ... and it's back down the bilges !

More of the same will follow in future editions.

Now what about YOUR favourite dit about unusual jobs ?

De-Commissioning of KNM ALTA

Edgar & Morten Husby, Alta Association

On 5th May M314 KNM Alta was decommissioned in a Navy-style ceremony led by the Captain, Commander (retired) Tore Pettersen.

The ship was launched at Hodgdon Shipbuilding, Maine, USA on January 21st 1953 as number 101 of US AMS 60 class (Adjutant-class minesweeper). In 1966 it was transferred from the Belgian Navy to the Royal Norwegian Navy and re-named Alta.

She then served in the Royal Norwegian Navy for 30 years as part of the Sauda-class minesweepers. In 1996 it was decommissioned and transferred to the Norwegian Defence Museum.

In order to preserve the ship a group of minesweeper veterans organized the Alta Association (Fartøylaget M314 Alta) and signed a management agreement with the Defence Museum.



With a substantial financial donation from the Department of Defence the extensive work of restoration was completed in 2007. She is now probably the last original, operational version of AMS 60 class. Several members of the Alta Association attended the launch of TCA book “Last of the Wooden Walls” in Portsmouth 2012 and in 2016 a group led by Allan George visited Alta at her base in Oslo

Over the years many active and competent members of the Alta Association have continued to maintain and sail Alta for the pleasure of members, sponsors and Naval personnel. Alta has represented the Royal Norwegian Navy by numerous port visits along the Norwegian coast and many formal and informal social gatherings have been arranged onboard at her home base in Oslo.

It has however become increasingly challenging to maintain and operate Alta due to aging of the vessel as well as the members of Alta Association. Finance is, as ever, a particular problem. In 2019, due to pressure on the Defence Budget, the Navy announced that they were not able to continue their financial support. The Alta Association realised that without able crew and financial support it would be impossible to meet their commitments so the agreement with the Defence Museum had to be set aside. It is hoped that the Museum may find a sustainable solution for M314 Alta that may keep this historically important ship alive for the future.

TCA has sent our condolences to the ALTA Association. We are familiar with the problems they face and there will always be a welcome for them at our door – once travel restrictions have been lifted ... **Editor**

Act of Kindness 205 Years Ago

*Reprinted with kind permission from the Royal Gazette of Hamilton, Bermuda,
24th February 2020. Photographs © Akil Simmons.
Courtesy of **Keith Rossiter**, "our man in the Caribbean".*

The kindness shown to the last fatality of the War of 1812 between Britain and the United States of America was marked by an annual event in the East End yesterday. Sea Cadets from TS Admiral Somers provided a Guard of Honour.

The ceremony paid tribute to US Navy Midshipman Richard Sutherland Dale, who died in February 1815 aged 20, after he was wounded in action against the Royal Navy. He was brought to Bermuda as a prisoner and cared for by the people of St George, but died of his injuries and was buried in St Peter's churchyard.



Note the version of "Old Glory", the US flag, current at the time of Midshipman Dale, with 15 stars and 15 stripes (1795 -1818). (right) Governor Rankin inspects the Cadets

The ceremony to honour his memory was started in 1932 but stopped when the US Naval Air Station closed in 1995. It was brought back in 2006.

John Rankin, the Governor and Constance Dierman, the US Consul General, took part in the event. Mr Rankin laid a wreath on behalf of the Dale family. Captain John Rodgaard, a retired US Navy Officer and Judy Rodgaared also laid wreaths (below).



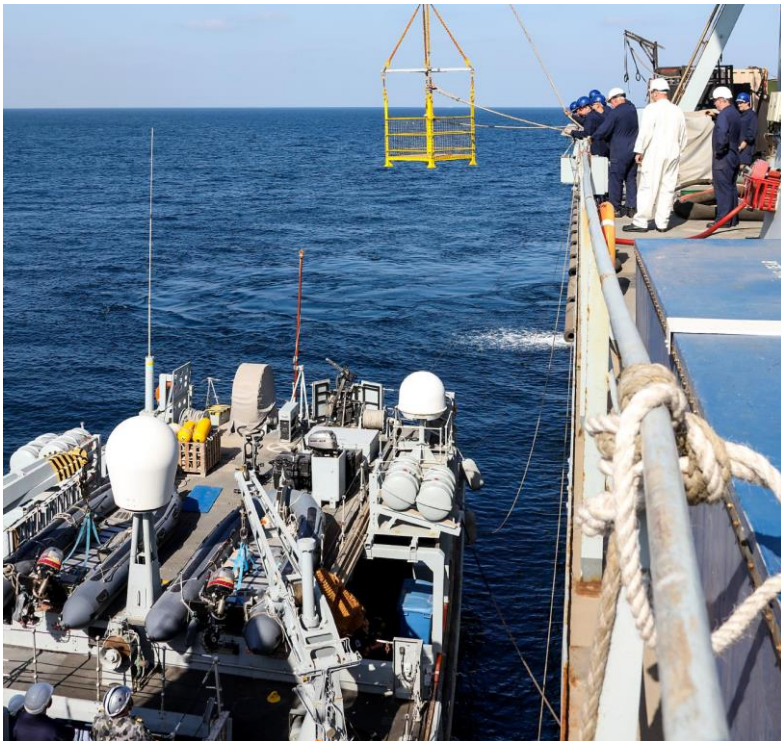
Mine Warfare is a Complicated Profession...

Lieutenant Matthew Trounson RN

Battle Watch Captain. Mine Warfare Battle Staff – Red Watch.

Commander United Kingdom Mine Counter Measures Force (COMUKMCMFOR) forms part of OPERATION KIPION, previously known as the Armilla Patrol in the 1980s and 1990s. This is the UK's long-standing commitment to maintaining peace and stability in the Gulf. One of the key reasons for this is ensuring the safe flow of trade, with 21% of global petroleum liquid consumption transiting through the Strait of Hormuz every day. The Strait is the most critical potential choke point in the world for transport of oil products.

COMUKMCMFOR, Commander Neil Griffiths RN, holds Tactical Command of the Afloat Forward Support Base (AFSB) RFA CARDIGAN BAY and four UK Mine Counter Measures Vessels (MCMVs), HMS BROCKLESBY, HMS BLYTH, HMS LEDBURY and HMS SHOREHAM, all of which are forward deployed to the region. The MCMV hulls are maintained in theatre for significant periods by the Fleet Support Unit, while the crews rotate with their UK counterparts.



Alongside re-supply of an allied MCMV by RFA Cardigan Bay

Commander Griffiths and his Mine Warfare Battle Staff, embarked in AFSB, ensure effective command, control and support to the MCMVs. All aspects are catered for from logistical and engineering expertise, intelligence and meteorological outputs to the MCMVs, to the Medical Officer providing cover for the entire force. CARDIGAN BAY herself holds and supplies essential fuel, stores and provisions which greatly extend the endurance of Mine Countermeasures (MCM) operations.

When on task the Battle Staff maintain 24hr operational coverage with its two current operations teams consisting of a Communications Rating, Ops Room Supervisor and Battle Watch Captain. They co-ordinate the MCM effort as directed by the Operations Officer and Operations Room Manager, both holding extensive Mine Warfare experience.



US Navy RHIB launches a towed side scan minehunting sonar

The wealth of capability within the Battle Staff is not limited to UK forces alone. In the recent annual EXERCISE KHUNJAR HADD (Sharp Dagger) COMUKMCMFOR acted as the Operational Authority for an international Mine Warfare Task Unit comprising UK, US and Omani forces. The central point of control provided by the Battle Staff allowed for effective co-ordination of assets across a multi-national range of communication systems. The US Mine Hunting Unit embarked on CARDIGAN BAY utilised remotely operated boats to detect contacts with their advanced sonar before interrogation and counter-mining by the two UK MCMVs.

Mine Warfare Battle Staff - Red Watch will remain in theatre for several more months, until relieved by White Watch, thus maintaining continuous support to the MCMVs and to UK overseas interests.

Grand Old Ladies of Durban Maritime Museum Return after Refit

From Tony Simmonds, Cape Town; Courtesy of Daily News of KwaZulu, Natal

Two grand old ladies of the Durban Maritime Museum Have recently taken up their rightful places at the popular tourist destination on the city's esplanade. The iconic ships have undergone much-needed refurbishment on the dry-docks of Durban based ship repair and building firm, Southern African Shipyards.

Since August 2019, the JR MORE, a 59-year-old tug and the SAS DURBAN, a wooden minesweeper from the same era, were receiving Tender Love and Care from ship repair staff under the watchful eye of Ship Repair Manager, Natasha Ramdhane and her skilled tradesmen. The vessels have been given thorough restoration and repairs. Zamakhize Mkhize, the Boat Supervisor at the Durban Maritime Museum said "It's important to know about your past. What has happened then affects how we approach the future, The ships provide an interesting experience for modern seafarers to see how seafarers lived in the past"

On the JR MORE, Southern African Shipyards refurbished the steelwork and repainted the vessel, while on the SAS DURBAN, the ship repair teams repaired damaged and rotten woodwork. Both vessels had extensive underwater repairs that were urgently required to stop the ingress of water in various places of their hulls.



*The oil-fired steam tug **J.R. More** was built by Ferguson Bros. Shipbuilders Ltd in Port Glasgow, in 1961 for the South African Railways & Harbours administration (SAR&H).*

Eight TON-class minesweepers were transferred from the RN, to the South African Navy, mainly from reserve, but SAS Durban and SAS Windhoek were built specifically for the SA Navy by Camper and Nicholson of Gosport.



Welfare Information

Robbie Reid-Sinclair, TCA Welfare Officer

Information has recently been received about a range of NHS services dedicated to those who have served in the Armed Forces. NHS staff will work closely with military charities and related organisations to support wider health and well-being of veterans.

These notes supplement our earlier advice of recommending to TCA members that that advise their doctor that we are Service Veterans [code 13JY] so that their practice can obtain more information about the priority access to which we are entitled for medical conditions related to military service.

Veterans Trauma Network provides care and treatment to those with a service related physical health condition. Available in specialist health centres across England, the VTN works closely with Defence Medical Services, Veterans Mental Health and Transitional Service and Veterans Mental Health Complex Treatment Service to provide a complete package of care.

Your GP can refer you by e-mailing england.veteranstraumanetwork@nhs.net

These services are available to serving and ex-forces personnel with mental health difficulties. They provide a range of treatments from recognising the early signs of mental health problems and providing access to prompt support, to therapeutic treatment for complex mental health difficulties and psychological trauma. Help may also be provided with housing, employment, drugs and alcohol misuse and social support

For further information, visit the NHS website www.nhs.uk and search for "Veteran".

If the Corona Lockdown is making you feel depressed or isolated, TCA members David Larkin and Mick Hilder are happy for you to give them a ring for a friendly chat.

David's phone numbers are 07341 839 124 & 01323 765 491.

David is an experienced counsellor with the Samaritans and Age Concern

Mick's phone numbers are 01305 568 604 & 07794 223 609.

He works with MV Freedom, bringing access to the sea for those living with disability.

The Most Unusual Job I had in the Navy

Tim Trazare

Part 2 - STAND-IN CHEF

Back in 1985, HMS GAVINTON was about to set off from Rosyth to the West Coast of Scotland, about the business that TONs were engaged upon in those far off days.

The Baby Chef, being an ahead-looking chap, put in a request for an extended long week-end when we returned so that he could run the London Marathon. He came up before the Captain who denied the request as written but, instead, arranged for the Chef to be sent on 10 day loan draft to HMS PRESIDENT (RNR London) with express instructions that he was to get to know the route, train accordingly, run the event and have a couple of days to recover. Being on loan draft, of course, he was given travel warrants and was accommodated and fed free of charge.

The outcome was that he ran a creditable time, was suitably looked after by the PRESIDENT staff and brought credit on the RN in general and 'Gavvie' in particular.

But there was a problem. We were a chef short for the upcoming deployment. No problem; the Skipper called in a favour and had a chef loaned to us for the duration from HMS COCHRANE. Now, when I say 'chef' I am being particularly kind. What arrived on the jetty, just as we were about to sail, was a Naval Cook (ordinary type) with a Pusser's grip, eighteen years-in and, it seemed, his own squadron of flies circling above his head. He was, in short, a disaster - So much for calling in favours. Everything he cooked tasted grey and the crew tended to avoid his more daring efforts, falling back on that Gavinton favourite - 'babies heads and snorkers- good-oh !

By the time we got to Stornoway in the Outer Hebrides, it was obvious that the mood of the ship's company was less than sympathetic. The Jimmy was summoned to the Captain's cabin where the following conversation took place.

"Number One; That cook we borrowed; I want him off the ship."

"But we are sailing in half an hour."

"You don't understand. I want him off my ship and I want him off now! Give him a warrant and some pocket money and get rid of him. He can make his own way back to Rosyth."

"Aye-aye, Sir."

And so the Cook was marooned on the island and the ship sailed away, leaving a forlorn figure with his grip and his flies and his warrant clutched in one greasy paw,

"D'ye hear there, Captain speaking. I have had to leave the cook we borrowed ashore just now (faint cheers heard throughout the ship) but it leaves us with a problem. We now have only the Leading Chef and we can't expect him to do all the cooking on his own. So, if anyone would like to take on the job of Baby Chef until we get back to Rosyth, come to the bridge."

Shortly after, a young Seaman (MW) from the East End of London (who styled himself - "Young 'Arry") appeared on the bridge as a volunteer.

"I don't mind having a go, if you like, Sir."

"Have you done any cooking before, Young 'Arry?"

"Well, not actually cooking - but I seen my Mum do it."

"D'ye hear there, Captain again. Young 'Arry has volunteered to stand in as Baby Chef - if that's alright with everyone." (More cheers from below.)

"Well, Young 'Arry, it looks like you've got the job; and good luck to ye!"

For the rest of the trip Young 'Arry did a splendid job with fry-ups and simple food and learned a great deal in the process. The support he received from the ship's company was tremendous.

We returned to Rosyth; the Baby Chef came back proudly wearing his Marathon medal; Young 'Arry returned to Muppeting; and the Borrowed Cook was never heard of again.

HMS Ashton - Fishery Protection 1974

Clive Dennison, Vice Chairman, Burstwick, Hull

In late 1973 I joined HMS Ashton on FPS based at Lochinvar, Port Edgar. It was a great time for me moving down to the 'small ships' navy after previously being in HMS Antrim, a GMD with 600 guys on it. I stayed on Ashton till November 1974 when sadly she was decommissioned in Rosyth, awaiting scrap.

On fishery patrols we spent our time patrolling round the coast, occasionally boarding a few fishing vessels, plus visiting lots of the small ports around the coast. Across the top of Scotland for NI Granada patrols with stop offs in Lerwick , Kirkwall , Campbeltown , Douglas and Peel. We had a lock-in with the locals in one of the Kirkwall pubs and got an invite back with some of the locals to continue drinking till the early hours of the morning; we sure did struggle the next day, the less said about Campbeltown the better !!

Another of my favourite runs was the Tyne area, with numerous visits and stops at the drinking dens on the Tyne. It was on one of these North Sea trips that we had a funnel fire off the Humber Estuary and, fortunately for some, had to put into Grimsby – I lived in nearby Hull and the Skipper let me get off home – a rickety train ride to the Humber Ferry (pre- Humber bridge days) and I arrived unannounced at the front door of my home in Hull much to my parents' surprise. On another trip we made it down to the Scilly Isles and returned via a brief visit to Pompey. As a young 18/19 year old MEM1, it was great times

We did have one Foreign jolly; a trip to Cuxhaven in Northern Germany at the mouth of the River Elbe, close to Hamburg. I think we stayed 5 or 6 days and had a great visit, with the locals making us all very welcome . We had a football match arranged to play one of the local German Navy teams. Needless to say our ship's team were not exactly super athletes and due the fact that we had all been out drinking for most of the previous few days, we were not exactly fighting fit. On the day of the match after pleasantries, we commenced the game. I remember we held our own well till half time 1-1 , but the second half saw us flag in fitness and we were convincingly beaten 8-1 !! Never mind we did our bit for Anglo-German relations.



Our German Navy Hosts



Teams Line up prior to Kick Off
Clive third on left

Only Having a Laugh



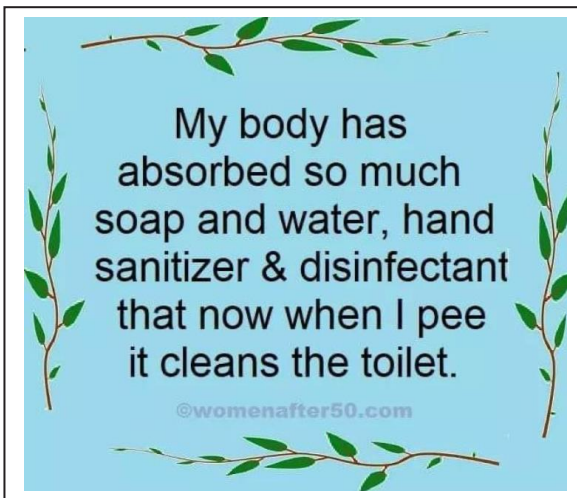
Wife is in the kitchen boiling the eggs for breakfast wearing only her nightie.

Husband wanders in half asleep. He wakes up when his wife says "I need you to make love to me right now ! " .

Not believing his luck, they get down to it and afterwards have breakfast. "What prompted this really lovely start to our day? " asks the husband.

Wife replies "The egg timer is broken " .

Mick Hilder, Weymouth



*Mel Whitehouse
Marshland Maritime Museum*

HMS GAVINTON - Captain's Log - January 1985

Commander Nigel (Bernie) Bruen, St Saud la Coussière, France

Monday

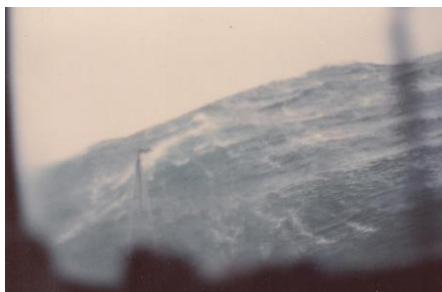
By 1030 the pressure was at 980mb, steepening and falling, with the wind increasing. Gales from the East forecast, so I lashed down my cabin.

Sailed from Rosyth at 1200 into a freshening breeze, which then became a Wind.

As we progressed both wind and seas increased from the East. However, we set off North towards the Pentland Firth and made good about 14 knots with no problems at all. She rode the seas well, save for a considerable amount of rolling and movement in the Ship. It very soon became apparent who had not prepared themselves for the weather - and there were many.

Tuesday

At about 0200 a large, rogue wave hit us and removed 10ft of the port garden-wall, from the mine recovery fairlead up to and including, the petrol stowage. It also buckled the port garden gate. Soon after, we had a steering gear failure and had to wait, 'dodging' the waves, while everyone prepared for a major foray to go aft. Then we hove-to in order to allow it. *See view from the bridge - Right*



We suffered all sorts of deck leaks, power failures and a switch-fire in my cabin. The main lights were on at 50% power when isolated ! We lost the fresh water pump, the port name-board, various other bits and pieces and the entire explosive-cutter locker. The provision room fridge came off its mountings and the port engine lube-oil pump failed. As we have no spare, we hove-to for the rest of the night, making two knots Easting to North-easting. The sea is about state 6-7, waves up to 25ft high. Wind Easterly 65kts, gusting off the scale (over 85kts [Force 12 – hurricane]). Not a lot of fun.

Next morning.

They are sending HMS LEEDS CASTLE to stand by us. Meanwhile, with a very large sea, the First Lieutenant, Bos'n, Buffer etc try to sort out the damage.

Eventually, around 1030, we got ourselves sorted out and started to make Southings, first at 4kts and then up to 11.5kts, once again with the sea on the beam. The weather started to abate, things got smoother and the glass started to rise.

Between 1600 to 2200 it rose from 960 to 980, by which time we were in the Forth and heading for home on one engine. It was too rough to fit a replacement part to the port engine, even if they had been able to get one to us – though they never tried. When I talked to them (Rosyth) last night (under polythene sheeting in the Radio Room), the water dripping through the deck made us loose power.

"We'll have to be quick as I keep losing power. Water is getting into the transmitter. We are on emergency now." It sounded like something from Tony Handcock's 'The Radio Ham'.

The weather moderated by the evening but was still blowing hard. The wind must have been spiking at around 100kts and the maximum recorded list was at 65 degrees. The First Lieutenant told me that the wardroom door-curtain was seen to swing up to touch the deckhead!! I can quite believe it; but they do say that these ships can roll to 92 degrees and still come back. Quite right too!

Wednesday

Alongside at 0120. Not easy with only one engine (Stbd) and swung out quite a way getting alongside BILDISTON in the NE corner. There was a tug on hand to push us back in but I did not need it.

After a couple of hot toddies, I crashed out (after 42hrs on the bridge) not to reawaken, despite shakes, until 0830.

Called on MCM3 at 0900. He was most friendly. Questions have been asked, of course, but there are no problems so far. Lots of people are aboard to see what's what. It does not seem as though we shall go back to the other side (of Scotland) now.

MCM3 came onboard for lunch.

The barometer stands at 995.

Various people visited my cabin throughout the evening, some not leaving until breakfast-time!

Thursday

Lost the whole day, until 1500. Just slept and slept. The Ship moved to the TCV and life went on - but I did sleep.

Friday

Cold move back onto BILDISTON today.

In the evening a selection of the ship's company gathered together and came up with this:

The Gavinton DED Song

(tune – Everley Bros *'Dream, dream, dream'*)

The Gavinton – has broken down.
The petrol's gone;
See the Jimmy frown,
But if we were to go to sea like this
We'd drow-ow-n. Weee'd all drown.

The sonar will not train.
The deck lets in the rain,
Any time, night or day.
Only trouble is – gee wiz –
The garden wall's fallen away.

The winch don't work,
The WEO's tried;
The lights are duff,
It's dark inside.
All we ever wanted
Was a BMP – and a Dee ee Dee.

The port engine won't go
Coz the lube oil will not flow,
Steering gear's shot away.
The generators fail;
Make sail!*

It wasn't like this in the Bay.

The wardroom heads
Try to explode.
The switchboard's wet,
Can't take the load.
All we ever wanted
Was a BMP – and a Dee ee Dee.

The Brinton's in the Clyde
Being pushed round by the tide,
Coz only one engine works.
She's gonna have to
Make do
While we snaffle all of her perks.

The dockyard has
Given us this gift;
They're putting us on
The synchrolift;
And now we find that
We have got – a Dee ee Dee – Early!
An early DED.

(* memories of Gavvie in the Gulf of Suez)

Postscript

By way of punishing me for '*...hazarding my Ship*' (despite being under orders to '*...get to Faslane just as soon as I could*'), CMCM sent me off to 'the Hole' at CinC Plymouth's to watch-keep for a month while the Ship was being mended.

Unfortunately, my not being there with the experience and the deep knowledge of Dockyard ways that I had, the result was that the Ship **went in** with five major defects and **came out** with 30 ordinary ones.

One would have thought that CMCM might have congratulated me for bringing my ship back, more or less in one piece, when the outcome could so easily have been so tragically different. But he did not.

Was this the same CMCM who, from his warm and cozy office, banned the warm and practical Coastal Forces Rig from being worn by his Coastal Forces' (MCMVs) quartermasters while in harbour - stipulating Square-rig in its place? "Oh, thanks a bunch - - Sir!"

Membership Update

NEW MEMBER – Welcome Aboard

Keith Wright. Senior Aircraftsman, RAF. Flat 4, 4 Tennyson Road
WORTHING, West Sussex BN11 4BY. Tel:- 07776-301153.

Served on HMS HALSHAM 1969-72 F2469

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Robert Maddison To: 2 Wrelands Ashreigney, Chulmleigh Devon EX18
7NB. F1087

CHANGED E-MAIL ADDRESS

George Lea To: georgelea791@icloud.com F0509

LOST CONTACT

Last known address given.

Anyone knowing current address please advise Membership Secretary

John Baber 130 Lumsden Road, SOUTHSEA F2109

RESIGNED – May fair winds attend you

Brian King. 2 Princes Cottage Anders Ash Road LISS Hampshire GU33 7LX.
F2062

Robert Dean. 37 Larcombe Road, PETERSFIELD, Hampshire GU32 3LS.
F0263

Keith Matthews. 38 Westway, Nailsea, BRISTO, Avon BS48 2NB. F0474



Crossed the Bar

Dorothy Preston

*Wife of the late John Preston
Atherton, Greater Manchester*

LME Lawrence Beedle. RN

*10 Aveling Close, Maden Bowe, CRAWLEY,
RH10 7UR.*

*Served on HM Ships DARTINGTON 1963-65, YAXHAM 1965-66
F2349*

Ronald Kirby

*15 Windsor Court, Church Street, KINGSBRIDGE, Devon TQ7 1RZ.
A1805*

May They Rest In Peace

SLOPS

Items held in Stock		Special Order items	
Please ring Stores before placing order to confirm items are in stock		State size, colour and logo required Logo 1 = Mine and Keys, Logo 2 = Mine and TON silhouette Allow 6-8 weeks for delivery	
	Price		Price
TCA Baseball Cap Logo 1 or 2	£ 11.20		
TCA Beret Badge	£ 7.50	TCA" V" Neck Sweater, Navy or Maroon	£ 32.45
TCA Embroidered Blazer Badge	£ 9.77	TCA Round Neck Sweatshirt	£ 29.16
TCA Lapel Badge	£ 6.05	TCA Polar Fleece Jacket	£ 38.30
TCA Mouse Mat	£ 4.00	Blazer Badge + ships name	£ 34.20
Car sticker – Logo 1 Clings to inside of windscreen	£ 1.25	TCA Polo Shirt in Navy with ships name	£ 18.44
TCA Tie, Blue	£ 9.90	Iron Man Tee Shirt, Navy	£ 15.37
TCA Tie, Maroon	£ 11.60	Iron Man Polo Shirt , Navy	£ 18.44
TON Profile badge - Silver or Gold	£ 8.50		
Blazer Badge (Gold Wire)	£ 16.00		
TON Talk Binder	£ 7.73	TCA Pen	£ 3.00
TON First Day Cover	£ 2.50		
TCA 10th Anniversary Print	£ 5.50	M/S Sailors Painting	
TCA 25th Anniversary Badge	£ 6.00	- Notepad	£ 3.75
RN Beret, Blue. Various sizes	£ 8.00	- Notepad & Pen	£ 5.00
Blackfoot Tie	£ 13.00	- A3 Giclée Print	£30.00
TCA Polo Shirt, Navy logo 1	£ 18.44	- A4 Giclée Print	£ 25.00
TCA Mug	£ 9.91		
Beanie/Ski woollen hat Navy with TCA badge	£ 8.72		
TCA Wall Shield 8 inches	£ 37.00		
BOOKS			
Life in the TONs	£ 11.50		
Jacks of All Trades	£ 11.50		
Last of the Wooden Walls Hardback and e-book via www.halsgrove.com	£ 24.99		
		Coronavirus Virus	
		Slops cannot take orders from the Special Order column (listed above) due to suppliers being in Lockdown.	
		Items listed as "Held In Stock" column (on the left) are still for sale, providing we do not run out of any item. If we do, then regrettably they also will not be available, due to Lockdown.	

All prices include P&P (within UK only)

Please make cheques payable to

TON Class Association

Laurie Johnson, 4 Downham Close, Cowplain, Hants

PO8 8UD Phone: 023 923 65729

NOTE NEW E-MAIL: Lawrencej1055@gmail.com

Post Bag

**FROM: Hans Andresen
TO: Peter Harrison**

May I thank you and TCA members who kindly sent me messages of sympathy on the occasion of the death of my wife Monika.

I was pleased to hear about the one minute silence observed at the recent Committee Meeting for her and other TCA members who had Crossed the Bar.

FROM: Poopalu Nagiah, Port Dickson, Negri Sembilan, Malaysia

My kind message to all my TCA friends is to stay home and stay safe. It is the same for us out here The whole world has changed in the past few weeks. What a testing moment for every one of us. Hope this will end soon with us going about our business as usual.

FROM: Keith Rossiter, Bermuda

Trust all is well with you. We are being severely restricted here but it is for the good of all. Seems strange with no busses, ferries, ships or visitors. Stay safe in these anxious times.

**FROM: Commander David Bruhn USN
Rtd Chico, California**

Fortunately, we former sailors are used to being confined to relatively small spaces for relatively long periods.

Best wishes, and stay safe.

**From: Lt Cdr David Ince RANR,
Cairns, Queensland, Oz**

Lovely weather here. Unfortunately we can't get out in it for very long due to the Kung Flu madness. Still, I managed to mow the lawn this arvo and got some sneaky bronzing in 😊

It is ironic that those of us who were brought up during WW2 and remember rationing of food, fuel and clothing, which lasted, with progressive easing, until 1953, are coping in the present crisis by reverting to behaviour learned at that time.

It is possible that adjustment may be more difficult for our grandchildren's generation who have only ever known times of relative plenty ... **Editor**

**FROM: Assistant Professor Athol
Yates, Khalifa University, Abu Dhabi**

I am writing a book on the history of British forces in the Gulf up to 1971, and included in it is a short history of the 9th Minecountermeasures Squadron in Bahrain.

Given your organisation's deep knowledge about it, please can you check the enclosed draft ?

We have sent to Professor Yates the text and photos from the Gulf chapter in "Last of the Wooden Walls" and also the two articles by Cdr Ed Featherstone on the Secret War in Oman printed in TON Talk editions 199 and 200, plus some photos of TONs in the Gulf from our Archives.

If you served in 9MCMS and have any dits or photos that we have not yet published, please send them to me and I will pass them on to Professor Yates

... **Editor**

FROM: Lt Cdr Dan Nicholson, Poole

On P33 of April's TON Talk magazine there is made mention of USS *Washtenaw County* carrying out a final check sweep of Haiphong Harbour in June of 1973.

At that time my wife and I were preparing to depart UK for exchange duty with the USN's Mineforce in Charleston, South Carolina. I was assigned to the Mobile Mine Countermeasures Units who were returning from sweeping Haiphong Harbour using RH53D Helicopters as a component of 'Operation End Sweep'.

Since 9 May 1972, Haiphong Harbour had been closed to all traffic by Operation 'Pocket Money' the purpose of this aerial mining campaign was to halt or slow the transportation of supplies and materials for the Nguyen Hue Offensive (known in the West as the Easter Offensive), an invasion of the Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam), by forces of the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN), that had been launched on 30 March. 'Pocket Money' was the first use of naval mines against North Vietnam.

Among the returning mine-warfare crews was Lt Cdr Gene Cate (excuse the spelling) who had been the CO of the above-mentioned USS *Washtenaw County* (MSS1). He told me that the main purpose of this check sweep was to pass a realistic target through the main channel thus simulating other, similar local craft that would need to enter the harbour and to satisfy the locals that the final helicopter minesweeping efforts were successful in clearing the harbour and thus preventing any more mine

explosions. This 'guinea pig sweep' was the final proof to the Vietnamese that there were no more 'poised' mines.

The vessel was fully manned and thus put herself and her crew at enormously high risk. The modifications prior to the event had included padded deck-heads, collapsible shock-pallets on which the crew stood and highly-sprung seats to absorb the shock of an underwater explosion in the vessel's vicinity. Although there was some doubt about the efficacy of these mods the CO and his crew successfully completed the check sweep, most probably using a combination of acoustic devices as well as the vessel's own magnetic, acoustic and pressure influences.

I don't know for sure whether Lt Cdr Cate and his crew were given a gallantry award....if not, they should have been!

My wife and I have very fond memories of our time in Charleston – sadly now closed down. We lived on the base in Naval housing for the whole of our 2½ year tour and our first child was born there and retains her dual citizenship.

FROM: Ian Campbell, Staines

Beaten to it! I'd been toying with the idea of an article about Vic 32 as my wife, Carole, and I have been going every year for the last five years. She (Vic 32) is still going strong (not at the moment, obviously) and it's a well worth while trip. Food's still as good, runs ashore include trips to ruined chapels on uninhabited islands, distillery, seal watching, mushroom collecting and dowsing (!). They treat Corryvreckan with respect, but go through the Dorus Mor nearby which is interesting. Before Vic 32, the last time I was in these waters was on XSV Explorer, skipper Ted Seath of this parish, who I seem to remember has his own Corryvreckan dit.

Biography our new Treasurer David Woolgar

I am a professional engineer working as a consultant in renewable energy and gas safety through my own small company.

I was given a travel bursary at school which allowed me to participate in the Tall Ships race on the schooner Malcolm Miller which cemented my interest in things maritime. I went on to study engineering at Southampton University and HMS ISIS, a Ley class inshore minehunter, operating from Solent Division we also had sea time on their TON HMS WARSASH.



After university I worked as an engineer on marine projects in the UK, development projects in Africa and naval facilities in Oman. I returned to the UK after several years and worked for Vosper Thornycroft in Portsmouth on naval facilities in several countries including developing mine warfare capabilities in Saudi Arabia based on the Sandown class. During this time, I joined Wessex as an NCS officer and did my sea time and sweeping experience on HMS ITCHEN a river class sweeper.

I had a change of direction and joined an environmental process engineering company in Shropshire and moved my family here. I worked in biological treatment of waste and production of biogas. I worked for period in the gas and energy industry and returned to biological processes developing biological plant to convert organic waste to biogas and biomethane for renewable energy and recovered fertiliser to replace inorganic fertilisers.

My interest in bacteria and yeasts extends to my leisure interests so I make yogurt and cheese, brew beer and bake bread.

David will take over from Stuart Johnson as TCA Treasurer on 1st September.



When Self Distancing isn't an option ...

Courtesy: Chivs, Stowmarket RNA