

TON Talk

Newsletter of the TON Class Association

Edition 206



October 2020



Bronington M1115
TON Class



Coniston M1101
TON Class



Welcome to the TCA Website. Our aim is to provide information about those little wooden ships that were Britain's main line of defence against the sea mine throughout 1950's - 90's.

Here you will find details of the design of the ships and a brief history of each of the 118 of them, together with other facts.

You are eligible to join the TON Class Association if you served in a TON MCMV, no matter how briefly.

Associate Membership is open to others with MCM experience and interests.

You will enjoy the comradeship of fellow TONs sailors and receive information on current developments in Mine

Our Patron

HRH The Prince of Wales



TCA Publications



TON History



Slops

Clothing and Souvenirs



Join Us!

Become a Member of
TON Class Association



TON Talk

View latest edition



Top of Home Page on our new Website

TON Class Association

Patron HRH The Prince of Wales

Contents



p 9



P 16



P 18



P 24

Editorial	1
Chairman's Corner	2
Coming Events & Who's Who .	3
BRONINGTON 1976	4
Life at the Sharp End	7
Pancho's Oddest Job	8
New Vice Chairman.....	9
TCA Website Re-Launched	10
Jobs for the Boys	12
USN-USAF Cooperation	14
RN in Transition.....	16
Steel Vendor Rescue	18
MCMV News	22
Having a Laugh	23
RAN's First VC	24
Battle of Burnt Island	25
Uniformed Kindness	26
Membership Update	28
Slops	30
Post Bag	31

TCA Membership

£15 per annum

£150 Life Membership

Front Cover:

Top of the Home Page of the new website

www.tcaminesweepers.co.uk

Founder: Jack Worth MBE

Editorial

Editor's Old E-mail - Please note and adjust your records and laptop.
Editor's old e-mail address with TalkTalk is no longer being monitored.
Please contact him via peter.avoca@gmail.com

It's a whole new Navy..... Captain MW, FP & D is no more. He is now Captain Patrol, Underwater Exploitation & Diving. Likewise the Fishery Protection Squadron is now subsumed into the Overseas Patrol Squadron and First Patrol Boat Squadron is now the Coastal Forces Squadron. Surface and Submarine Flotillas have replaced Portsmouth, Devonport and Faslane Flotillas. Stand fast the Royal Marines, all Heads of Fighting Arms are downgraded to 1* as part of the cull of Flag Officers.

VMT to Nobby Hall, TCA's Man on the Inside. See also pages 16/17 RN in Transition

Virtual AGM – It is not too late to register your interest in taking part in the Zoom Conference commencing at 10.00 on Saturday 10th October. Just e-mail HonSec (see above) for instructions. It is not complicated and you do not have to download any software to your PC, laptop, tablet or i-phone

Membership Details In order to more fully comply with GDPR, contact details of members joining and leaving TCA will no longer be published, If you wish to contact a former shipmate you can request this information from the Membership Secretary who will obtain permission from the member concerned. *See Membership Update.*

White Rose Branch has managed to hold a socially-distanced meeting and is planning for a Social Weekend at a northern venue in 2021. Suggestions for suitable hotels for a gathering of 30-50 people (assuming the Covid Rules allow for that by then) would be welcomed. Ideas to Buster [a-brown@sky.com] please.

TCA Standard at Funerals – With limits on numbers attending, this is not currently possible but it would be prudent if members would let their next of kin know that they would like to have the standard paraded. One more thing for the check list and could save some hasty last-minute phone calls

Hams, Leys and Fords We lack details of many of these craft for the new website. Can you fill in the gaps about where and when they served ? Please contact Editor.

Our new website www.tcaminesweepers.co.uk appears to have been well received. The number of Visitor clicks is building satisfactorily and the Contact Us facility is already being used for queries about Old Ships.



Deadline for December's Edition is 21st November

pjd

Chairman's Corner

My first duty is to formally welcome two new members to the Committee. First is Neil Hall (known as Nobby) as the new Vice-Chairman. Nobby joined the Navy as a JS (MW) and is still serving as a Commander. He is the first serving member to be appointed to the Committee. The second is David Woolgar who is taking over as Treasurer from Stuart Johnson. David served In the RNR and now has his own business. I know both will be an asset to the TCA. I am most grateful to Nobby and David for volunteering.

The new website - www.tcaminesweepers.co.uk – is now live and I do recommend you do have a good look at it . The website is the quickest way of updating members with news and our window to the world. Peter Down has been the lead for this major project. He has worked hard with a company specialising in websites to produce a website which I can only say is probably the best website in the world ! - with apologies to a well-known lager.

The Final Draft of the revised Constitution is now ready to be approved by the virtual AGM next month. The revised Rules are also in final draft form apart from the appendices. These should be completed with the next 4 weeks or so.

We cannot avoid hearing about Covid 19 and the situation as I write in mid-September shows no sign of improving. With winter approaching I do urge members to have the Flu vaccine. Regrettably there is no vaccine for Covid 19, yet. Hopefully one will be available next year. In the meantime, please Stay Safe.

It is highly likely that the Spring Committee meeting will also have to be a virtual meeting. At this year's Spring Committee meeting there were only 11 attendees, whereas we usually have 20 -30 members attending.

Being positive, I am looking forward to the Annual Reunion next year at the Carlton Hotel part of the TLH Leisure Centre in Torquay. The booking for the hotel is confirmed and a booking form for the event will be available when we know what the Covid rules may be for next October.

I am already looking at venues for the 2022 Reunion. We have tried to alternate between North and South but have had problems with the two hotels we have recently used in the north. I am in the early stages of talking to a hotel that may be suitable for a Northern Reunion in 2022.

Best wishes,

Peter Harrison

TCA Who's Who

President

Rear Admiral R John Lippiett CB. CBE. DL

Chairman

Also Reunion Secretary

Peter Harrison,

151 Discovery Road

Plymouth

PL1 4PR

Tel: 01752 656 228

E-mail:

peterharrison@eclipse.co.uk

Vice Chairman

Cdr N.J. Hall RN

Contact via HonSec

Chaplain

Rev. Trevor Filtness

24 Orchard Road

Brixton

Plymouth

PL8 2FE

Tel: 01752 881 967

Mobile: 07785 568 056

E-mail: trevor@filtness.org

Hon Treasurer

David Woolgar

The Priory

Church Street

Church Stretton

Shropshire

SY6 6DQ

Tel: 07410 988 470

E-mail:

djwoolgar@gmail.com

Welfare Officer

Robbie Reid-Sinclair

68 Brookside

Carlisle

Cumbria

CA2 7JR

Tel: 01228 542114

Mobile: 07791-908242

E-mail:

crofton1216@gmail.com

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

Mobile: 07919 897275

E-mail: dcook1727@gmail.com

COMING EVENTS

October	<p>Annual Reunion Toorak Hotel, Torquay</p> <p>Regretfully cancelled due to Covid distancing Refunds of deposits etc have been made .</p> <p>AGM will be a Virtual Conference using ZOOM 10.00 Sat 10 Oct</p> <p>– Contact HonSec for instructions if you wish to participate</p>
----------------	--

"ROYAL" BRONINGTON

Rear Admiral Roy Clare CBE DL

HRH Lieutenant Prince of Wales commanded HMS BRONINGTON 9 February – 15 December 1976. Based in Rosyth, the ship had an operational programme typical of those undertaken by other MCMVs in the First MCM Squadron at that time.

In a Foreword to the Bronington Souvenir brochure (ISBN 13: 9780951896617) , Prince Charles wrote of the 'enormous privilege of commanding HMS BRONINGTON':

"In 1976 I was blessed with a typically robust and competent Ship's Company. I could not have asked for a better team. We had an active programme which included mine hunting and minesweeping exercises all-round the coast of the British Isles and north west Europe."

Participation in various exercises kept the ship at a high level of readiness. The 'cold war' provided the backdrop for national and NATO exercises and other events familiar in the Fleet at the time. BRONINGTON played her part in the usual way, attracting no special attention. An exception was a front-page report in a newspaper about the ship's expertise in dealing efficiently with dummy mines in Exercise Teamwork 76; the truth is that the ship was merely doing what every minehunter did during their NATO training!

During multiple operations in the Firth of Clyde, the ship used her mine hunting sonar to survey the seabed in the channel from deep water to the Faslane submarine base. Codenamed Operation Pike, these assignments were strategically important as they contributed fresh data that was used by the Fleet Headquarters to manage the deployment of nuclear submarines. During one such period, the ship was visited by HRH The Duke of Edinburgh; and on another by the CinC Fleet, Admiral Sir John Treacher, who stayed for lunch at sea.

On that occasion, Prince Charles invited the galley to prepare a salmon that had been presented to him by a member of the public during a prior visit to Workington. "Is it poached?" enquired the Captain with a twinkle when the donor handed it over surreptitiously in a carrier bag. The fish, cooked to perfection, was presented on a bed of rice, unexpectedly dyed bright ocean blue. The Admiral did a double take, but the Captain noted cheerfully that the colour scheme was just one of the things that happen in the TON Class.

In an era long before social media, BRONINGTON proceeded on her planned programme in 1976 with little or no special attention. That was a refreshing feature for the Captain, who was able to exercise command in as normal a manner as possible; a visit to a small port by a small warship usually attracted only local comment. The Captain's personal security team did not come to sea with the ship, but they would be on the jetty to greet each return. Uniquely, they had collected the mail, bread and milk and delivered it to the ship even as the ropes were snaking across to the bollards.

BRONINGTON was spared being the 'canteen boat' by an even more junior Lieutenant in command of BILDESTON in the same squadron. The two vessels spent little time in company, but BRONINGTON was able to be 'senior ship' during a joint visit to Barry. Earlier, the two ships had proceeded in company from Rosyth, around the top of Scotland, when it was professionally pleasing for the Captain to be able to order his junior ship to 'fall in astern' for the transit of the Pentland Firth.

On passage to St Peter Port, BRONINGTON was diverted to carry out surveillance of a Soviet Whisky Class submarine, on the surface in the English Channel. The Captain chuckled when the signalman hoisted his Royal Standard during this operation. Historians may one day discover whether on that occasion the Russian commander observed the flag and worked out the identity of the commanding officer of his Royal Navy shadow. The visit to Guernsey later provided the Captain with a unique opportunity to try his hand at the still-new sport of windsurfing. The island's Governor was able to suggest a remote bay where the inevitable spills could take place out of public view.

Tasked to patrol the Dover Straits, BRONINGTON was for a time responsible for helping to enforce the world's first Traffic Separation Scheme, introduced less than ten years earlier. This involved radio communications with authorities ashore and – guided by their instructions – closing to warn vessels contravening the scheme. Given BRONINGTON's maximum speed of only 15 knots, the relative velocities required careful calculation if contact was to be made with often much faster vessels.

Calling in to Portland, the ship embarked Earl Mountbatten of Burma for a day at sea. The occasion had a special quality. Spanning generations of naval know-how, the mutual respect was evident as the former First Sea Lord eyed his family protégé. The Captain had long benefited from coaching at Broadlands about the ways that naval ships should be run. Everything gleamed that day. Proudly flying the Union Flag of the Admiral of the Fleet, the ship was piped and saluted by every other vessel in harbour. Lord Mountbatten and the Captain seemed thoroughly to enjoy it all.

One of the mine hunting exercises during the year took place off Anglesey. The seabed was rocky and uneven, a difficult bottom for the sonar. A type of detailed search was employed, which involved anchoring at intervals of a few hundred metres as the ship progressed along the planned track. After many searches, anchoring repeatedly during several hours' successful work, the anchor became snagged. Nothing would shift it. It was caught fast on the cable linking Wales and Eire. Explaining the necessity to abandon an anchor and a length of phosphor-bronze cable, the Captain said his abiding image as the windlass heaved was of telephone boxes in Ireland drawing closer and closer together.

The Act of Remembrance at the Cenotaph in Whitehall is a special national occasion in any year, but in 1976 it was particularly memorable. A few days earlier, the passage up The Thames was uneventful and Tower Bridge opened for BRONINGTON to pass into the Pool of London and berth alongside Tower Pier. For once, the world's media were there to photograph the spectacle. The Captain joked about his nervously knocking knees, but the manoeuvre was flawless. After the commemoration, the Captain welcomed The Queen and ten members of the Royal Family, who came onboard to meet the ship's company and view the ship. In the tiny wardroom, they all sat together to sample a classic Ton Class experience.

Soon afterwards, operations resumed and BRONINGTON sailed in company with four other MCMVs to participate in a programme of training in the NATO school of mine countermeasures in Ostend. The Captain particularly enjoyed the camaraderie of the final visit of his period in command. He mixed easily with those from the other ships, played a full part in the training and relished the relative anonymity he could enjoy in the naval environment. Out of the public eye, he took the opportunity to step ashore for an evening stroll through the streets of the historic Belgian seaport.

Then it was back to base in Rosyth for the handover of command. Including his period of training, Prince Charles had spent over a year in the world of TONS – with happy memories. In his own words:

"Often unsung, certainly uncomfortable, sometimes in danger, the ships went about their duties with a characteristically breezy informality. They had a well-deserved reputation for rolling on wet grass, but despite this feature and the privations of life in the cramped conditions onboard – or perhaps because of these adversities – the ships were popular with their people. The time passed very quickly and our many adventures continue to spice the occasional story after dinner."

Life at the Sharp End in the Gulf 1969

Commodore Laurie Hopkins, Emsworth

*Originally contributed for Prof Yates' book about Brit Forces in the Gulf ... **Editor***

I served as the Navigating Officer of HMS WISTON, the leader of 9th Mine Countermeasures Squadron (7 ships), based in HMS JUFAIR. Our CO was Cdr John Gunning, an absolute star from whom I learned everything.

Other ships in the squadron included BRINTON, BEACHAMPTON, GAVINTON, YARNTON, PUNCHESTON.

We patrolled the Gulf, including operations in support of Oman – fighting off the communist “Adu” incursions from Yemen. Here I saw my first live action, giving Naval Gunfire Support to the Sultan's two armed Dhows with our 40/60 Bofors !

Got into a few scrapes, including being arrested by Iranian police in Bandar Abbas with three other Navigators. Temperatures often 40 deg or more with no AirCon . Many slept on the upper deck.

John Gunning made me Squadron Social Secretary, so I had to organise an annual Summer Ball (first and last actually). He told me to put an advert into the Telegraph:

“The officers of the 9th MCMS once again find themselves at odds with the world's imbalance of population. They will be holding their Annual Summer Ball in Bahrain on [*date*]. Any young lady who can find herself in Bahrain on that date would be a most welcome guest”.

Eight girls turned up – air hostesses - and I was a hero. But by signal, CinC Fleet told John Gunning to reprimand the officer responsible for the advert ! John just told me to consider myself reprimanded ...

We gave the annual cocktail party for HMS JUFAIR in 1969. The theme had to be “flower power”. So John Gunning had five ships moored in the shape of a flower, bows (petals) together, with one moored to the “walk ashore” at her stern. Gangways between forecastles allowed guests to visit each ship, and we were all bedecked in flowers flown in from Cyprus. A sixth ship was anchored off with a band playing on the forecastle as entertainment

... Such style !

My Oddest Job in the RN

Pancho Brett, Doncaster

In 1959 I was in R.N.B. Chatham standing by the Vidal which was in refit preparing for a lovely commission to the West Indies. One day I was duty watch and fell in at the Main Gate for evening quarters expecting a tedious task when I and a two badger named Gilchrist were detailed off to double back to the mess and return in full blues with boots. Lucky for me having recently left Ganges I still had mine but the old two badger had to borrow a pair. At the Gatehouse we were ordered into the Regulating Office and issued with belt and gaiters thence into a Pussers Tilly and driven to the railway station. We were accompanied by a Jossman who had done the regulating course with Pol Pot. Inquiring where we were bound was greeted by ' *You'll find out soon enough, lad* '

When we got to Waterloo we reported to the Provost Marshall's Office and shuffled into a room and told to wait. Some time passed before the Joss returned then we set off for the platform to Southampton. The Joss had obviously been to the Station bar for he was in a more amiable mood and gave us some cash to go to the buffet car for some scran and a beer. By now it was dark and still we wondered what was the purpose of our mission. So plucking up the courage I asked again where we going. He said to collect a deserter and take him back to Chatham for punishment, he being a Chatham rating.

At Southampton two plain clothes officers took us to the docks where the Queen Mary was being nudged alongside by the tugs. What a magnificent sight she was, lit up like Christmas tree, a proper liner, not one of these sea going blocks of flats you see today. The gangways were placed into position, we waited at the bottom of one while the officers went onboard to collect the offender. The sight that beheld our eye's was something I will never forget. He came down the gangway like a movie star wearing a cowboy hat, fine clothes and proper cowboy boots. The porters trailed behind carrying his luggage. The Joss was jumping up and down in rage, ' *Look at this* ' he hissed ' *a deserter from the Royal Navy being treated like royalty ...* ' He took out his handcuffs and manacled him to me, the police dropped us back at the station for our return journey.

On the way back up to the smoke the Joss and Gilchrist went to the bar he said to get some sandwiches but I guessed they was going for a wet. I was able to converse with my prisoner. I cannot recall his name but he had jumped ship in New York in 1955 and after a spell there he met a girl and they travelled down to Austin, Texas. He had a great time until one day he was involved in a minor car accident in which the police were involved. Requiring his driving licence etc he decided to come clean. He was flown up to New York and a good berth on the Queen Mary brought him back to Blighty. He had no regrets, had had a wonderful time and hoped to return to Texas one day. I asked him what he might get, he didn't know or care. He was aged 25 and had his life before him. If he wanted to go to the heads I had to go with him my arm jammed around the door.

A few years later I fell over him in a bar or canteen somewhere. He said he was lashed up by the Commadore to 42 days who took into consideration that he had given himself up. Then he got a draft chit to the Aisne which was Chatham's skate ship. Never did get his name. What an experience for an O.D

Welcome to TCA's new Vice Chairman

We are pleased to welcome Commander Neil J. Hall Royal Navy as TCA's new Vice Chairman. He is the first serving Naval Officer to be appointed to the TCA Committee and will bring to TCA a valuable insight into current RN thinking and practices.

In a career that has spanned over forty five years, "Nobby" has seen service in several significant theatres of conflict, including the Falkland Islands War, twice in Northern Ireland during "The Troubles", the Persian Gulf Tanker War, the first Gulf War, the Balkans, and the relief of Sierra Leone. As a result, and unusually for a Naval Officer, he was awarded the Continuous Campaign Service Medal for over 1000 days in the combat zone.



He has served in every type of HM Ship from Patrol Boat to Aircraft Carrier, (18 in total), qualified as a Principal Warfare Officer & Information Operations Specialist and twice held Sea Command. He started his career in 1975 as a JS (MW), re-catted as an AB to (RP) in 1978 and rose to A/LS (RP) before being Commissioned via the Upper Yardman Scheme in 1980. He then followed the standard Seaman Officers career path of junior watch keeper, MM/PP 1st Lt & CO, Frigate Navigating Officer and PWO(A). He then served as NBCDO in a CVS, 1st Lt in the LPH and his final Sea Appointment was CO of the Cyprus Patrol Boat Squadron. He subsequently specialised in Maritime Law, Counter Terrorism, Intel' and Info' and has since held a series of Posts in those fields. Currently he is the XO in the NATO CIS Group in Belgium.

A long standing member of the TCA, Nobby served in the MCMVs FITTLETON, ALFRISTON, KELLINGTON, WASPERTON & BLACKWATER. He is married to Helen, (a former Chief WREN), and his interests include, membership of several Veterans associations, being a Charity Champion for the RNRMC, rugby union, naval & military history, offshore sailing and collecting nautical memorabilia.

Launch of the Re-engineered TCA Website

Peter Down, Hon Sec & Editor

I am pleased to announce that the rebuild of the TCA website has been successfully completed on time and within budget. It is now ready for use by visiting www.tcaminesweepers.co.uk

Thanks are due to the creative technical staff of Spi-Des-Ign, our partners in this project; Kelly, Richard, Sharon and Paul. VMT + BZ to the dozen or so Committee and other members who participated in the User Acceptance Testing of the Preview of the website by trialling the navigation and proofreading their areas of interests. All were kind enough to say that they found the navigation easy and straightforward – which compliment to their skill, I have passed on to the design team.

Please visit the revised website, not only to build up the number of “visitor clicks”, but also to feedback to the Editor any issues that may arise.



Much will be familiar from the old website. We have purposely built on the principles established by former webmasters, Rik Furnival and Bob Dean, in order to maintain continuity. Thus the appearance, layout and colour scheme should feel familiar. We have removed some obsolescent information but much of the content, such as histories of the class and of each ship, have been retained. A few new sections have been added as interesting and relevant new material has come to light.

The biggest change is that the Forum, and the need to Register in order to post comments, have been removed. This feature had not been used properly and was acting as a magnet for spammers and hackers – potentially this may have been the gateway through which the virus attacks arrived on the old website.

We have removed the malware from both the old TCA website [www.tca2000.co.uk] and the Marshland Maritime Museum website, so these can now be visited with no risk to your computer or warnings from your anti-virus software. The old website will soon be shut down but meanwhile anyone clicking on the old website will be directed to the new one.

Improved security features have been built into the design. Prudently, most of these will not be visible on screen but will act in the background. You can still leave comments for the Editor via the “Contact Us” feature, which sends an e-mail to the Editor, who will relay your comments to others, where appropriate.

The purpose of the website is now quite simply to provide easy access to information about ships of the TON Class, and related Inshore and Support vessels and Establishments, to TCA members, the public and those interested in research about warships. It is open to all-comers, *except hackers and spammers*, on a public access basis. I hope that the content will continue to expand, perhaps with more international links.

As Editor of both media, I anticipate closer collaboration between the website and our magazine *TON Talk*. The website is a speedy vehicle to report news of immediate interest, whether that be about members or events on the national or international stage, whereas the magazine will concentrate on memoirs (dits) from TCA members and historical features that are not dependant on a limited time frame.

We have an exciting vision for possible future enhancements to the website. These ideas would each need to be examined in detail, costed and discussed by the Committee before being taken further, but include:

- Links to enable the monographs that we have produced about Suez, Confrontation, Op Harling and the Falklands to be read on-line. *11MCMS in the Falklands has been put up as an example.*
- Facility to make payments by debit/credit card for Membership Subscriptions, Reunion Bookings and Slops. Holders of those accounts would have to accept a little extra admin to make this work, so it is not a change to be rushed.
- Link to the electronic version of TON Talk, which is already sent to over 100 members. At a stroke this could save TCA our considerable bill for postage – over £4000 p.a. (more than the cost of redeveloping the website). Provision would have to be made for those members not connected to the internet to continue to receive a paper copy, so more costing and debate required before making such a major commitment. *Recent editions have been put up as examples.*

There is scope for us to appoint an Assistant Editor to undertake research to discover and develop more material, rather as the early members of the Historical Group did. Volunteers please contact Editor Peter Down for an informal discussion on ways and means.

Please visit the re-engineered website. It is a facility designed for ALL members and I invite your suggestions for further improvements. Our Maintenance Agreement enables us to make regular amendments and enhancements – subject to Editorial discretion.

Jobs for the boys becomes BOYS FOR THE JOBS

Harry Cartlidge, Staffordshire

... Where was I? Bilges, miscreants, pylons, forts, caverns, spiders, Admirals, going North and going to sea ...

Joining Indomitable was ticklish, Coxon of their pinnace questioning. Then the jaunty prevaricated about putting me in the boys messdeck where my numero uno oppo Jack Grint was AB I/c, enabling us to relive larks and swing the lamp to a receptive audience.

All I knew about Carriers was the bilges of one and the backend of others from a crash boat, however the Admiral proved familiar walking the ship, two ladders ahead of his marine minder, talking to all Ranks and Rates in all POS with myself translating colloquial terms and the British sense of humour.

Staying in San Diego time our routine continued in the Ops Room, sandwiches and coffee compulsory, as the Carrier and Escort joined other elements of NATO fleet ploughing north in heavy seas. The exercise evolved regardless of the worsening weather as hands succumbed to the motion. The boys mess was a milieu of misery .. We've all been there. We have all seen Destroyers disappearing between waves but when Battleships ape them you begin to wonder. Eventually, exercise was suspended, the Admiral's wrap-up and debrief occupying the night, as the Fleet scurried for shelter.

Rolling into Trondheim ships of diverse Navies anchored by class in exact formations despite the difficulties. Jack and I took the recovered boys on deck to witness this miracle. No hammock, I retired to the locker tops. Soon asleep, a boy cook of the mess shook me awake "you've been piped to lay aft". I thought him wrong, but coward out and went. With a group of Officers on the quarter deck the Commander waved me over "you Cartlidge?" he asked. "I'm told you can handle a boat, do you think you could take the Cutter in shore in this weather to collect a Midshipman with an important parcel?"

Imagine my thoughts; wh me ?- a no badge Killick, and a passenger? I'd been up all night and what about their Cox'ns and all the badged POs aboard?

N.B. I had once recovered the Sultan of Zanzibar's sixteen oared ceremonial barge with Himself enthroned in a pagoda-like structure, floundering in a sudden blow and rising sea. Later walking aft to receive a Thankyou gift .. Imagining rubies and emeralds, I collected a bunch of flowers! Not daring to take them Fwd I lost them in the Wardroom pantry via the Marines messdeck where, sipping aft I had spent two days of my 21st Birthday I'm told. I sometimes had a Marine boat's crew, at ships concerts we'd perform a Sand Dance, myself being less tall Betty in the Middle wearing a fetching grass skirt and coconut shell ensemble.

I walked to both sides. Nothing on the water, waves half way up the ladder, Cutter bouncing on the boom at the full extent of its boat rope. I'd never been afloat in a boat in worse weather! I said I'll need a Stoker, the ladder hoisted above the waves so he can jump from it, and the Cutter pulled to the foot of the boom so I can slide down the boat rope. To be fair, the Officers jumped to it. Getting onto the boat was perilous. I

was no Tarzan. The Stoker was nimble jumping into the stern sheets as I made passes by the ladder. In a following wind and sea the canopies acted like sails, bow down and stern high we yawed our way inshore to collect the Middy.

If the passage in had been akin to a water chute, heading back was like riding a roller coaster in a monsoon. I was grateful for the boy's oilskin I'd filched, and glad I'd left my cap behind. Again, the Stoker (who had been great) launched himself onto the ladder followed by the Middy as I made several passes then went forward to hook on to the lowered falls where heaving lines were snatched away by the wind and voices drowned in its racket.

Hooking on was a gargantuan task. Time and again it felt like the bottom was being pulled out of the boat as waves took the weight, then, jarringly left us hanging. On the boat bay I helped with the gripes and waited for all the water to drain before replacing the bung, then climbed down to an empty deck - everyone gone! I'd done it. How good or bad who'd credit? I do know nobody else would. The real performer was the Cutter, it behaved flawlessly.

The Admiral bade a gracious farewell and took one of his Battleships home. The Indom moored in the Forth. What is the Regulation branch for if not to obstruct? I asked the Jaunty for a rail warrant to Pompey, he said I'd need my DO's authority. I said I don't have a DO and the conversation went on like a bad tempered tennis match.

At last I jumped from a boat at South Queensferry, walked up the hill to Dalmeny Station, sat down and lit a fag and thought bloody hell, I'll probably be back down the bilges again tomorrow

An aside

Able Seaman Jack Grint was a smart lad. Four ships later at St. Vincent he phoned inviting me to be his Best Man. We arranged to meet at a pub in Mayfair (yes that Mayfair) together with his intended who enjoyed a successful career in magazine editing, and was the daughter of a celebrated industrial Peer of the Realm and Governor of one of H.M.'s Dominions. We discussed arrangements and Dress; it might have been my No. 1's (the only suit I owned), or the second pint I ordered, or possibly just me, but two days later he rang again and uninvited me! C'est le vie. I've always been grateful for his friendship and our memories.

The Long Arm of TCA reaches USN/USAF Cooperation

An enquiry from Cdr Ron Swart USN rtd., editor of DASHPOT, magazine of the USN Association of Minemen, about the photo below was forwarded to Rob Hoole of MCDOA, whose extensive network of contacts soon produced a result:



From Lt Cdrs H. Donohue and Martyn Holloway:

As Hec Donohue notes, The officer third from right is indeed Barry Wayne 'Tug' Wilson RAN, who relieved Lt Cdr Ian Maconachie RAN on exchange at COMINELWARCOM, Charleston, South Carolina in about 1977. A prerequisite for any overseas exchange officer was to attend the USN Minewarfare Staff Officers' Course in order to learn how the USN did it. The course had been noted by some as being a one month course crammed into four, thus providing plenty of time to learn from one's predecessor how to make Margaritas and to barbecue steaks the Southern way.

Barry 'Tug' Wilson was awarded a Unit Citation Medal for negotiating a particularly difficult inter-service political line in order to get the USAF involved in an exercise whereby 2 x B52 bombers were allocated to lay exercise mines.

In the briefing beforehand where it was discovered that each aircraft would be carrying 80 (Eighty) mines, the USAF briefing officer was asked about spacing as required to form an effective minefield or, more specifically, would the lay be accurate and would the mines be in the right place? His response was "Well the first one will be in the right place, the rest will just fall off".

One of the two aircraft, flown by a Lieutenant, lost an engine on take off and the Flight Engineer called abort. The pilot however yelled that they were committed and elected to continue using the other seven (7) engines only, noting after they had taken off, that did the flight engineer realise how difficult it had been for the USN/USAF to put this

together and if they had aborted it would have been highly unlikely they would get to do it again.

The achievement was getting the USAF to take part so it was considered inappropriate from an inter-service political viewpoint to 'score' the minefield. This would normally be achieved by plotting the positions of the recovered mines using a localised precise navigation system against their intended lay positions, as would be done for the carrier air wings as part of their Mine Readiness Certification Inspections. However recovering 160 exercise mines from the balmy waters off Charleston gave the local EOD Unit and a certain RN Exchange Officer nearly three weeks of uninterrupted diving and a break from the office.

I much enjoyed the experience of working in COMINEWARCOM and worked with some excellent people, many of whom had been recently deployed for End Sweep [Clearance of US-laid minefields in the waters of North Vietnam]. I was particularly impressed by the way the aviators had embraced AMCM and did their damndest to make it work, despite its limitations and shall never forget the sight of Chiefy plus two streaming a Double Oropesa out of the back of an RH53D helicopter.

*TON Talk edition TTalk 201 of December 2019 carried a piece about the USN using helicopters for minesweeping and Martyn kindly adds the para below ...***Editor**

In early 1976 while doing my own USN Minewarfare Staff Course I spent time in RH53Ds on exercise off Camp Lejeune, VA while working off the back of an LPD in which we were accommodated. As you would imagine, the Double Oropesa was all lightweight gear, running off a winch in the back, controlled by a Chief plus two seamen. Normal sweepdeck stuff; it all went out fairly simply, static cutters only and then the two wires were married into one, no kite though. It took 45 minutes to stream and that left enough fuel for 45 minutes sweeping before another RH53D came out, snagged the single tow that was then released by the first helo and air to air transferred giving helo No 2 some 90 minutes in the lap. Navigation was by a local precise nav system called Raydist although statistical evaluation was used to work out clearance levels allowing for the variations of where the sweep was relative to the helo. All done very professionally by the aviators, with an MCM Unit doing the ground work supplying whatever was to be towed either from the LPD or, as we later achieved, from the beach.

When the Falklands minesweeping problem was thrust on my shoulders my first thought was to borrow a USN LPH, a helicopter minesweeping squadron (HELMINERON) and a LPD to launch the kit. Ten seconds later, having had a quick chuckle over that, I began to think about Double Oropesa using the bigger gear of the EDATS system that had not been used like this since the demise of the Algerines.

The Royal Navy in Transition

Commander Nobby Hall RN
TCA Vice Chairman

The Royal Navy is currently going through a number of major changes as we move forward to achieve Maritime Strategy 2035. These include Transformation, Programme HECATE and a name change for the whole force.

The aim of RN Transformation is to ensure the RN has necessary skills, governance and support required to operate more effectively to continue delivering the RN capability needed for the future. The new approach to change will be based on digitally enabled transformation rather than unsustainable cuts and will be at the heart of the vision set out in the Command Plan.

Transformation will improve the way the RN does business and maximize the investment in the front line. In order to do this the RN is embarking on large scale long term initiatives across the Service, focusing initially on the functional areas of Support, People, Acquisition, Technology and Innovation, ASW Advantage in the North Atlantic, Infrastructure, Carrier Focused Task Group Navy, Commando Force, Forward Presence and Future HQ.



HMS Prince of Wales

While change is not new in the RN, there is a recognition that we need to do things differently. This was originally looked at as part of the Modernising Defence Programme and is being taken forward as part of the broader transformation activity to Mobilise, Modernise and Transform the RN.

Programme HECATE will contribute to the People and Training Line of Development of Transformation to unlock even more of the potential of Service people by changing the way the RN recruits, trains and employs its people. This has commenced with a Shore Base Review with the aim to refocus at least 10% of uniformed personnel to more operational roles. The priority will be get sailors and marines into frontline units.

Of interest, Hecate is the Greek Goddess of Darkness, Sorcery, Witchcraft, Ghosts, Necromancy, Crossroads and Trivial Knowledge. Conclude what you will from that ...



Type 26 Global Combat Frigate Concept

Finally, the RN Executive Committee has agreed, that as part of Transformation, when speaking about the RN as a whole force, the term Royal Navy should be used rather than Naval Service. This will not remove the separate identities of the individual components that make up the RN: the Regular Service, Royal Marines, Royal Fleet Auxiliary, the Reserves, Civil Servants, Careers Service and QARNNS, all continue to exist as distinct elements and should be referred to individually as appropriate. However, when talking about all these elements together they should be referred to as the Royal Navy rather than the Naval Service.

This change should serve to reinforce the RN brand, both in the public eye and across Defence and government, without reducing the importance and distinct character of its individual elements.

So you can see there is a lot going on at present as the RN continues to evolve. Recruiting is up, new Type 26 Global Combat Frigates are on the way and the Carrier Strike Group will deploy next year. It may be a different Navy to the days of the TONS but it is still the best one in the world.

Rescue from SS STEEL VENDOR - October 1971

Commodore John Madgwick

HMS *Eagle* was the younger sister ship to *Ark Royal*. Displacing 55,000 tons, she was in markedly better condition and was much better equipped. Nevertheless, as a consequence of its decision to withdraw from the Far East, the Labour government had chosen to decommission *Eagle* early. In 1971 she was engaged on her final deployment, and had just visited Australia, New Zealand and Singapore before commencing the long passage back to the UK, via the Arabian Gulf and South Africa.



HMS *Eagle* in the Mediterranean 1971.

A powerful air group was embarked, and included Buccaneers for long range, low level strike; Sea Vixens for air defence; Gannets for airborne early warning; and 826 Naval Air Squadron's brand new Sea Kings in the anti-submarine role. The Sea King had only recently entered service with the Royal Navy: whilst the navy had conducted search and rescue operations for many years, the new aircraft represented a step change in capability, enabling long range operations to be conducted for the first time.

Eagle's next and final port of call in the Far East was to be Hong Kong. However, the weather forecast was somewhat disappointing, with up to three typhoons raging through the region, and in particular, Typhoon *Elaine*. A series of passage exercises with regional navies had been programmed, but these were cancelled due to the severe weather conditions. As the ship passed through the South China Sea on 8 October, a distress message was received from the SS *Steel Vendor*. The Vietnam war was still underway, and she was an American cargo ship carrying war materiel, mainly cement, from Manila to Saigon. She had suffered a major engine failure and for the best part of three days she had drifted, pitching and rolling violently in appalling conditions, while her engineers attempted to resolve the problem. Unfortunately, just as limited power came back on line, the ship grounded on a coral reef close to the uninhabited Loaita Island, part of the Spratly chain. The low-lying reef, the remains of a long-extinct volcano, was not visible except for breaking waves; and it proved impossible to lower boats or life rafts as these would have been ripped to shreds on the sharp coral below. There were no other vessels in the vicinity, and it was rapidly assessed by the crew that the only way off the ship would have to be by helicopter - in the unlikely event that such an aircraft might be available.

It so happened that *Eagle* was approximately one hundred miles away when she received the call from *Steel Vendor* in mid-afternoon. The ship was not conducting flying operations due to the seriously inclement weather, but two Sea Kings were nevertheless raised from the upper hangar to the flight deck and hurriedly prepared for a search and rescue mission. They were successfully launched together in extremely hazardous conditions when the two ships were about sixty miles apart. Yours truly was in the second aircraft. In addition to the challenging circumstances, it was clear that the task was going to be compounded by the fact that daily sunset near the equator is relatively early - shortly after six o'clock.

The *Steel Vendor* was found to be firmly wedged on the reef, listing to starboard, and with waves breaking over her superstructure. She was equipped with unusually high kingposts, further complicating the task of lifting personnel from the deck. The forty crew members were huddled in the lee of the deck house, cold, wet, and frightened, and deeply concerned that rescue might not be possible. The initial task was to lower the aircrewman to the *Steel Vendor*. Due to the hazards posed by the kingposts, normal winching from low level was not practicable. However, lowering the rescue strop from high level to the deck against gale force winds was problematic and a high line transfer proved to be the only option. In this case, a long weighted line extension to the winch wire, connected via a weak link to the aircraft's winch hook, was lowered to the *Steel Vendor*. Ship's staff took the line in hand, and guided the aircrewman to the deck as the wire was paid out from the aircraft.



Photo showing survivor being recovered into one of the 826 Sqn Sea Kings, with the coral reef clearly indicated by the white water. The anchor had been lowered in a vain attempt to stop the ship striking the reef, but once wedged on the coral, there was no escape.

The aircrewman's first priority was to reassure the crew that their ordeal was almost over; and then to ensure that each member was safely in the strop before being raised - individually - over eighty feet up into the aircraft. The lower end of the high line was controlled from the ship's deck in an attempt to keep the survivor, unavoidably swinging in the turbulent air, clear of superstructure, masts, kingposts and other solid obstructions. It was a slow process.

During the next hour, notwithstanding deteriorating conditions, storm force winds causing severe turbulence, driving rain, heavy spray breaking over the ship and failing light, the two aircraft successfully completed the rescue. Two further Sea Kings were dispatched from *Eagle* for photographic purposes and to provide essential backup in case of emergency. The aircraft were designed for anti-submarine work, and crammed full of sensors, navigation and detection equipment, leaving little room for survivors. They were bundled into the aircraft, each clutching the pillow case of personal

belongings they had gathered together when disaster struck. It is fair to say that all of them were extremely grateful.

Steel Vendor's crew were then flown back to *Eagle*, where they were properly clothed, fed, and rested. Following a night onboard, they were airlifted to Cubi Point, a military airfield near Manila, the following afternoon. With no other ships in the vicinity, and in any case no way of disembarking survivors by boat due to the sharp coral on which the ship was aground, the only avenue to safety was by helicopter. With the exception of the military, relatively few ships embarked a helicopter of any type in 1971: and there were no other warships so equipped in the South China Sea at that time. *Steel Vendor's* crew were truly fortunate that *Eagle* happened to be in the vicinity, with Sea Kings embarked, capable of operating over long distances and remaining on task for a sufficient period to achieve a successful rescue. The following day, a Buccaneer aircraft was launched to conduct a photographic sortie over the reef, and found the *Steel Vendor* had broken her back overnight and was rapidly sinking. Had *Eagle* not been in the region, there is no doubt that the crew would not have survived.

Eagle subsequently received a signal from the Commander US Naval Forces, Philippines which read: *'Your rescue of the SS Steel Vendor was noted with great pleasure. The professional manner in which the rescue was affected, the care afforded the survivors while on board, your fine communications and efficiency demonstrated in putting the survivors ashore was most noteworthy and should be a source of pride to all concerned. Please convey my sincere appreciation and well done to all hands.'*

A telegram was also received from the President of Isthmian Lines: *'We wish to convey to you our heartfelt thanks and admiration for the magnificent performance of your officers, crew and aircraft in the rescue of the entire crew of Steel Vendor on 8 October 1971'*. And on arrival in Hong Kong, a delegation from the shipping line presented an appropriate award to the Squadron.

Although there were many similar rescues to follow in subsequent years, this was arguably the first such operation carried out by the Royal Navy, and was only possible due to the capability of the new Sea King aircraft. As a result of the rescue, 826 Squadron was awarded the Boyd trophy by the Flag Officer Naval Air Command, for *'the finest feat of naval aviation in 1971'*.

MCMV NEWS

Rob Hoole

Operation KIPION MCM

Our MCM forces in the Gulf, based at the NSF (Naval Support Facility) at Mina Salman in Bahrain, currently comprise the Hunt class MCMVs BROCKLESBY (MCM 2 Crew 6) and CHIDDINGFOLD (2/3) plus the Sandown class MCMVs SHOREHAM (1/4) and PENZANCE (1/3), all supported by RFA CARDIGAN BAY. While en route to the Gulf, CHIDDINGFOLD and PENZANCE spent a period assigned to SEA GUARDIAN, the ongoing maritime security operation in the Mediterranean.

Between 9 and 17 September, CHIDDINGFOLD, PENZANCE and CARDIGAN BAY participated in an MCM interoperability exercise with the US Navy MCMVs USS DEXTROUS and USS SENTRY plus explosive ordnance disposal technicians, MK VI patrol boats and MH-53E Sea Dragon MCM helicopters assigned to Commander Task Force (CTF) 52, CTF 53 and CTF 56. Also in September, SHOREHAM hosted a visit by the Commander of the US Fifth Fleet in Bahrain, Vice Admiral Samuel J Paparo Jr USN while undergoing a maintenance period. He was accompanied by the senior RN officer in the Middle East, Cdre Dean Bassett RN (UK Maritime Component Commander) and Cdr Richard Talbot RN (Commander UK MCM Forces).

HUNT Class

LEDBURY (2/2) returned to her Portsmouth base on 11 September after three years on Operation KIPION MCM in the Gulf. Her trip home included stopovers in Crete, Gibraltar and Plymouth. CATTISTOCK (2/1) has been undergoing all manner of operational sea training off Scotland and hosted Lithuanian Navy personnel. HURWORTH (2/7) is believed to be in maintenance and MIDDLETON (2/8) is believed to be undergoing operational sea training.

SANDOWN Class

BLYTH (1/2) returned to her Faslane base on 11 September after three years on Operation KIPION MCM in the Gulf. Her trip home included stopovers in Crete, Gibraltar and Plymouth. BANGOR (1/8) re-entered the water in August towards the end of a maintenance period at Rosyth. GRIMSBY (1/1) and RAMSEY (1/6) have been undergoing operational sea training.

MASTT (Maritime Autonomous Systems Trials Team)

On 21 August, MASTT received its new autonomous mine hunter, RNMB HARRIER, and has been conducting trials on the Clyde. The new system offers greater flexibility to deploy around the world on survey and mine hunting ops.

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

Only having a laugh ...



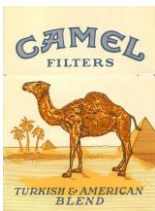
**The Drop in the price of Petrol during Lock Down.
Is like a Bald Man winning a Hair Brush**

Black Tot Memory

I was in Hong Kong and the local Ton Squadron [6 MCMS) paraded around the Naval Base with a Funeral Carriage with the Rum Tub on. Tropical Routine was enhanced by a Make and Mend from 11am Tot Time - possibly to prevent a mutiny ? The China Fleet Club made a fitting venue for the Wake, or what I remember of it.

Two Matelots were outside having a smoke when it started to rain. One of the Sailors pulled out a condom, cut off the end, put it over his cigarette and continued smoking.

His Oppo was so impressed with the idea that he called in at Boots and asked for three packets of condoms.



The blushing lady assistant eyed Jack admiringly and fluttered her eyelashes saying 'What brand would you like sir?' Jack stated 'It doesn't matter love, as long as they fit a Camel'.

The young lady fainted !

All dits courtesy of Terry Hall, Derbyshire Submariners

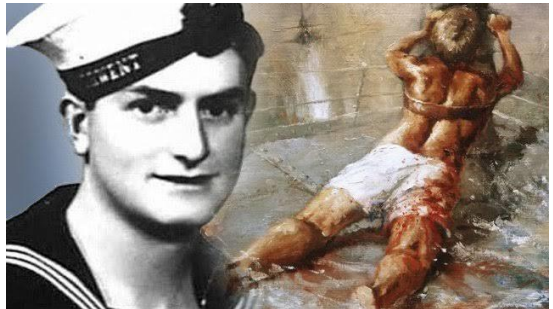
RAN's First Victoria Cross

Lt Cdr David Ince RANR

In June 1942 Ordinary Seaman Sheean joined the commissioning crew of HMAS *Armidale* as a loader for the ship's Oerlikon 20mm anti-aircraft guns and at 18 he was the youngest member of the 149 strong ship's company. One of 60 Bathurst class ships built during the war and designated 'minesweeper' (the Aussie Ton of the day) *Armidale* was mainly deployed on escort and anti-submarine duties. With a top speed of just 15kts, she was 57m long, displaced 1,000 tons and as well as depth charges was armed with three Oerlikon 20mm and a four inch gun. On 1 December that year, less than six months after commissioning, in the vicinity of Timor, *Armidale* was attacked by at least 13 Japanese aircraft which saw her hit by two torpedoes and one bomb. Not surprisingly she began to sink and the order to abandon ship was given. After helping release a life raft Teddy was struck by two bullets as the Japanese planes began to strafe the mortally stricken ship and, as was their wont, the survivors in the water. Although wounded in the back and chest, the 18 year old Teddy wasn't having a bar of it. He made his way to the aft anti-aircraft gun, strapped himself in and opened fire on the enemy, no doubt screaming "get some you B####d" or equivalent. It was later confirmed he had hit and seriously damaged at least two aircraft, downing one Zero. The 49 of his shipmates who survived the attack and sinking credited his actions as saving their lives. The stern of the ship was seen to lift from the water, her propellers still turning, as Teddy continued to blaze away on the 20mm. He was seen going down with the ship still strapped to and firing the aft Oerlikon.

Due to a number of factors, including a cock up in his initial write up and paperwork submission by inept staff work, Teddy was never fully recognised for his amazing selflessness and bravery. He was Mentioned in Dispatches at the time and even had a Collins Class submarine named after him in 1999 (the only RAN vessel ever to be named after an Ordinary Seaman), but it has taken Teddy' Sheean's family of over three decades fighting phenomenal government bureaucracy to get his extraordinarily brave actions during WWII properly recognised. They deserve a medal themselves for their dogged perseverance! Finally, on 12 August 2020, seventy years, eight months and eleven days after his amazing acts of bravery, it was announced that the Queen had approved a posthumous Victoria Cross for Teddy. A very proud day for his family and the RAN.

BZ Teddy Sheean, a waterborne warrior who can now truly Rest in Peace



HMS BRINTON and The Battle Of Burnt Island

Commodore Laurie Holloway

In May 1976 I was CO of HMS BRINTON, newly out of work up in Rosyth after a long refit in Chatham. We were in the Fishery Protection Squadron. From Rosyth, we sailed along to Burnt Island for three days of degaussing, or as the buffer, Ldg Seaman Nurden, announced "*Lads, we're going to get our arse wiped...*".

This was the first chance of a "foreign" run ashore for the new ship's company, and no less than 16 junior rates set off together to enjoy the delights of that charming little carbunkle on the smooth skin that is the Fife coastline.

At closing time, they decided to "parade" back to the ship, down the main street, singing some wonderfully inappropriate songs and carrying the two tables and six chairs left so carelessly outside their last watering hole. The "polis" were called and the entire Burnt Island force of two constables gave chase. The parade forgotten, my dear misunderstood boys legged it back to the ship where the quartermaster, Able Seaman Sharp, saw the last man onboard before blocking the gangway to the "federales" and brandishing his extremely long and shiny personal diver's knife !

Much shouting ensued, and it wasn't long before the Coxswain decided to take charge of the situation. He arrived in the waist from his cabin wearing a pair of somewhat grey and listless Y fronts and a pair of flip flops. He, too, had been enjoying the delights of Burnt Island bars, so was not hugely helpful !

Anyway, the OOD quickly resolved the impasse and the next morning the First Lieutenant, the superb Roger Ainsley, was able to extract the quartermaster from the nick. We sailed with so many people on nines that, after a week, the ship was never as clean again !

What happy, innocent days!

A Uniform Kindness

Tony Quick, Watford

The tube train rumbled into Piccadilly Station and I fought my way out to join the pressing throng ascending the escalators towards the Exit. I handed my half ticket to the Collector and jostled my way into the crowded hall and out into the Circus. Eros was up there on his plinth with the whole roundabout jam-packed with slow moving vehicles. Between the flashing Belisha Beacons at the change of the lights, the waiting crowds surged forward to chaotically intermingle half way across. I was making for my intended destination when it happened !

On my seven days Annual Shore Leave, with my family and friends at work, I had thought to spend the afternoon at a Theatre Matinée in the West End and had chosen to see the latest Musical Show in town, "Kismet". The songs from this show were very popular and all over the airwaves.

Dressed in the splendour of my No.1's, I thought I was cutting the very image of "Jolly Jack" Ashore. In those days the public was very proud to see their military in smart uniforms. On the pavement I was turning towards Haymarket when I felt a sharp tap on my left shoulder. Most matelots in square rig will tell you that they have had their "collars felt" at some time, usually by ladies of a certain age believing a superstition that it brought them Good Luck.

But now I was quite surprised by the reaction around me for I heard a communal gasp of "Aaaaah !". this was one of those "frozen in time " moments for those encircling faces all registered a degree of horror, sending the four or five ladies scrambling to open their handbags. My own reaction turned to concern, for they were all staring at my left shoulder. Had it been more than just a tap ? Out came tissues and handkerchiefs, each lady dabbing at my collar and chatting away expressing disgust, Their theme was "Something has got to be done about those pigeons", peering defiantly skywards.

A tidily blue collar is essentially the trademark of a sailor and it's appearance is paramount. My little entourage were seemingly fully aware of this, as they scrubbed away and finally one lady held up her hand mirror to let me see their efforts. They had removed most of the "Du Du" but that stain would need a wash. A tall concerned Lady Helper stepped forward and took charge, saying "Follow me please". She led me into the large corner store of Lilywhites, the Sports Outfitters.

Apparently she worked there as a Floor Supervisor and, passing a couple of gawping Shop Assistants, we went through a curtain into a Stock Room behind the store counters. The Tall Lady faced me and I could see that she was probably in her 40's. "Take your collar off and I will give it a sponging" she said, then disappeared with my collar into what was evidently the Ladies Rest Room.

I sat on a wooden chair between shelves of tennis racquets, footballs and sports shoes etc. contemplating what I would have done without the help of those kind ladies.

Perhaps I would have reported to the Naval Patrol in "Adam and Eve Mews", or the RPO at Waterloo Station, I hoped that the C-in-C atop his column in Trafalgar Square would administer some appropriate sanction on the guilty pigeon that had dive bombed one of his sailors !

Meanwhile, a couple of giggling shopgirls peeped round the curtain and I heard the familiar buzz of a hairdrier (I have three sisters) coming from the Rest Room.

A few minutes later the Tall Lady returned with my beautifully restored and immaculately pressed blue collar, saying "Here you are" as she handed it to me. I put it on and smoothed my lanyard and scarf as she held a small mirror for me.

I thanked her profusely, as he picked up my cap and, looking at the ribbon said "H.M. Minesweepers – isn't that rather dangerous ?" I replied that many jobs in the Navy were like that. She sighed and said "I wish I had a fiver for every time I have washed and ironed a blue collar. You see my husband was in the Navy but I lost him when he went down in the *Prince of Wales*".

I felt like someone had kicked me in the stomach !

On leaving the shop and saying our Goodbyes, I noticed that she was still wearing her wedding ring and seeing a tear gathering in her eyes, I felt guilty for probably raking up old memories.

I enjoyed the performance of "Kismet", especially those songs in exotic settings, great chart toppers like "Baubles, Bangles and Beads", "This is my Beloved", "Sands of Time" and my favourite "Stranger in Paradise", with the Pelopossian dancers to boot.

I still feel quite stunned by that spontaneous kindness shown to me in my little crisis.

What a decent society we have inherited, so many kind hearted and caring people; complete strangers who naturally respond to the adversities of others.

Look no further for today's equivalent of the "Tall Lady" than the frontline NHS, Armed Forces, Police, Fire and Rescue Services, shop staff, refuse collectors, teachers and transport staff who continue to keep our society functioning during the present crisis.

Membership Update

To comply more closely with GDPR Data Protection rules, contact details of members are not disclosed in full but friends can obtain them from the Membership Secretary, subject to permission of the member.

NEW MEMBERS – Welcome Aboard

Colin Bennett. (ME)1 RN. Dorset Served in HMS DILSTON 55-56 F2471

John Lowe. (Wtr) RNR. Exmouth . Tel: Served in HMS CURZON 63-67 F2472

Robert H Hawkins. (Mid - S/Lt - Lt) RN. Portsmouth Served in HMS WALKERTON 78, HMS WOLVERTON 82, HMS HUBBERSTON/UPTON 8 F2473

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Robin Tapply. To Buinessen, Isle of Mull. F0366

Basil M Chapman. To:- Liskeard, Cornwall. F1243

Neville Dutton. To:- Shalford, Surrey GU4. F1299

CHANGED E-MAIL ADDRESS

Leonard Manners. Suffolk. F1610

LOST CONTACT.

Anyone knowing current address please advise Membership Secretary

Alfred Todd. Last known address:- Gosport Hampshire . F2128

Eric Wootton. Last Known Address:- Famagusta, Cyprus. F2249

Corrections to Crossed the Bar in August's edition

Commander John Barron RNR

Perth F0483

Served in HM Ships UPTON, CROFTON, KEDLESTON, CUXTON 1972-84

A/B Brian (Stanley) Matthews RN

Coventry L1224

Served on HM Ships Laleston 1957/58, Wotton 1962/63



Crossed the Bar

Lieutenant Commander Tom Cridland RN

Marlborough, L2108

Served in HMS HOUGHTON 1959-60

A good friend and distinguished Aviator

Warrant Officer (MW) Robert (Dixie) Dean RN

Fareham

Not a member of TCA but a great friend to the Association and a helpful contact in HMS COLLINGWOOD, where he was a Technical Author in the MCM School.

A leading member of the VERNON Monument team.

A/B Bernard Watkinson RN

Toowoomba, Queensland, Australia. F2321

Served in HM Ships CARHAMPTON 1964, WOLVERTON 1965,

LULLINGTON 1965

Commander Archie Maclean RNR

Edinburgh. F05950

Served in HM Ships KILLIECRANKIE 1954-76, KEDLESTON 1976-78

Graham St George

Nice, France. L0698

Served in HM Ships THAMES 1963-64, DARTINGTON 1967-68. SHERATON

May They Rest In Peace

SLOPS

Items held in Stock		Price	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	
TCA Baseball cap. Logo 1		£ 11.20		Price
TCA Beret Badge		£ 7.50		
RN Beret, Blue. Various sizes		£ 8.00		
TCA Embroidered Blazer Badge		£ 9.77	TCA" V" Neck Sweater, Navy or Maroon	£ 32.45
TCA Lapel Badge		£ 6.05	TCA Round Neck Sweatshirt	£ 29.16
TCA Mouse Mat		£ 4.00	TCA Polar Fleece Jacket	£ 38.30
Car sticker – Logo 1 Clings to inside of windscreen		£ 1.25	Blazer Badge + ships name	£ 34.20
TCA Tie, Blue		£ 9.90	TCA Polo Shirt in Navy with ships name	£ 18.44
TCA Tie, Maroon		£ 11.60	Iron Man Tee Shirt, Navy	£ 15.37
Blackfoot Tie		£ 13.00	Iron Man Polo Shirt , Navy	£ 18.44
TCA First Day Cover		£ 2.50		
TON Talk Binder		£ 7.73	M/S Sailors Painting	
TON Profile badge - Silver or Gold		£ 8.50	- Notepad & TCA Pen	£ 5.00
TCA 10 th Anniversary Print		£ 5.50	- A3 Gicleé Print	£ 30.00
TCA 25 th Anniversary Badge		£ 6.00	- A4 Gicleé Print.	£ 25.00
TON Profile badge - Silver or Gold		£ 8.00		
TCA Polo Shirt, Navy logo 1 & 2		£18.44	TCA Christmas Cards	
TCA Mug		£ 9.90	<i>"Snowman" and "7MSS Leaving Malta" designs £ 5.50 for 10 cards, with envelopes.</i>	
Beanie/Ski woollen hat Navy with TCA badge		£ 8.72	Order early for Christmas !	
New - TCA Wall Shield 8 ins		£ 37.00		
Blazer Badge (Gold Wire)		£16.00		
TCA Pen		£ 3.00		
BOOKS				
Life in the TONs –	Sold	Out		
Jacks of All Trades		£ 11.50		
Last of the Wooden Walls		£ 24.99		
Hardback and e-book via www.halsgrove.com				

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
e-mail: Lawrencejohnson1055@outlook.com

Post Bag

FROM: Ray Brooks, Gosport



For a moment I was sure she said I was on a promise !

Strangely enough, I happened to be a guest of the Federal German Navy aboard the Corvette "Begleite Schiffe Eider" on the occasion of the first visit to the UK of German Navy Ships since before WW II.. There were 3 ships, FDS Frigate *Scharnhorst* and 2 Officer Cadet Training Corvettes.

They visited London for a great Civic Reception, then sailed to Belfast for another momentous reception. They were berthed in the Pollock Dock, just a minutes' walk from HMS Caroline.

During their stay they sent an invitation to CAROLINE requesting the pleasure of 50 junior rates to attend a Reception aboard the Corvette "Eider."

So, "names in the hat" was the order from the Jimmy and I was one of the lucky ones. We were entertained in a large mess. Places set with one of us and one German alternating all the way round the table. They were great fun and

were most pleased to be visiting the UK and, of course, we swapped Cap Tallies.

Regret I don't recall the date or even the year. But I've found that *Scharnhorst* F213 was a unit of the German Navy from 1959 to 1968 and was formerly HMS Mermaid of the Black Swan Class

So the visit must have been between 1959 and 1962.

I hope that someone out there may remember that occasion and that hopefully a record will exist.

*The new German Navy had another Black Swan, HMS Flamingo, re-named Gneisenau.. So Scharnhorst and Gneisenau once again sailed up the Channel ... **Editor** (who with Treasurer Stuart Johnson served on another Black Swan, HMS Crane, F123, in the Far East.*

FROM: Cdr Charles Wylie, Fareham

LEVERTON and others were deployed to the Gulf for the four hottest months of the year during the 'Kuwait Crisis'. With no air conditioning and in mostly 100% humidity, the only time one was dry was after a shower at sea. Then, drying off starkers on the upper deck with the blessed wind of passage, one could put on some clothing and luxuriate for twenty minutes before becoming soaked through with sweat.

Salt tablets prescribed by the Squadron Doc were useless. I would put a heaped teaspoon of salt in a pint of limers and hardly taste it, so badly was it needed.

Aah! Can you see my lamp swinging?
Please don't cry.

We carried an SAS Officer who was 50 shades of brown darker than the Arab gangs he infiltrated. When we stopped a dhow and searched it from stem to stern and truck to keel, we found none of the arms and ammunition his sources told him to expect. Nonetheless, he used his special authority to ask the captain to evacuate the crew, take them prisoner, and sink the dhow. "But they're just innocent fishermen. We shall ruin them," protested the Captain. "Sink her," was the cryptic response.

After a couple of dozen rounds of 40mm Bofors there was a gigantic explosion. Our SAS friend just raised his eyebrows and asked for the 'fishermen' to be handed over to the Trucial Oman Scouts. We learned later that they had all confessed 'after a little persuasion'.

FROM : Buster Brown, York

Following our discussion about St Angelo. In my time 7MCMS were tied up alongside St Angelo. My only experience was going up to the fort for my annual health check. I remember it was a magnificent view from the sick bay, right across Grand Harbour. The same view the knights would have had. Or to go to the pay office with the hope of getting a flash of stocking top from the Jennies.

I recall walking along the jetty, "Jack mi tickler tin" one badge A/B, when I saw my old instructor from Ganges, PO Keen (Keen by name keen by nature). Without having to think, I buttoned up my shirt and walked straighter. He was of course a different bloke away from training

**FROM: Lt Cdr Richard Green VRD,
RNR , Colchester**

Our telephone discussion about friends in the new German Navy reminds me of an incident during a visit to Emden, following a VERMEX in July 1971.

I was SOO to MCM 10 at the time, who was also in command of the ship. While in Emden, the CO had an emergency recall to Scotland (the reasons escape me) and I was appointed in command of KILLIERANKE for the journey back to Edinburgh. This was my first experience of command and I still had to get my command ticket

The German Port Admiral was very hospitable and kindly invited us to an All Ranks Reception. The CTP went well, with everyone on their best behaviour with lots of 'social Interchange'.

As things got to the "even more relaxed" stage, one of our younger/naive ABs asked the Admiral the inevitable question "What were you doing in 1939 etc ?"

The Admiral replied candidly "I was a Naval Constructor and played a small part in the design of *Bismark*".

A grizzled voice came from the back "...and I played a small part in her destruction !".

The speaker, Ldg Seaman John Main, had been an 18 year old Range Taker in the fighting top of HMS Duke of York in that fateful encounter in the Atlantic in May 1941.

John later rose to become Lt Cdr RNR and a leading mentor in the arts of minesweeping .

Bravo Zulus for Gipping Press and Spi-Des-ign

In brief, impromptu, socially-distanced ceremonies, Hon Sec presented plaques bearing the flaghoist Bravo Zulu (Manoeuvre Well Executed – broadly translated as “Well Done”), to **Gipping Press**, who print and distribute our magazine, in recognition of their extraordinary efforts in producing the last three editions of TON Talk on time, despite the complications of having most of their production team furloughed and to **Spi-Des-Ign** for their creative skills in producing our new website (see also pages 10 & 11).



Pictured above left is Jonathan Steed, Managing Director and Graphic Designer, who undertook the Studio work to transform your Editor's drafts into the artistic page layouts you have before you and on the right Production Director Greg Ruffell, who single-handedly worked the digital press and finishing machinery to produce 1100 copies of the magazine you are reading.



Pictured right are Kelly and Richard Gurteen of Spi-Des-Ign who worked closely with your Editor to keep him on track as the website developed.

The BZ plaque, size of the wall shields that many of us have for the badges of ships in which we served, is the result of cooperation between TCA and purveyors of RN souvenirs, Forever Jack.

The plaques can now be purchased on their website www.shopforeverjack.co.uk.

PEKING *ex-ARETHUSA* moved to Hamburg Harbour



The famous German four-mast barque PEKING, known to many RN Boy Entrants from 1920's -50's as *TS ARETHUSA*, was rescued from a dilapidated condition in New York a couple of years ago has been undergoing an extensive refit in St Peters Werft dockyard (above) in Wewelsfleth on the River Elbe.

Restoration to a pristine condition above and below decks has now been completed and in September she was moved to an interim berth in Hamburg Docks Hafenmuseum where she is beginning a new lease of life open to the public.

The restoration was funded by a Trust Fund, public subscriptions and generous grants from Regional and National Government. An even more extensive project is planned to make PEKING the centrepiece of a National Maritime Museum which will see the Historic Ships Quarter in Hamburg expanded with greater access and facilities for tourism.

Photo: Courtesy Hamburger Abendblatt newspaper and TCA member Kapitän zur See Hans Andresen, German Naval Reserve.