

TON Talk

Newsletter of the TON Class Association

Edition 212



October 2021



**Commander Bob Hawkins MBE RN AFNI
Guest of Honour
TCA Reunion 2021**

TON Class Association

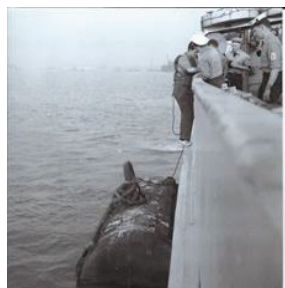
Patron HRH The Prince of Wales



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TCA Membership
£15 per annum
£150 Life Membership

Front Cover:
Cdr Bob Hawkins – Guest of Honour

www.tcaminesweepers.co.uk

Founder: Jack Worth MBE

Editorial

MORE SHIP HISTORY INFORMATION Mark Chaplin, who has been researching Mirrless to Deltic conversions on British Rail locomotives, (see page 8), has also kindly done some searching on our behalf and has found the Yard Numbers for 78 TONs built by the following yards: Camper & Nicholson, Cook, Welton and Gemmell, Harland & Wolff, Herd & McKenzie, Philip & Son, Richards and Wivenhoe.

These Yard Numbers have now been added to the Ship Histories on our website.

CENOTAPH PARADE Ten names have been registered with RBL. The list is now closed. RBL will post tickets directly to each applicant during October. As usual, **hospitality will be available at the Tom Cribb**, afterwards courtesy of the Landlord.

FUTURE MCM OPS – received from Lt Cdr Simon Reeves, CO of MCM 2 Crew 3.

There are several strands of development across the MCM force as the capability is transformed and modernised. The article from Navy Lookout at the link below provides a useful summary: <https://www.navylookout.com/autonomous-systems-the-future-of-royal-navy-mine-warfare/>

The transition from legacy mine-hunting to the MHC programme (autonomous systems) is forecast to take approximately ten years from now, with Hunt class MCMVs remaining in service until approximately 2030. The Sandown class will be drawn down over the next few years, with all vessels expected to be out of service by 2025. The crews from the Sandown vessels will have many of their personnel re-trained and re-roled to become a part of the MHC missions teams, including the ACRIMS system, recently featured in TON Talk.

The remaining Hunt crews will continue to train for legacy MCM ops and support commitments in the Gulf and in UK waters.

*Lt Cdr Reeves, his XO and Coxswain will be joining us at the Reunion. We look forward to learning more detail .. **Editor***

FITTLETON 45th Anniversary of the disaster was observed by HMS President on 20th September. Old Hands were invited to participate.

216th ANNIVERSARY OF TRAFALGAR. We had to postpone Trafalgar Night Dinners last year due to Covid. Let's make up for it this year with Spicers.



Deadline for December's Edition is 20th November

pjd

Chairman's Corner

Regrettably I have to start with the sad news of the death of Lieutenant-Commander **John Robbie** RNR. John was a Founder member of the TCA and our first Historian. He collaborated with Jack Worth on building up the ship histories. This important work formed the starting point for the next major phase; Jeremy Stewart 's work. with his team of volunteer researchers at the National Archives subsequently expanded via the Historical Group. This became a significant part of the TCA Archives, resulting in our book "Jacks of All Trades".

John was also very instrumental in acquiring all sorts of minesweeping memorabilia when Claverhouse, the Edinburgh RNR Division, closed. These artefacts were gifted to BRONINGTON, then on display in Manchester, and were lost to us when vandals and the consortium of museums stripped BRONINGTON.

Looking to the future I am really looking forward to our **Reunion at the Carlton Hotel**. I have missed the buzz of the Reunion ; meeting old friends and seeing new faces as well, after two years.

On Saturday 2nd October there is the **all-important AGM** where attendees hear reports from the Committee and are able to ask questions. One major report will be from Bill Pollington on his excellent work in recording the TCA artefacts, ships' plans, photographs etc. This work is an essential first step in deciding the way ahead. I hope the full record will be available by the end of the year so that the Committee will have to time to digest the information before the Committee meeting in March 2022.

I am also looking forward to our **Gala Dinner** and especially listening to our Guest of Honour, Commander R H Hawkins MBE Royal Navy AFNI. Bob specialized as a Mine Warfare and Clearance Diving Officer in 1982 and served in several TONs. He was the First Lieutenant of HMS QUEEN ELIZABETH for its first commission and is a member of TCA.

I also pleased that three members of the last Ships' Company of HMS CHIDDINGFORD, will be joining us for the Gala Dinner: Lt Cdr Simon Reeves (CO), Lt Matthew Brown (XO) and PO(D) Lee Causer (Coxswain). Please give them a warm TCA welcome !

Changes to this year's raffle to speed up the process: BOTTLES ONLY please and tickets will be on sale on Friday night and Saturday afternoon.13.00 - 16.00.

Finally, on Sunday morning we will be holding a **Memorial Service for John Soanes**, conducted by our Chaplain - Lt Cdr the Rev Trevor Filtness BA, RN rtd,

Peter Harrison

TCA Who's Who

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COMING EVENTS

March 2022	Sat 12	Committee Meeting Royal Maritime Club, Portsmouth 10.30 + ZOOM link will be enabled
October 2022	Sat 15	TCA AGM & Reunion Crown Plaza Hotel, Nottingham Booking Form in February's edition of TON Talk

Guest Speaker at this year's Reunion will be Commander Bob Hawkins MBE, RN, AFNI

See Front Cover

Bob Hawkins grew up in Fulham and Putney, London and joined the Royal Navy at Britannia Royal Naval College, Dartmouth in January 1978. He has served as a Naval Officer for over 43 years in numerous ships at sea, plus headquarters and training establishments ashore, including seven appointments serving abroad in Hong Kong, USA, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Malaysia and Singapore in various operational, staff and diplomatic positions.

Trained first as a Warfare Officer, watchkeeping and navigating ships, then **sub-specialising early in 1982 as a Minewarfare and Clearance Diving Officer**, the proponents of Naval Mine Countermeasures and Explosive Ordnance Disposal. Hawkins then further specialised in 1992 as a Principal Warfare Officer, the officer who 'fights' the ship on behalf of the Command, becoming a proponent of Naval Gunnery. Later his career has been dominated by staff and sea training appointments and, having passed his Sea Command qualifications in 2000, has been honoured to serve in two Command positions at sea: firstly as Executive Officer and Second-in-Command of HMS IRON DUKE, a Type 23 Frigate, then as Commander of the Faslane Patrol Boat Squadron, with the concomitant Command of HMS PURSUER, the squadron's lead P2000 Patrol Boat. **His culminating sea service was as the First Lieutenant in the Fleet Flagship, HMS QUEEN ELIZABETH.**

Cdr Hawkins has seen active service in a number of live operations, including: Operation BANNER, Op SHARPGUARD, Op KEELING, Op KIPION, Op IMPERIOUS, and Op SHADER, covering the diverse theatres of Northern Ireland, Former Republic of Yugoslavia, Sierra Leone, the Arabian Gulf and wider Middle East, and in Scotland protecting the country's nuclear deterrent submarines.

Previously widowed, Bob is married to Trudy. They have three children and are delighted to be grandparents. He makes no apologies for being an avid Fulham Football Club fan, is a former RN (Scotland) and Edinburgh Wanderers RFC rugby player, and a rider of (fast) motorbikes. Appointed as a Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) in the Queen's 2007 New Years Honours List for "services to the Navy, and services to Youth.". Bob's previous assignment was an Operational Tour in U.S. Central Command HQ in Tampa, Florida. He currently serves in the Maritime Operations Centre as SO1 Homeland, responsible for Maritime Security and UK Resilience Ops in the UK Marine Area.

Bob will have some very interesting dits to relate.

TCA ARCHIVES - SITREP

Bill Pollington, Hon Auditor

Members may be interested to know how I am progressing with production of the TCA Inventory of Assets and Historic Records. A copy of the latest draft list has been passed to HonSec and those interested can obtain an electronic copy from him.

To date I have recorded all items in the custody of Chairman, Secretary, Membership Sec, both Standard Bearers and myself. In addition I have recorded and am holding the TON drawings acquired by the late Nobby Hall.

I have a very large box of material sent to me by Clive Dennison which I am still reviewing but have not yet recorded. That will be work in progress for some while.

You will have seen my call for information on page 4 of TON Talk edition 211. So far that has resulted in just one response from member Neil Edden who is also a member of Portsmouth Dockyard Historical Association. Neil is involved in reducing his association's holding of drawings and a significant number of those related to TONs will become available to TCA. However, the sifting is likely to continue for some months. My objective is to secure where possible original drawings on linen, or copies on linen. I will request what I believe to be of interest to TCA.

In due course when I have produced a complete inventory, it will be for the Committee to decide just what is to be retained, and where it will be held, plus any cost implications, including insurance.

Unless a member can offer bulk storage space, individual members are likely to have to continue as custodians. We cannot keep more than can sensibly be accommodated. All surplus items could be offered to members but may, eventually have to be disposed of.

I welcome any thoughts you may have and anticipate wider discussion at the AGM.

The Value of TCA Archives

The Editor consults TCA Archives almost every week, either the consolidated Ship Histories on our website, the photo archives on his laptop or other materials, mainly unsorted documentation and diagrams, cluttering his office. The Facebook page Tonclassmcms and MCDOA website can also be useful sources of information.

The reasons for these searches are usually to answer enquiries received via our website, either from TCA Members or from members of the public, who are often relatives of men who have served in TONs or previous generations of minesweepers. The Editor's personal collection of books on the history of minesweeping and anti-submarine warfare can come in handy in these cases.

Many of the enquiries are about dates of exercises, patrols and occasional armed engagements and the ships involved, but a recent enquiry shows how useful our collection of information, built up over the years from many sources, including the TCA Historical Group, can be for personal, family histories.

Mark Gilmore of Poole recently contacted us about a photograph of his grandfather relaxing aboard WARSASH [below] that he had found among family papers, mainly dating from 1943 concerning his grandfather's service as Surgeon Lieutenant Thomas Brooking-Snell during WW2.



Mark explained "Grandfather died in 1996 and I have always regretted not discussing his war service with him, so any scraps of information I can piece together now mean a

great deal. I recently discovered some of his old negatives which almost certainly have not been viewed since the time they were taken, or indeed ever !

Google reveals the last WARSASH to have been BOULSTON and our Ship Histories show that she was attached to WESSEX Division RNR in March 1960 – May 1969.

Sunbathing at sea suggests warmer climes, so somewhere south.

Our book *Jacks of All Trades* reveals that Boulston/WARSASH participated in ROCKHAUL exercises to Gibraltar in 1963, 1966 and 1967 but also that she was part of Operation STOPGAP in February-March 1965, where three RNR sweepers deployed to the West Indies at short notice to cover for the frigate guardship that had suffered a serious engine defect just prior to sailing.

It would be prudent for the ships to embark a doctor for this deployment, so the probability is that this photo may date from 1965, showing Sugeon Commander Brooking-Snell relaxing from not having to do bridge watchkeeping or supervise part of ship activities - or maybe it was a Make and Mend ...

The photograph also shows the nose of a diverter and tail fins of the Acoustic Displacer Sweep, which may help others of Wessex Division date the photograph more accurately.

Mark believes that his grandfather joined the RNVR in about 1938 at the age of 27. Among other appointments, he served on the battleship RAMILLES and the cruiser LONDON in the East Indies Fleet from 1943-45.

Mark's grandfather retired as a Surgeon Captain RNR in 1968. BOULSTON was broken up in 1974.



Mirrlees to Deltic Conversions

Yet another example of how our website and Archives are used to answer queries. This one from Mark Chaplin, who has no direct naval connections :

"I am researching railway history particularly the Brush Type 2 diesel locomotives, built for British Railways 1957-62. My interest in the TON class minesweepers is because, like the Brush Type 2 locomotives, they used Mirrlees J series diesel engines.

My main interest is in the replacement of the Mirrlees engines with Deltics in the minesweepers, to compare with the British Railways replacement of the Mirrlees engines with English Electric V12s in the Brush Type 2 locomotives ".

By analysing the Ship Histories in "Jacks of All Trades", it was relatively easy for the Editor, to produce a list of the 17 vessels, dates and dockyards for each of the Mirrlees to Deltic conversions.

Regret we do not always know where the conversions took place, except they would have been in a Naval Dockyard.

The time required for an engine swap was probably less than ten days but the opportunity was often taken to combine this conversion with a long refit and upgrades to other equipment. Some of the conversions went straight into Strategic Reserve on completion, others returned to active service, depending upon operational requirements at the time.

Mark continues "... I have some basic engineering questions about the Mirrlees engines in the minesweepers including :

- Was there direct drive from the propulsion engines' crankshafts to the propellers?
- Did the pulse generator engine drive an electric generator and if so which manufacturer/type?
- How were the engines cooled ? .

I have given my guesses to Mark, but would any kindly Tiff or POME with Mirrlees experience offer to assist Mark with his project ? Please contact HonSec in the first instance.

Oh Happy Days ...



VMT to Rob Hoole – Santa and helper on a summer break ...

A couple of locals encountered on the South Downs Way near Chichester at a pub called “The Fox Goes Free” - How apt !

“Looks to me as if they’re a couple of old salts who missed the bus back to the ship and have decided not to worry about being adrift until the beer runs out !”

– Chivs, Stowmarket RNA

SHOREHAM's SUCCESS

from Twitter via Rob Hoole Tonclassmcmvs Facebook page



A tweet from HMS SHOREHAM (MCM1 Crew 7), coming to the end of her deployment in the Gulf on Operation KIPION.

HMS BANGOR (MCM1 Crew 8) is currently en route to relieve her.

"This is what success looks like !

Members of our Ship's Company recently gathered for a photo following a successful period of mine recovery."

Blue Liners and Tobacco Coupons

A Jack Dusty Remembers

Doug Andrews, Ware

Enclosed are what I hope will prove to be amusing anecdotes from those far-off days of 'wooden ships & iron men,' embedded in my memory as if they happened yesterday.

The first one is concerned with that precious privilege, our duty-free entitlements. I am talking here of the early 1950's, when everybody, but everybody, smoked. The weekly visit to the cinema, a trip to the 'local,' on all forms of public transport and even in everyone's home, the air that was breathed was thick with tobacco smoke, and this was regarded as normal. Both my parents were smokers, and as a youngster with a bike, I was frequently sent off to buy yet another packet of Gold Flake for my father, and my very tender age was not questioned.

My older brother had graduated through Sea Cadets into RNVR, which secured his passage into the RN for National Service, and he was eagerly welcomed home on seasonal leave, bringing with him his entitlement of 200 'blue liners,' i.e. R. N. cigarettes, which our parents shared - a welcome contribution to their weekly budget. I duly followed him into RNVR then into the Navy, so I was well briefed for the basic interview in Victoria Barracks, Pompey. Yes, the vitally important question was asked as to my religion (should the worst happen, in order that I could be accorded the correct funeral), followed by 'Do you, or do you not SMOKE?'

I know, with the benefit of 70 years' hindsight, what the reply should have been, but I answered 'Yes,' whereupon a Smokers' Declaration was firmly stuck into the back of my paybook, and my duty-free entitlement was secure for the duration of my service.

Having survived Victoria Barracks (acquired from the Army after centuries of occupation by them had ended when the barracks were regarded as 'unfit for human habitation', whereupon the Navy moved in) our New Entry Class went on draft to HMS Ceres near Wetherby, Yorkshire - in February, it should be noted, not the best time for an enjoyable stay. Then followed our serious training, in which the Navy systematically took its new recruits to pieces, then rebuilt them in its own image. I note from my Service Certificate that my starting rate of pay was actually 'five bob a day' - yes, five shillings, or 25p in modern parlance, and back then, the ship's company was paid fortnightly, with tobacco coupons issued once a month with one's pay. This process involved 'clearing lower deck' and falling in by divisions in the drill shed, then marching up to the pay table when your turn came, to 'off caps' and report your name & official number, whereupon your pay was placed on your cap. The money was swiftly pocketed, the cap replaced and you marched smartly away.

In my era, it was a wise move to make an allotment of pay 'home to Mum', because the Navy thereupon paid an additional sum to her, and this is what I must have done, because my diary of that time shows that on one payday I received £2.00 a fortnight with £2.50 the following one - unless, that is, the Establishment's monthly magazine The Star was on sale (by Wrens) costing 2/- a copy, and on THAT payday, my pay would be £2. 2s. 0d.

Woe betide anyone who failed to buy a copy, because this slight lapse would considerably increase the likelihood that your hair would, in the opinion of the eagle-eyed Master-at-Arms, require cutting immediately, and called for the swift surrender of your Station Card ! The R N cigarettes cost 2/6d (that is, 12½p in decimal money) per 100, and the basic allowance of 200 per person was for barracks and shore establishment personnel in this country. This increased when serving in arduous conditions, on ships at sea, plus foreign service, with the added attraction of a good range of branded cigarettes. Having put to sea, it was necessary for the ship to exceed the three-mile limit off-shore before breaking out the 'duty frees,' and I distinctly remember that, having departed Newhaven for Invergordon/Denmark & beyond for my first period of training on a 'TON' - in 1957, 'Thames/Alverton' - how quickly we were legally able to do so ! Whilst mentioning that particular trip, at the end of the 'cruising season' (?) over the weekend Friday 11th to Sunday 13th October it was necessary to convey Thames from Newhaven to Sheerness to lay her up for the winter, but it was felt that there may be difficulties in forming a crew for such a short trip, so a brief jolly was included by popping across to Boulogne along the way ! Out came the branded duty frees, plus the daily tot, and we were a happy crew. With very limited time ashore, most of my messmates opted for a large 'parfumerie' (complete with statuesque blonde and white clipped poodle on the counter), intent on buying scent for their other halves. As usual, this process involved the obligatory 'squirt' on the forearm in order to sample the chosen product, and I have often speculated as to how many of my mates had some serious difficulties in explaining away, the strange 'foreign' odours emanating from their serge uniform if the atmosphere inside the coach bringing us home from Sheerness was anything to go by. It would not have been out of place in a lady's boudoir ! After arriving in Sheerness, we did not moor alongside as normal, but left the ship moored to a buoy - with the help of our very own buoy-jumper - see photo, and were ferried ashore in a launch.

It had been drilled into us from the word go that the duty free privilege was solely for one's own 'consumption', and it therefore followed that if you merely offered a messmate one of your cigarettes, you could find yourself 'on a charge.' Furthermore, the long-suffering residents of Wetherby had complained more than once to the commanding officer about carelessly discarded cigarette packets in and around the town. The whole ship's company was therefore under strict instructions to break open both packets of 100 and write their name, rate & official number on each individual packet of twenty as soon as they were purchased from 'Slops,' again under scrutiny. This was presumably designed to (1) eliminate the sale of cigarettes between

messmates, and (2) offending the locals with the litter. Whilst this measure may have succeeded with the latter, it failed dismally with the former, since Jack, in his usual efficient manner, merely took the tray of cigarettes out of the cardboard cover, and sold the 'middle bit,' destroying his own outer covering in the process!

Corruption in High Places.

A little later on in my (brief) naval career, I was sent on draft to HMS Jupiter, the base in the Gareloch (now Neptune), and the buzz at that time was that the manning of it was being swapped from Portsmouth to Chatham, and I and a few others were the vanguard. Settling into the Jack Dusty's Mess, I was given the job they most wanted to get rid of - that of carrying out both the day-to-day paperwork, and the actual process of issuing the daily tot of rum. Having a certain aptitude with figures, and an ability with 'cleaning things' (think of all those copper spirit measures, pump, funnel etc., duly gleaming for Captain's Rounds every Saturday forenoon) I think I coped quite well.

One lunchtime, just after the issue of rum had been completed and the gash ditched over the side, a rating who had just joined the ship tried to persuade us to re-open the Spirit Room to issue his tot, but I told him that unfortunately, he was too late. He queried this with the Officer of the Day, who confirmed the position. From then on, he bore a grudge!

A month or so later, I had failed to read the daily orders, and was totally unaware that, when duties swapped over at mid-day, I was 'duty.' Enjoying the fresh air on the upper deck after lunch, I did not hear the pipe for me to issue potatoes from the 'spud locker,' and I was swiftly 'run in' by the tot-less chap I/we had previously upset. Taking up my invitation to appear at Captain's Defaulters, I duly appeared before the First Lieutenant (Jimmy-the-One), doubling up to the Table and 'off-ing' my cap. My Divisional Officer spoke quite highly of me, and since it was my first offence, I was merely 'awarded' two hours' extra work for my sins.

Now my normal daily routine meant that I had to visit the Master-at-Arms' Office every day to obtain details of any crew members joining or leaving that day, were under punishment or in sick bay (both of which involved the stoppage of their tot) and so on. I therefore had a good working relationship with both the M.A.A and the Regulating Petty Officer (the Jaunty and the Crusher, respectively), so when the RPO saw me after I had just been 'weighed off,' he asked "What did you get, lad?" "Two hours' extra work, R.P.O" I replied, whereupon he wrote my name in felt pen on the Punishment Board. "Doesn't look very good, does it?" he asked, then said "Tell me, were you planning on going ashore this evening?" "Yes, I was, RPO" I answered. "Well, you still can, if you wish, because the Master-at-Arms is on short weekend leave this weekend, and if his tot is not stopped, you can go ashore - do we have a deal?" "Yes, we do RPO!" As a result, the Master's single tot was duly collected from the Issue Room by his messman in his customary bottle with no one who was 'in the know' that He was

away batting an eyelid, and I went ashore with my mates that evening. The two hours extra work remain undone to this day!

Same ship, same crew but a few weeks later, I was approached by the Master-at-Arms (as a breed, they all seem to have been issued with rubber-soled shoes and could appear out of nowhere completely unheard) and he posed a question which immediately put me in a spot. I was asked if I could possibly sell Him a cigarette coupon ! My brief nautical career flashed before my eyes, since if I said 'Yes,' both he & I knew that I would be breaking Q.R's & A. I's and could be 'in the rattle'; but if I said 'No' (he must already have been aware that I was only a 'cosmetic smoker') - he could make my life absolute hell from that day on. I therefore made a snap decision and sold him one, whereupon 5/- changed hands, and my life continued unruffled, as before.

Finally, because I had only ever appeared on the end of a lighted cigarette to justify my continued entitlement to them, I gave up my smoking habit as soon as I was demobbed without the slightest difficulty, but if I needed an incentive to do so, merely proceeding from half-a-crown a hundred to five shillings for twenty would have been sufficient. Fifty or so years later, after I had explained to my doctor during a check-up that I had once smoked cosmetically because it had been financially beneficial to do so, but that I hadn't touched a cigarette in over forty years, he added a note to my medical records 'history of smoking' that is presumably there for all time.....



*HMS THAMES and Buoy Jumping the easy way
– No agility from the bows of the seaboat ...*

OFF TO SEA WITH BLUE STAR SHIP MANAGEMENT

Philip Carroll, Gosport



Blue Star

Lamport & Holt

Booth

ACT

Starman

Austasia

Funnel badges of Blue Star Ship Management Ltd (ACT = Associated Container Transportation)

In about February and March in the Final Year at university, the Milk Round occurs. National and multinational companies and conglomerates tour Britain's universities to explain what they do and attract students to apply for their respective graduate entry schemes.

I did not know what I wanted to do for a career, so I spent time in the Careers Office at Newcastle University thumbing through brochures and lists of companies scheduled to visit Newcastle, all offering much the same type of Graduate Entry Trainee Manager programmes.

Despite enjoying my time in the University's Officers Training Corps, I had lost interest in applying to become an Infantry Officer, as I no longer felt attracted to spending decades grubbing around in mud and discomfort at risk of being shot or blown up. Then I came across an advertisement for Blue Star Ship Management (BSSM) which involved going to sea in the Merchant Navy. Now, that looked pretty exciting : sail the world, visit all sorts of interesting places, and get paid for it.

I submitted my application form and was invited for interview at Albion House, BSSM's headquarters in Liverpool. A selection board comprising the Cadet Training Manager; a serving Master; a serving Chief Officer; and one of the lecturers at Liverpool Polytechnic, conducted the interview. I must have impressed in some way, as, having also passed the medical examination and eye-sight test, I was offered a job as Officer Trainee (O/T), commencing in September 1980, with a starting salary of £3,823 and 183 days annual leave earned as one day for every two served at sea.

Readers may not have heard of BSSM and Blue Star Line, however many will remember Dewhurst the Master Butcher, a branch of which was to be found in almost every British high street. Blue Star and Dewhurst were directly linked due to one very wealthy family: the Vestey's, the second wealthiest family in UK after the Royal Family.

In 1876, the founder, William Vestey, was sent to work in Chicago stockyards to scout for business opportunities and noted how much meat was wasted. He teamed up with his brother Edmund in UK and they established a factory to can this surplus as corned beef and export it to Britain. They quickly realised that imported meat could be even more valuable if it were fresh rather than canned, tapping into the vast supplies of beef in the Americas to meet demand in the UK. The invention of ammonia-compression plant meant refrigerated shipments became possible and the Vestey fortunes took a great leap forward.

By the early 20th century, the Vestey's had established cold storage businesses in Liverpool, Manchester, London, Hull, and an outpost in pre-revolutionary Russia. They imported eggs from China (40,000 tonnes in 1939) and meat from New Zealand, Venezuela and Brazil. Vestey's also began a retail business in Britain (JH Dewhurst), which by the early 1990s was the UK's largest chain of butchers. In 1911, they expanded into meat production, processing and distribution, with

pastoral properties and meatworks in Venezuela, Australia and Brazil, and meatworks in New Zealand and Argentina. In London, they bought stalls in Smithfield Market. Three years later, they established the North Australia Meat Company in Darwin, and bought Wave Hill Station (1200 square miles) in Northern Territory.

When Prime Minister David Lloyd George refused the Vestey's request for exemption from income tax, the brothers decamped to Buenos Aires in 1915 to avoid paying UK income tax. This enabled the family to legally avoid an estimated total of £88m in UK tax until the loophole was closed in 1991.

By the 1920s, Union Cold Storage was the largest cold storage company in the world, employed 30,000 people, owned 450,000 cattle on ranches in Australia, South America and South Africa, handled 20% of Britain's frozen meat imports, and operated a third of the country's cold storage capacity. In 1980, a Sunday Times investigation revealed that in 1978, the Dewhurst chain had paid just £10 tax on a profit of more than £2.3 million.

Meanwhile, the Vestey's cut out the middle man by building their own refrigerated ships and founded Blue Star Line in 1909. A decade or so later, it was the largest refrigerated fleet in the world. During the Second World War, most Blue Star vessels were commandeered by the British Government and carried much needed food to the UK. Their ships were fast and sailed unaccompanied. By the end of World War 2, twenty-nine Blue Star Line ships had been sunk and 646 Blue Star crew lost their lives. Famously, *Doric Star* was sunk by the *Graf Spee*, whilst *Arandora Star* was lost to a U-Boat off the west coast of Ireland.

Melbourne Star and *Brisbane Star* were part of the famous Malta convoy in August 1942 that included the tanker *Ohio*. Both ships suffered bomb damage but survived to bring their vital cargoes safely into harbour..

Before airline travel became easier and the evolution of today's mass cruising holidays, Blue Star Line operated passenger-carrying cargo vessels. Pre- and post-World War 2, Blue Star established a reputation for first class cruising. Fine examples were the A-class ships (*Argentina Star*, *Brazil Star*, *Paraguay Star* and *Uruguay Star*) which carried 68 passengers and a cargo of hanging chilled beef on a 7-week round trip between UK and South America. Traditional passenger services ceased in 1972.

Blue Star operated worldwide and acquired Lamport & Holt Line and Booth Line in the 1960s. This allowed ships from one company to be re-badged to another in the group depending on evolving trade routes. In the late 1960s, containerisation loomed. Blue Star Line expanded as one of the founding partners of Associated Container Transportation (ACT), managing four of ACT's seven modular container ships. Austasia Line was formed in 1952 to operate services between Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia and Australia.

This conglomeration of shipping lines led to the creation of Blue Star Ship Management (BSSM) in 1975, placing all ships, regardless of house flag, under one umbrella organisation. Finally, BSSM entered the heavy lift environment via Starman Shipping and acquired two such vessels by 1977: *Starman America* and *Starman Anglia*.

When I joined, BSSM's fleet comprised over thirty ships engaged in global trade and I was fortunate to have trips on all types of BSSM vessel and sail under every house flag except Lamport & Holt.

Prior to starting at BSSM, a kit list was issued. My mother and I spent some time trawling around naval outfitters in Pompey for the required white shirts, black trousers, cummerbund, tie, cap (with MN badge). Other purchases were a new pair of Doc Marten boots and boiler suits as these were essential for work on deck. Waterproof trousers and jacket were also necessary. My mother also bought me my formal uniform.

In September 1980, I set off from Gosport to drive 280-miles to New Brighton in my Morris Marina, loaded with all my kit and suitable 'civvies'.

Officer Trainees (O/Ts) were accommodated in the Belgravia Hotel; a typical British seaside hotel, built in the 1930s and had a licensed bar. I checked in and struggled up the stairs with my luggage to my room, which was typical of a traditional seaside hotel; no en-suite facilities but at least it had a wash basin..

That evening, Mr Burke, BSSM's Cadet Training Manager responsible for the O/Ts, had arranged a meet-and-greet in the bar. There were thirteen of us in this intake. We chatted amongst ourselves; introductions were made, welcomes proffered on behalf of the company and then a briefing about the next few weeks.

Traditionally the British Merchant Navy had recruited A-level entrants onto Deck Cadet and Engineering Cadet training programmes; lads joined straight from school, completed a cadetship of about four years and then started their career in earnest. BSSM noticed that the industry was not attracting enough suitable youngsters to fill their vacancies, so to meet the shortfall in junior deck officer numbers, BSSM were the only British company to recruit graduates to train as deck officers.

Graduates were unlikely to remain forever in sea-going roles, patiently doing the time required to qualify as Master and then wait umpteen years for a Master's vacancy – usually dead-man's shoes. Thus, BSSM expected many of us to leave after a few years' service but, meantime, we would fill the junior deck officer posts that they were having trouble filling with 'normal' school-leaver entrants.

Mr Burke explained all the above and the contents of this introduction phase and the subsequent college phases. We would be issued with a Merchant Navy Training Board (MNTB) task book to complete and the college's self-study modules whilst away at sea. Finally, he stated that the scheme had been running for several years, had proved successful, and that we thirteen had been selected from about 1200 applicants. After questions and general conversation, he departed and left us to carry on socialising in the bar. It was a bit of a late night.

Next day, we travelled by rail to Liverpool Polytechnic and found the Department of Maritime Studies on the sixth floor of the main building. Liverpool Polytechnic was renamed Liverpool John Moores University in a subsequent re-organisation of tertiary Education.

The academic staff were all experienced Merchant Navy Masters and had commanded a variety of cargo ships during their respective sea-going careers. Head of Department was Captain Holder, who we occasionally saw, but the bulk of our lessons were conducted by Captain Moore and Captain Watson. Captain Bole was also on the scene to teach us about electronic navigation systems, the principles and practice of radar, gyros and other 'wiggly-amp' stuff.

The purpose of the initial phase was to prepare us to go to sea so we would have some idea of how a ship operated (at sea and in port), day-to-day routine, on-board organisation. In addition, we were introduced to the subjects in which we would be examined in three years' time. Chartwork, navigation, mathematics, and physics were the basic building blocks. Chartwork and navigation were obvious topics in which one must gain proficiency as a deck officer. Mathematics focused on spherical trigonometry and familiarisation with Nories' Tables, a thick book of mathematical tables used to calculate position from observing the sun, moon, stars and planets using a sextant. Haversines were, for the moment, incomprehensible. I still have my old copy of Nories on a bookshelf at home. Physics encompassed basic science, as applied in the maritime environment.

One other academic subject was quite nebulous: General Ship Knowledge (GSK). This comprised anything to do with ships, including stability, cargo work and equipment, ship construction, meteorology, seamanship, and a multitude of other topics. Finally, two subjects which could prove to be one's downfall in the final examinations: morse code and Rule of the Road (ROR).


The standard required in morse code was to read a flashing light at six words per minute. Rule of the Road (International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea 1972) was definitely a hazardous subject. Part of the final examination series was an oral exam with the Principal Examiner of Masters and Mates wherein one had to achieve 100% accuracy in answering questions on the contents of this very slim booklet which comprised 38 Rules and four Annexes at that time. This does not sound like much in terms of volume, however the content was extremely detailed and laden with pitfalls

We completed a two-day fire-fighting course at Liverpool Speke Airport (named John Lennon Airport since 2001). The airport fire service training centre instructed us in dealing with ship-board fires with hand-held fire extinguishers and foam and water pressurised hoses. The training ground included a gas-fired ship fire-fighting module, a large steel cube representative of the interior of a ship: a couple of decks, hatches, doorways, ladders, compartments. Therein we conducted a few practical exercises fully dressed in fireman suit and breathing apparatus, clambered around inside the unit in intense heat whilst manhandling heavy charged hoses. Movement and mobility were hampered by the fireman's suit, the weight of the breathing apparatus strapped to one's back and hefting the high-pressure water hoses. It was an exciting and novel experience but frightening to translate this into real life on a large ship pitching and rolling at sea, possibly at night, and with nowhere to escape, except over the side into a lifeboat.

Finally, we completed a two-day sea survival course, which introduced us to life-rafts, their hydrostatic release mechanism, distress radio beacons, correct donning of a standard Department of Trade lifejacket and how to enter the sea wearing it.

I enjoyed this initial training phase, learning new subjects relevant to my newly chosen career at sea. Armed with new-found knowledge and limited expertise, we were on leave until Mr Burke notified us of our first ship, where and when to join her. Armed with my Discharge Book and British Seaman's Card, (see below) my globe-trotting odyssey was about to begin !



<p>Page 3</p> <p>All particulars to be in BLOCK CAPITALS</p> <p>BRITISH SEAMAN'S CARD</p> <p>NAME <u>CARROLL</u></p> <p>ENTER NAME <u>PHILIP JOHN</u></p> <p>DATE (at Discharge) <u>27.11.58</u> Place <u>GREENPORT</u></p> <p>Height <u>5' 9"</u></p> <p>Colour of Eyes <u>BLUE</u></p> <p>Discharge Book No. <u>UK 063656</u></p> <p>Signature <u>BRITISH</u></p> <p>Home Address <u>27 LANCASHIRE DR</u> <u>BLUES TIRE GREEN, GREENPORT</u></p> <p>National Insurance No. <u>WE 27 09 53 A</u></p>	<p>Page 4</p> <p>BRITISH SEAMAN'S CARD PARTICULARS</p> <p>Serial No. <u>109752</u> B</p> <p>Photograph of Holder</p>  <p>Preaching Stamp</p> <p>Signature of Holder</p> <p><u>PJ Carroll</u></p> <p>or, if Holder is unable to sign, his description stating right or left, and signature of a witness</p>
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We look forward to learning more of Phil's adventures as his career in the Merchant Service unfolds.
... Editor

DELTICs – The Reasons Why

Nigel Paine, Editor - Napier Heritage News

I enjoyed the latest issue of TON Talk, especially the "Bad Day in Lagos" since it reminded me of the reason why the Deltic engines fitted in the TONs originally came to be.

During WW2 the Allied fleet of Motor Torpedo Boats were all powered by marinised aircraft engines from manufacturers including Rolls-Royce, Packard and especially D.Napier & Son. Motor torpedo boats had to be light and highly manoeuvrable, so they were built of wood and armour plating kept to a minimum. MTBs had to come in close range for a shot at their targets however their manoeuvrability meant that they could avoid being hit by the enemies' defences. These marinised aero engines were ideal for these vessels since they were lightweight and powerful. Ideal that is except for one major flaw they were fuelled by petrol (generally 100 octane gasoline).

As an MTB's fuel tanks emptied they filled with petrol vapour. This vapour is heavier than air and as little as 3% vapour mixed with 97% of air forms a rather explosive mixture. So, as fuel was consumed a boat's vulnerability to a naked flame, be it from a shell, bullet, cigarette end or even lighting a stove, steadily increased. Often crew had to live with the smell of petrol fumes for much of the time. During combat, a direct hit to a boat's engine compartment or fuel tank could result in the total loss of boat and crew. In harbour the crew used Valor paraffin stoves for cabin heating which sometimes ignited the fumes and allegedly blew the roofs of the deckhouses off !

One of the most graphic illustrations of the vulnerability of these boats occurred in in Ostend Harbour on 14th February 1945. By 1945 Belgium was in Allied hands and Ostend Harbour was used as a base for a fleet of Royal Navy and Royal Canadian Navy MTBs as well as the No.1 Coastal Forces Mobile Unit (C.F.M.U.1). The purpose of this Unit was to keep the MTBs operational and ready for action at short notice. Engineering and repair work was carried out during the day, since the MTBs mainly operated at night. The MTBs operating from the harbour were mainly British owned but manned by Canadians.

At the time of the accident the harbour was crowded with MTBs and support vessels. There were eleven "Short" MTBs and five "Fairmile "D" MTBs berthed in the Creek area of the harbour. A further thirteen "D" or similar MTBs and three Motor Launches were in the main harbour alongside the C.F.M.U. Building. Vessels were grouped in Trots of three or four MTB's moored together. Six of the sixteen MTBs present in the Creek area were undergoing repairs and maintenance. Several vessels had taken on contaminated fuel from the tanker "Pass of Balata" and consequently had been discharging water from the tanks. This work was completed with the assistance of C.F.M.U.1. engineers to who ensured the work was carried out safely. Each time this

operation was carried out a varying amount of fuel was discharged into the harbour. This procedure had gone against Navy standing orders that did not permit the discharge of noxious substances overboard when in harbour and it was often unclear when all of the water had been removed. . .

During the week running up to 14th February 1945 Petty Officer Motor Mechanic F.A. Waldon had tried unsuccessfully to remove the water contamination from the petrol tanks of MTB 464. He had reported the problem to his First Lieutenant, Sub Lieutenant G.M. Hobart who, in turn, reported it to C.F.M.U.1. However nothing had been done because they were too busy and short of staff. Waldon was keen to get his boat back in full running order and had attempted to pump the water into buckets and put it over the side. On the day in question MTB 464 had set off for gunnery trials but returned because the sea was too rough and the centre engine had been stopped because of water contamination. Upon inspection Waldon found that there were still several inches of water remaining in the central petrol tank. Once again he went to the C.F.M.U. to report the problem but could find no responsible person. So he returned to MTB 464 and between 15.15 and 15.35 hours, with only the help of a stoker, he attempted to remove the remaining water estimated at fifty gallons of fluid. This was carried out unsupervised and with no specific orders. They inserted a long rubber hose through the sounding tube of the centre fuel tank and connected it to the MTB's mechanical bilge pump. The pump was turned on and the water pumped out. Any sludge in the tank discoloured the green colouring matter in the 100 octane petrol making it indistinguishable from the harbour water. In addition neither Waldon nor the stoker saw the moment when the liquid being discharge changed from water to petrol. Finally, there was a time lag between the sighting of the discharge of petrol and stopping of the bilge pump, all resulting in a large quantity of petrol being discharged which then sat on the surface of the water in the harbour.

At 15.35 the Commanding Officer of MTB 611 along with his First Lieutenant and Coxswain detected the strong smell of petrol when coming into berth. Before disembarking he gave instructions to ascertain the source of the smell on his MTB. Similarly the Commanding Officers of MTBs 766 and 791 remarked to each other about the petrol smell on MTB 791 and decided that it probably originated from the exhaust from the on-board generator. Similarly at around 15.58 the Commanding Officer of MTB 798 also noticed the strong smell of petrol. In every case they neglected to raise the alarm about the smell and potential safety risk.

Whilst the true cause is unknown, there is a strong likelihood that a discarded cigarette end started the fire. At around 16.02 as the petrol, which had spread across its surface, rapidly ignited in the Creek between the bows of MTBs 462 and 465. The fire almost immediately spread to eight boats in two trots, all of which were consequently destroyed. Within three minutes of the outbreak there was an explosion on either MTB 462 or 465, which threw a huge amount of burning debris into the air and added a large quantity of petrol to the fire, which in turn caused the explosion of torpedoes, depth

charges, etc. Further boats were now ablaze however three MTBs in Trot "A" escaped the fire by the quick action of Stoker L. Young who started the main engines of MTB 485 and moved the vessels as far away from the fire as possible. The fire spread to four MTBs in a berth immediately after the first explosion; all but one was destroyed. MTB 789 was lying to the South of the Creek and badly damaged by the first two explosions and then capsized after a third where it remained afloat but overturned. The boats were closely berthed often three abreast making it difficult to get crews from boats in the centre to safety. Men dived into the water swimming for safety whilst explosions, which shattered windows up to a quarter of a mile away, ripped more MTBs wide open. For the next two hours explosions of fuel tanks, torpedoes and other munitions wreaked carnage around the entire harbour. This is recorded as the worst disaster for the Coastal Forces during the Second World War.

The fire resulted in the following toll:

- MTBs 255, 438, 444, 459, 461, 462, 465, 466, 776, 789, 791 & 798 destroyed
- MTBs 443, 464, 511, 762 & 771 damaged and repairable
- 64 officers and ratings killed
- 65 officers and ratings injured
- 9 civilians killed
- At least 14 civilians injured
- Not to mention the damage to buildings, quays and wharves in Ostend.

A full report of this disaster is located in National Archive files ADM 116/5493 and ADM 116/6077. The report covers all of the circumstances of the accident and contains many comments and recommendations made to improve MTB safety. Short-term efforts were made to improve safety on petrol engine vessels including regular venting of petrol vapour and the insertion of an inert gas into the tanks. Within the report was the following comment:

"To berth these heavily armed, petrol driven and therefore highly inflammable boats safely in any harbour would be difficult and require such an amount of dispersion as to be administratively inconvenient. The real solution is to construct Diesel boats which are neither so potentially dangerous to their crews nor need so much maintenance. It is understood that the Germans use Diesel driven boats which are faster than our own."

It is interesting to note that the first recommendation of the report states:

“Owing to the grave risk of fire and explosion inherent in petrol engine Coastal Force craft it is recommended that diesel engine boats should be introduced as soon as possible.”

The Engineer-in-Chief for the Royal Navy noted on 30th June 1945 that he was aware of this recommendation and commented that the Admiralty was already dealing with the matter. In fact the Admiralty had been seriously investigating the use of diesel engines in MTBs since October 1943 when “The M.T.B. Power Unit Committee” under the leadership of Sir Roy Fedden first convened. D Napier & Son were represented on this committee and several diesel engine proposals were submitted including a diesel engine equivalent of the Napier Sabre and also an 18-cylinder engine constructed in a triangular arrangement of six banks of three cylinders. To cut a long story short the triangular engine in the shape of an inverted Greek 'Delta' was born and the 2,500 BHP Deltic 18-11B engine fitted in the Royal Navy's new fleet of Dark Class MTBs.

In 1955 M1130 HMS Highburton had been fitted with two de-rated Deltic 18-7A engines of 1,500 BHP and underwent first of class sea trials with these engines. The rest as we say is history since new-build TONs were subsequently fitted with these engines and early Mirrlees power vessels converted.

Later the Hunt Class M.C.M.V were fitted with 9-cylinder Deltics and were only recently converted to Caterpillar. The Deltic engine has been fitted in Royal Navy vessels continuously for over 60 years, which must be some kind of record.



A New Village Relationship

Councillor David Bramhall, Blaxton

David Bramhall contacted TCA in May through our website. He is a Parish Councillor in the village of Blaxton, near Doncaster and had discovered that a TON had been named for the village and wished to find out more.

Thanks to the legacy of the TCA Historical Group, this was quite an easy matter. The Ship's History revealed that BLAXTON had only a short Operational Life in the RN but it included participation in Op Musketeer, the Suez landings in 1956 (C.O. Lt Cdr F.D. Willis). Then, after spending many years in Strategic Reserve in Singapore and Gibraltar, she was sold to the Irish Navy and re-named FOLA, where she had an active career – see "Last of the Wooden Walls".

Two TCA members served in BLAXTON: George Lea, for many years our Stores Officer, was a Signaller in her when first commissioned and George Robertson was an ERA in the maintenance party which had charge of her in 1966.

Details of the ship's history and a dramatic photo of BLAXTON at Suez [below], with Whirlwind helicopters flying in Royal Marines from OCEAN and THESEUS, have been passed to the Parish Council and are now on display in the village hall, together with a ship's badge.



Councillor Bramhall advises; I am ex-Navy and served mainly on Type 42's based in Portsmouth. Through EBD I transferred myself into the ME Dept, although I was a greenie (OEM) by trade ,and finished my time in the Navy as a Tiffy.

I joined NURTON on loan draft after Christmas leave in 1982 while at Pompey FMG, it was a perk for the senior guys at FMG to get these so called jollies ... so I suppose I had a snap shot of life onboard a TON, but to this day I have mixed feelings !!!

So early January 1982, after going down to VERNON to find NURTON was under sailing orders but I had nothing but what I was stood up in, so I had to race home to get some kit PDQ

I remember there were a few sweepers going out together, but due to bad weather in the channel the other sweepers headed into Brighton I believe, but NURTON was on a tight schedule and continued heading on up to Rosyth for work up.

Unfortunately for me I was sick as a parrot, having never suffered seasickness before in the mob. Plus going into work up on an unfamiliar vessel I had no idea of DC electrics as a LMEM(L) and only use to AC ships and especially Type 42's. So it was a steep learning curve, while being every shade of green.

My mind is quit blurred about that period onboard, it was damned hectic. I remember it was b*** cold in Rosyth, and the fresh water lines in the dockyard were frozen, so water was tight onboard and personal hygiene became a bit of an issue. We were like diesel boat submariners; overalls, white seaman's jumpers and beards.

I learnt a new skill by operating the main winch while sweeping, I thought I'd get hypothermia it was that b*** cold in the Firth of Forth, but the highlight was seeing an Mine Disposal Weapon detonated during one of the exercises.

So, my time onboard was short, and before I knew it I was back in Pompey and the guy I was relieving came back; the crew were brilliant, a very close knit working team, but my time was up and off I went back to Portsmouth FMG to await my draft in April to HMS Sheffield, which is another story.



Inauguration of BLAXTON's badge, picture and history in the Village Hall with, Left to Right: Councillors David Bramhall, , Norma McCarron and John Scutt.

Councillors Richard Johnson and Sarah Lee and Parish Clerk Pam Reeves also assisted with this project.

Sartorial Elegance

Among the photographs discovered by Mark Gilmore [see page 6] is this one taken by his grandfather Surgeon Lieutenant Thomas Brooking-Snell aboard HMS RAMILLES in the East Indies Fleet, probably in 1942/43.



The group of officers appears to be taking their ease, on the Quarter Deck, probably during the First Dog Watch. In the bigger ships, officers would gather and stroll on the quarterdeck while sailors relaxed on other parts of the upper deck, especially the foc'stle. For the really active, games of deck hockey could be arranged.

Their footwear attracted the Editor's attention and sparked a few memories, as it was the subject of some dispute when the TONs were in Singapore Naval Base in the early 1960's.

The officer with his stockings rolled down to his ankles would certainly have been reprimanded for being "Improperly Dressed" but black shoes with white shorts were obviously acceptable at the time.

In our time, the correct lower adornment for officers was Pussers Long Shorts, long white stockings and white shoes; however the stockings seldom survived the Chinese laundryman and soon developed unsightly wrinkles and would not stay up. [Garters could only be worn on Friday night and then only by officers of a certain persuasion ..].

Work on deck in sweepers was frequently dirty and greasy, so the lightweight white shoes suffered. We did not have time to keep touching up the blanco, so we wore black shoes, or horror – went barelegged with sandals, same as Jack.

This caused consternation if we had to go ashore to HMS TERROR barracks, where the blood pressure of Staff Officers would be raised by the piratical habits of minesweeper personnel. They were not impressed by our preference for rugby shirts etc on the sweepedeck either.

The ship appears to be at anchor but I am not certain about the role of the rating holding a **white flag**.

Red and Green flags were used when working with berthing wires to indicate a risk of fouling a screw if a wire dropped into the water and I cannot think that the ship would be streaming a stern anchor with all those loafers on deck getting in the way, **so I will have to ask any TCA members who also served on capital ships if they can explain.**

Another impressive set of photos records the surrender of Japanese forces in Subang, Java, to Commodore Poland on the Quarterdeck of HMS LONDON with a Royal Marines guard.



The chap on the right of this photo on the left, is the Headman [pengurus] of Subang, wearing formal dress including songkok hat, baju jacket and sejenis scarf. Presumably he had been invited to witness the Japanese surrender. The officer striding across the deck wearing USN Khakis is Lt Haamus of the Royal Netherlands Navy, presumably on liaison duties, as the Dutch regained control of their East Indies provinces after Japanese occupation and prior to the formation of Indonesia.



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 MIDDLETON (MCM2 Crew 7) and CHIDDINGFOLD (2/1) plus the Sandown class MCMVs BANGOR (1/8) and PENZANCE (1/1), all supported by RFA LYME BAY. While *en route* to the Gulf to relieve BROCKLESBY (2/6) and SHOREHAM (1/7) respectively, MIDDLETON and BANGOR visited Lisbon, Gibraltar, Augusta in Sicily and Souda Bay in Crete. PENZANCE has been working with CTF-52 units of the US Navy's 5th Fleet to put REMUS unmanned autonomous underwater vehicles through their paces.

In mid-August, AB (CS) Bywater of CHIDDINGFOLD provided a *cordon bleu* meal for a visit by the Deputy UK Maritime Component Commander Middle East in Bahrain. While their ship was alongside in Jebel Ali in the UAE in August, SHOREHAM's divers had the privilege of plunging 60m to the bottom of the world's largest artificial pool, Deep Dive Dubai, prior to its official opening. The team unfurled the White Ensign, lifted weights and played chess in the pool.

HUNT Class

BROCKLESBY has returned to her base at Portsmouth after being relieved in the Gulf by MIDDLETON. She will celebrate 40 years of RN service next year. During her three years in the Gulf, she steamed 150,000 nm, completed 6 crew changes and participated in 18 operations/exercises. In early August, LEDBURY (2/7) was guard ship for Cowes week. In mid-August, HURWORTH (2/5) hosted Mr John Birch whose father, Lt Cdr Johnny Birch, commanded the Hunt class destroyer HMS HURWORTH in which he was awarded the DSO and DSC and took part in many of the battles that make up today's HURWORTH's battle honours.

SANDOWN Class

BLYTH (1/2) and RAMSEY were decommissioned at Rosyth on 4 August. They are to be refurbished and transferred to the Ukraine after 51 years of combined service. This will leave only five Sandowns in the RN MCM flotilla. SHOREHAM has returned to her base at Faslane after being relieved in the Gulf by BANGOR. PEMBROKE (1/4) has been undergoing weapon training in UK waters following a maintenance period.

MASTT (Maritime Autonomous Systems Trials Team)

RNMBs HEBE, HAZARD and HARRIER, autonomous MCM vessels, were spotted arriving in Ardrossan on 23 August to commence a series of trials.

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

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

None – Second period running ...

CHANGED E-MAIL ADDRESS

John Vaughan. F2417

LOST CONTACT.

Anyone knowing current address please advise Membership Secretary

Simon Foley. Last Known Address:- London F1488

Godfrey R Avery Last Known Address:- Basingstoke Hampshire F0672

RESIGNED *May fair winds attend you*

Rev Andrew C G Scott. Plymouth. Chaplin F0651.



HMS WESTMINSTER heading for the North Sea following a visit to the Free and Hanseatic Port of Hamburg.

Photo taken by TCA Member Kapitan zur See Hans Andresen from near to his apartment on the banks of the River Elbe.



Crossed the Bar

Lt Cdr John Robbie RNR

Killearn, Glasgow, L0020

*Served in HM Ships AMERTON 1962-70, REPTON 1971-74,
Claverhouse (Edinburgh Division) RNR. Our first Historian*

Vice Admiral Sir Rory Mclean CB, OBE

Not a TCA member but known to many.

*A Fleet Air Arm pilot, he commanded HM Ships JUPITER, BRAZEN, FEARLESS
and INVINCIBLE and was Director of Plans.*

MEM John Carroll RN

Ludham, Norfolk F2391

Served on HM Ships BRONINGTON 1968, CHILCOMPTON 1968-69

A.B Percy Bailey RN

Eastbourne Sussex. F1784

Served on HMS SHOULTON 1959-60

May They Rest In Peace

SLOPS

Stock Items		Price	Please ring Stores before placing order to confirm items are in stock	
TON Talk Binder		£ 7.73	TCA Mug	£ 9.91
TCA Baseball cap. Logo 1 or 2		£ 11.20	TCA 10 th Anniversary Print	£ 5.50
TCA Beret Badge		£ 7.50	TCA 25 th Anniversary Badge	£ 6.00
RN Beret, Blue. Various sizes		£ 8.00	TCA Wall Shield 8 ins	£ 37.00
TCA Embroidered Blazer Badge		£ 9.77	Beanie/Ski woollen hat Navy with TCA badge	£ 8.72
TCA Lapel Badge		£ 6.05	TCA Polo Shirt, Navy logo 1	£18.44
TCA Mouse Mat		£ 4.00	Blazer Badge (Gold Wire)	£16.00
Car sticker – Logo 1 Clings to inside of windscreen		£ 1.25	TON Profile badge - Silver or Gold	£ 8.00
TCA Tie, Blue		£ 9.90	TCA Notepad	£ 3.75
TCA Tie, Maroon		£ 11.60	TCA Pen	£ 3.00
Blackfoot Tie		£ 13.00	TCA Notepad plus Pen	£ 5.00
Special Order items <i>State size, colour and logo required</i> <i>Logo 1 = Mine and Keys,</i> <i>Logo 2 = Mine and TON silhouette</i> <i>Allow up to 8 weeks for delivery</i>			Regrettably ill-health will prevent Laurie and Sue from attending this year's Reunion.	
			Please place your orders by phone or e-mail.	
TCA V-neck sweater. Navy or Maroon		£ 32.45	Deliveries will be made by post.	
Blazer Badge, Embroidered + ships name		£ 34.20	BOOKS	
TCA Polo Shirt in Navy with ships name		£ 18.44	Jacks of All Trades	£ 11.50
Iron Man Tee Shirt, Navy		£ 15.37	Last of the Wooden Walls A4 Hardback and E-book <i>Order from</i> <i>www.halsgrove.com</i>	
Iron Man Polo Shirt , Navy		£ 18.44		
TCA Round Neck Sweatshirt		£ 29.16		
TCA Polar Fleece Jacket		£ 38.30		

All prices include P&P (within UK only)
Please make cheques / postal orders payable to TON Class Association
 Laurie Johnson, 4 Downham Close, Cowplain, Hants
 PO8 8UD Phone: 023 923 65729
e-mail: lawrencej1055@gmail.com

Post Bag

FROM: Tony Gutteridge via TCA website

I never served in the Navy so never on the LALESTON, but in 1963 I spent time on the minesweeper as an apprentice with the electrical fitting team as part of a refit in HM Dockyard Chatham.

There was a large multi cored cable installed around the boat and I had to connect all the cores into a continuous 'coil'.

Thanks for your note. I suspect that the multi-core cable to which you refer may have been part of the automated de-gaussing system which gave us protection from magnetic mines. It worked well, so thank you on behalf of all who sailed in TONS. ... Editor

FROM: Lt Cdr Bob (Shady) Lane, Lee on Solent

I have occasionally seen mention of ship's pets in TON Talk and wonder if any former members of HMS BELTON's crew remember "Dougal the Dog" who joined ship in 1968.

Dougal's mother (Samantha) suffered from seasickness and was, I think, taken home by our Cox'n. Dougal was a fine sea-dog even managing to survive falling overboard in a stormy North Sea – which resulted in two would be SR rescuers jumping in in their underwear (it was just after tot-time).

Dougal was promiscuous and frequently returned off shore late, nearly missing sailing several times. Eccentric, he would consume the contents of ash trays in pubs and, to some considerable shame in BELTON, indulged in what was at the

time called "unnatural acts" (on the receiving end) with what I think was

SOBERTON's dog "Skidders". BELTON was a superb and effective fishery protection vessel under the charismatic leadership of our CO, Lt Cdr "Tony Wilkes RN, and never again was I to meet so many real characters in a ship.

A predatory taker of (mainly French) illegal fishing vessels it was whilst detaining a French Trawler in Torquay that I met the current Mrs Lane 52 years ago.

As the RN Disposal and Reserve Ships Officer I now have a single link from BELTON's anchor cable given to me by a scrap ship broker and obtained after the vessel was broken up following capsizing.

FROM: Lt Cdr Michael Kerry, British Colombia

In the early nineteen sixties I found myself at sea in the Far East as a Midshipman. I was ex-lower deck, 26 years old and married with 2 children left behind in the UK.

I was appointed to the 6th Minesweeping Squadron and served in HMS MANXMAN with many detachments to the minesweepers of the Inshore Flotilla.

The officers of the wardroom in HMS MANXMAN were mostly older men and they headed the departments that looked after the minesweepers. They were specialists in TAS, gunnery, engineering, navigation etc. and there was a Schoolie and a Chaplain. The ship's company had the opportunity to be 'married accompanied'.

Occasionally when we were in our home port of Singapore the wardroom would hold a formal mess dinner for officers and their ladies with dancing to follow. For dancing the dining area would be cleared and I don't remember how music was provided but it was certainly gracious and elegant.

As a junior officer I would be expected to ask the Captain's wife for the pleasure of the next waltz.

That was in 1963. Now across the world in jolly old England something happened in that year that affected dancing and it was even being felt in Singapore. It centred around The Beatles. Dancing became less stately and took the form of wild motion of arms, legs, heads, bottoms and anything that could be moved.

Only one member of HMS MANXMAN's wardroom knew how to do it and that was the chaplain, Rev Noel Jones.

Now I'd like to fast forward from that scene to western Canada in 1982. On a sunny Saturday morning in July I was busy at home. The television was on but I wasn't watching it except for occasional glances. On the screen was a recording of the Royal Wedding that had taken place in St. Paul's Cathedral that morning (we're eight hours behind British Summer Time).

And I heard a voice that I recognised, saying something like: "We are gathered here today in the presence of Almighty God" It was him ! It was Rev Noel Jones, assisting the Archbishop of Canterbury in the marriage of Prince Charles to Lady Diana. The Prince was in dress uniform as a Commander in the Royal Navy and Noel Jones had risen to be Chaplain of the Fleet.

I wondered if he could still dance.

Rev Noel Jones sadly Crossed the Bar a few years ago. Having retired from the RN Chaplaincy, he was appointed Bishop of Sodor and Man – the Isle of Man.

Sodor is also the fictional home of Thomas the Tank Engine and his friends, including the Fat Controller, well known to most parents of under 5's.

*Rev Jonah often had mail for Thomas mis-directed to him, which he always answered. He was made Honorary Chaplain of the real Manx Heritage Steam Railway for his interest. ... **Editor***

FROM: Lt Cdr Dave Upton, Grimsby

Re: Stephen Isacke's dit "It's a Small World". It certainly is !

Along with Steve Chandler, we were the two Mids off on a nine month world trip after Dartmouth. We joined HMS ACHILLES flying to Gan to join as she finished Beira Patrol (remember them).

Also on the flight was the new PWO(A) - a certain Lt Cdr RJ Lippiett,.

We had a lot of good visits the most memorable April 29 & 30 1975 watching the USA leave Saigon for the last time.

Happy days and memories of a good life.

**Starboard
Lookout
can
always be
relied
upon ...**



Only Having a Laugh ...



A computer technician [CIS Branch] ends up on life support in Haslar. The sign above his bed says, "If you hear the machine give out a continuous beep, unplug me, then plug me back in, and see if that works

Many a junior sailor in *Leanders* was told on joining that, as part of their daily routine, they had to go to the galley and ask for a saucer of milk for the SeaCat. Cookie would of course oblige and the hapless sailor would turn up in his part of ship looking for the cat, only to discover it was a missile !

The crew of a frigate are practicing man overboard drill by "rescuing" a bright orange, fluorescent dummy. The Captain watches as a young Lieutenant nervously stops the ship, turns it and manoeuvres into place. Unfortunately, he runs right over the dummy. The captain looks at the young officer and says, "Do me a favour. If I ever fall overboard, just drop anchor and I'll swim to you."

VMT Gen Dit, Stowmarket RNA

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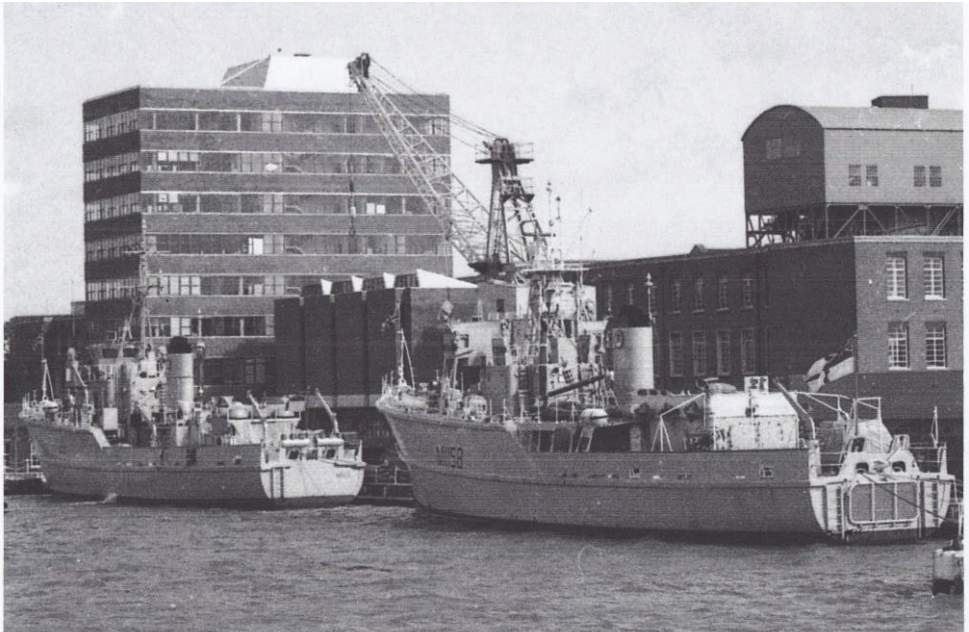
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Mystery from Lynn Ballard, Brightlingsea

LALESTON M1158 and **NURTON** M1166 alongside, but **Where and When?**



Ship Histories suggest Portsmouth and post-1974, as both ships appear to be wearing the Hampshire Rose funnel badge of MCM2.

As the Diving Trials Ship since 1967, LALESTON has her divers' Easy Entry platform at the stern and extended Diving Store in the coachhouse.

But what are the cylindrical devices on NURTON's stern – Towed Gradiometer perhaps ?

Editor offers a tot, to be reclaimed at the Reunion, **for any Better Ideas** for location, date and equipment.

Double Up for an "I was there" - BUT some proof required, such as a related dit ...