

TON Talk

Newsletter of the TON Class Association

Edition 234



June 2026

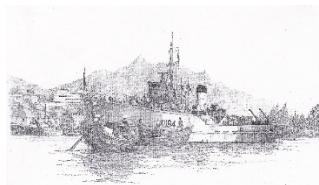


HMS UPTON

Served in 105, 100, 2, 5, and 1 MSS, STANAVFORCHAN, FPS, 10MCMS, 3MCMS. Completed 7 Grenada Patrols in 1981. Crew manned HMS Cordella for the Falklands War in 1982. Arrested 7 foreign fishing vessels in 1989. Paid off in 1990.

TON Class Association

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TCA Membership
£15 per annum, £150 Life Membership

Front Cover
HMS UPTON

P31 www.tcaminesweepers.co.uk

Founder: Jack Worth MBE

Editorial

Dits and Photos: Thank you for the articles submitted for this Ton Talk. Some of those will have to be kept until the September issue! Any stories, serious or funny, preferably with a photo or two, are welcome. Or just send us a letter for the Postbag.

Welfare: Just a reminder that there is a TCA Welfare system, with some funds available. Welfare officer is Robbie Reid-Sinclair, whose contact details are on page 3.

Area Representatives: There are vacancies for the Scotland, Kent and Sussex areas. Please consider it, in order to create a social group and provide some support for members. See page 5.

Deadline for the September edition is 15 August 2026, but please do not leave it to the last moment, especially if it is a long article!

George O'Connor

Remembering HMS Fittleton

A message from John Regan: Hi, I'm ex-RN but didn't serve on a Ton Class. However, my best friend Gerry Hoey (we actually went up to the careers office in Glasgow to join up together) did and, sadly was drowned as a result of the Fittleton disaster. As you are aware, 20 September this year marks the 50th Anniversary and myself and a few other ex-matelots are organising a memorial in Gerry Hoey's memory. I'm am looking to use the poem 'The Twelve of September' in the order of service but cannot ascertain the name of the writer in order to provide the necessary credit. Do you know his/her name?

Also, I appreciate that the remaining survivors may well be attending services elsewhere but would nevertheless like to extend an invitation to anyone on the site to attend if they so desire. The memorial will take place on Sunday 20 September in Greenock. If anyone (irrespective of what ship they served on) thinks they may want to come along then please pass them my contact details and ask them to get in touch so I can provide details of the arrangements. Cheers, John.

Email: j45regan@hotmail.com Phone: 07860 164353

Vice Chairman's Corner

Hi all,

I'm writing this with two hats on, as our chairman is undergoing cancer treatment, of which we all wish him well.

Doesn't time fly, here we are in June already, hope you all have a restful and enjoyable summer.

In March after we had had the committee meeting we all went down to Gunwharf Quay to the Custom House where we presented them with a 4ft long model of a Ton class, which had been bequeathed to us.....

I had the pleasure and privilege of repairing it, redoing the rigging etc, and giving it a repaint. It is now in a glass case in the entrance to Custom House, as per the photos on the inside and outside of the rear cover. It was a very enjoyable 3 months repairing and repainting.

Our padre gave a blessing, and our president said a few words afterwards. I thank them for that.

Your good selves will be reading this in June, but I'm writing it in May, and am Shortly off to Malta where I'll be checking as usual the plaques at Sliema War Memorial. Updates on them in the next issue.

The AGM is quickly looming on the horizon. Our reunion sec, Jim Virgo, has the forms already out there. Thanks Jim. It will be on the outskirts of Oxford this year. Hopefully see some of you there.

Well, I think that's about covered it for the moment. Take care of yourselves. Till the next time.

Regards

Sam (Driftwood) Cook

Remembrance Day Parade at the Cenotaph 8 November 2026

Matthew Salisbury

The following is the Royal British Legion's invitation to participate in the Remembrance Sunday parade in Whitehall for publication in Ton Talk.

The Ton Class Association has applied for 25 places for the Cenotaph Marchpast 2026. Registration for the Cenotaph Parade is achieved through the Royal British Legion's accreditation platform via an online portal. Members of the Ton Class Association who wish to participate are requested to contact the secretary by email: matthew.salisbury11@outlook.com soonest.

The following are the critical dates sent by the Royal British Legion:

10th June: Ticket allocation for TCA will be confirmed, Registration of participants will commence from this date.

30th September: Deadline for TCA to complete individual participant information.

31st October: Issue by RBL of E tickets and joining instructions.

NB Because of previous difficulties, the secretary would aim to complete registration before the end of August and requests all participants to assist with this.

As this is a veterans' parade, serving personnel, including full and part time reservists are not eligible to participate.

In the past, the volume of information required has needed some diligence on the part of the secretary. Early response from participants is requested. When the information required has been made known, the secretary will contact all concerned by email.

TCA Who's Who

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COMING EVENTS

July 2026	18	White Rose Group Meeting. Premier Inn, York North West. YO26 6RL
September 2026	20	HMS Fittleton Service of Remembrance, Fittleton, Wiltshire
October 2026	10	Reunion and AGM Holiday Inn, Peartree Roundabout Woodstock Road, Oxford OX2 8JD
November 2026	8	Remembrance Day Parade at the Cenotaph

Area Representatives

Area 1 Yorkshire	Allan Brown	brownallan592@gmail.com 07443 0573987
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Area 3 Kent		<i>Any Volunteers?</i>
Area 4 Cornwall	John Harvey	johnharvey2010@hotmail.co.uk 07840 240130
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Area 6 Sussex		<i>Any Volunteers?</i>
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Area 8 Hampshire and Isle of Wight	Bob Dean	fenton1135@gmail.com 01730 233596
Area 9 Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland	Paul Muir	mail@paulmuir.co.uk

It is proposed to form a group of members living in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The main aim would be to bring members together on a social basis and also to identify any member who would benefit from the support of the Association.

If interested please send an email with your contact details to mail@paulmuir.co.uk

There is much to be said for local gatherings of TCA Members, as takes place in the White Rose Group and the Bristol Channel Group. Please consider becoming an area representative if there is a vacancy in your area, thereby starting a social group and some support for those who might need it.

MCM NEWS

Rob Hoole

Second MCM Squadron

The Portsmouth-based Second MCM Squadron (now the only MCM squadron) comprises the MTXG (Mine & Threat Exploitation Group) mother ship HMS STIRLING CASTLE, the Hunt class minehunters BROCKLESBY (Crew 2), CATTISTOCK (Crew 4), CHIDDINGFOLD (N/A), HURWORTH (Crew 8), LEDBURY (Crew 1) and MIDDLETON (Crew 7) plus the Sandown class minehunter BANGOR (Crew 10). Only CATTISTOCK, LEDBURY and HURWORTH are currently operational.

BROCKLESBY has been spotted running out of Portsmouth.

CATTISTOCK berthed in Poole in February enabling members of Crew 5 to visit her affiliated village of Cattistock in late February and the ship hosted a family's day in March. Crew 5 handed CATTISTOCK over to Crew 4 at the end of April having achieved 118 days at sea and steamed 7,966 nautical miles 'delivering assured mine and seabed warfare Operations around the UK' during their 12 months manning the ship.

HURWORTH has been operating off the West coast of Scotland.

LEDBURY has been operating off the West coast of Scotland and running out of Portsmouth. She visited Liverpool in late April.

MIDDLETON arrived back in Portsmouth in mid-March having previously been transported from the Gulf to Southampton on board a heavy lift ship.

Transfers of MCMVs

Portsmouth is now the base for the Ukrainian Sandown class minehunters UKS CHERNIHIV (ex-HMS GRIMSBY) and UKS CHERKASY (ex-HMS SHOREHAM) as well as the Tripartite class minehunters UKS MARIUPOL (ex-BNS NARCIS), UKS MELITOPOL (ex- HNLMS VLAARDINGEN) and UKS HENICHESK (ex-HNLMS MAKKUM). Owing to the Montreux Convention, none of these vessels can enter the Black Sea via the Bosphorus and Dardanelles Straits in Turkey while a state of war exists between Russia and Ukraine. However, there has been a suggestion that the ships might be usefully employed clearing the Strait of Hormuz.

MTXG – Mine & Threat Exploitation Group

MTXG comprises: Whisky Squadron (Portsmouth Navy Special Ops), X-Ray Squadron Units 1 & 2 (Expeditionary); Yankee Sqn Units 1 & 2 (Homeland/Seabed Warfare); and Zulu Sqn Unit 1 (Clyde-based Homeland).

See my latest MCM news on the Minewarfare Clearance Diving Officers' Association website at www.mcdoa.org.

Bristol Channel Group Meeting

Matthew Salisbury

Following the tragic demise of the United Services Mess in Cardiff, former HQ of the Bristol Channel Group, 13 members assembled in the Bristol Channel Yacht Club in the Mumbles in Swansea on Monday 5th January.

Usually closed on a Monday, the yacht club made the group very welcome. Drinks were enjoyed in front of a wood fire before tucking in to a substantial buffet.

Eight members from Cardiff travelled by minibus to be joined by five from Swansea including Commodore Sir Robert Hastie, a former List Three Commodore and Commanding Officer of HMS CAMBRIA.

The Bristol Channel Group's next meeting and lunch will be at The Llandaff Institute, High Street Llandaff Cardiff at 1300 on Friday 13th March 2026.

In addition the Bristol Channel Yacht Club in Mumbles Swansea has been booked for lunch on Saturday 23rd May 2026. Any TCA members who may wish to attend this function who are not on the Bristol Channel Group list should let the secretary know.

The next meeting is likely to be in Cardiff in the Llandaff Institute in a couple of months.



White Rose Meeting

Allan Brown

Present were Terry Foreman, Pincher Martin, Phil Fluke, Alan Hewitt, Clive Dennison, Trevor Dixon and myself. We welcomed new member Barry Cook and his wife Pam.

Apologies from Graham Brayshore, Jim Virgo, Bob Dean and Steve Ruck.

I gave a brief update on proposed changes to the Constitution and Rules. Clive mentioned the March Committee meeting, including the Bossington presentation and the Bronington project.

Phil informed us that there did not seem to be much progress on the Patrol boat restoration. They are still pushing for funds.

I gave out forms for the reunion in October and there seemed to be quite a bit of interest.

We will discuss any proposals from our branch at the next meeting.

Date for the next meeting is Saturday the 18th of July. 1300 in the function room. Premier Inn, York North West. YO26 6RL

Families then join us for our meal.

As usual a good meeting with loads of laughs and the odd tot.



We Get Our Duty Frees

Ian Dunn

George Foxhall had wheedled his way ashore during the afternoon on some pretext or other. He had gone with our collected fares to get the tickets, and to explain to the Ferry Operator's staff the requirement that we shouldn't disembark whilst in France. This was the critical part of the deal. If they insisted that we got off, then we couldn't go. He arrived back all smiles, tapping his top pocket, he came across the gangway giving thumbs up signs to any PO or Chief he could see, to the puzzlement of the Officer of the Watch (OOW) who happened to be passing. 'George, you daft sod, you'll give the game away', the Buffer growled at him under his breath as George passed on his way to the mess deck.

At stand easy, we all assembled in the mess. The two who had elected to remain behind on duty were just as interested as the rest to learn the details. Because two of our number were required to remain on board, and as George said, it was easier to divide by ten, the PO's Mess man was included in the foray. 'Right', said George, 'It's all fixed. We don't have to get off, but the Captain does do rounds, so they have asked us to behave'. 'He needn't worry', Buster the coxswain chipped in, 'I'll whip you lot into shape, he won't know we're there'. "They've also asked us to get on last, just before the ship sails, and when we return, to disembark last. I've agreed to that", George concluded. 'What do you think the boss'll say when we all troop off together tonight?' I said. The Buffer started to laugh, 'I think we should all knock on the Wardroom door individually instead of our more usual en mass approach to ask permission to carry on ashore, and we should all ask him if he wants to know where we are going'. 'He won't ask, but by God by the time the tenth one's asked him, he'll be smelling a very big rat', laughed the coxswain. 'Let's do that, oh, and by the way, if he should ask, tell him you're going for your duty frees, don't hide anything.'

The Coxswain had been the last one to present himself at the Wardroom door to request permission to carry on ashore on leave. The Skipper had resignedly granted permission, but had resisted the temptation to find out what was going on. We were inside the Customs Duty Free compound in Dover docks, under the surveillance of a tight security system. We would have to wend our way to the main gate and get past the Customs and Dockyard Police he must have thought, and then they'll have a long walk before they get to the nearest pub. He was right about the long walk, if he ever thought about it, but we were making our winding way amongst the parked trucks waiting the night sailing towards the ferry terminal to book in. When we got to the desk, the girl inspecting out tickets said, 'Got your passports?' 'Yes,' replied Buster, waving a fistful of forms in one hand and three strips of photos in the other. 'Christ', the girl squeaked, 'You can't go like that, you've got to stick the photos on the form,' she said conclusively, pushing some sellotape under the grill. 'Haven't got any scissors,' quipped Buster. 'Oh, give us them here', she said reaching into the drawer for some scissors. Buster Brown slid the photos and the forms under the grill, saying, 'You might as well stick them for us as well love, you know what we rough sailors are like'. 'But', she replied, 'I don't know which photo to

stick on which form,' she replied. 'Doesn't matter', said Buster, 'they're such a horrible bunch Immigration won't know the difference.'

Miraculously I got my passport form with my photo neatly stuck in place. I don't know what the odds are, but Ladbrokes wouldn't take the bet. We made our way out of the side door and down some dark steel steps onto the beginning of the vehicle loading ramp. The wind continued to howl across the dock. The rain was driving nearly horizontal. As we walked down the ramp, happily chattering away, this dark figure stepped out of the shadows, beckoning, he called out, 'Gather round chaps. The Company want's you to have a good time, but don't take over, that's all we ask. OK?' 'No bother Chief', Buster replied, 'I'll be keeping an eye on them myself. "Until he's on his tenth beer', someone whispered in my ear. 'Right', the official called out, 'Enjoy your trip, although why you want to go to sea in a Force ten I'll never know'. He could hardly hide the incredulity in his voice. 'Don't ask, you don't want to know', laughed Lloydie before we were a safe distance away. As we stepped off the ramp it was already being closed, and another official pointed our way to the accommodation ladder to take us to the passenger deck.

As we entered the ships bar and sat down the steward called out, 'Evening lads, the duty free shop will be open as soon as we get out side'. 'OK', someone replied, 'Ian, get the beer, mines a lager, I'm off to find the shop'. 'You're wasting your time,' said the steward, 'it'll be a good few minutes yet'. 'Well come on then, get the beers in, Ian'. I looked at the steward who resignedly raised the shutter, 'OK' he said, 'there's no one about'. I got ten beers in, and we all sat down. It was a large lounge with large glass windows on both sides of the vessel. Through the port side windows we could see our minesweeper lying alongside the wall, still being beaten by the wind and rain, you could even see her moving fretfully against the wall due to the action of the waves whipped up by the wind within the harbour. The ferry began to glide out of its berth, our journey had commenced, we settled back to enjoy our first beer. 'Christ,' said Lloydie, 'What the **** is a Fire Engine doing going down the wall to the sweeper?' 'Piss off, pull the other one', 'No, I'm not kidding', he said. We all looked, and sure enough there was the fire engine slowing down as it arrived at our ship. 'Well there's nothing we can do about it now', said the coxswain, 'If you're in the shit, you might as well enjoy it'.

The decision was made, one bottle of Bacardi rum and one bottle of Bells whisky from the duty free shop was our first task. Two of our number left to make the purchase as the ships tannoy announced the opening. As they left, Buster said, 'Bottle of coke and one of lemonade, Ian'. Having been promoted to the commissariat, I returned to the bar. The four or five other passengers who had come into the bar earlier were already leaving as the ferry got out side and began a violent corkscrewing motion. Some were patently green about the gills. To us, the motion was sedate and quite comfortable when compared with the violent twists and bucks of the minesweeper, but these people were clearly suffering. 'We're in for a quiet night?', I quizzed the steward. 'My guess is you'll be the only ones I'll see tonight', he replied. 'Bottle of Coke and a bottle of Lemonade, please'. The please came almost as an afterthought. It's a word you never hear in the Service. He looked at me with a puzzled expression on his face, reaching for the required bottles. Suddenly the puzzled expression was replaced by a knowing smile, as he saw

Buster returning carrying only two bottles of spirit. He placed the bottles on the bar and I concluded the transaction. 'What about glasses?' he asked, then as three Chiefs almost as one drained off their pint glasses and put them down in a neat row, said, 'Forget it, I see you've got your glasses'.

The rum and whiskey was decanted into the pint glasses under the watchful eyes of the owners of each glass. The rum was shared into five glasses and the whisky into the remaining five. After much bandying about, the levels were deemed to be fairly distributed and we each diluted our glass to our own taste from the bottles of mixers on the table. The ship was certainly throwing herself all over the place, and we had to resort to holding the glasses. Our in built gyros would make sure that not a drop would spill on the lounge carpet. The steward quietly got on tidying the bar and putting things away for the night. He had no further customers. We passed the time talking about the Dover Patrol, the changing of the oil cooler, and generally reminisced about past cruises. The time passed very quickly, and before long the steward called out, 'I've got to close the bar, we're nearly alongside, and you're going to have to get off, so I need your glasses, lads'. Buster wandered over with his glass in his hand and talked quietly to the steward, who at first shook his head, then began to nod, slowly at first. Shortly he agreed, but insisted on giving us a lecture on behaving when his captain was doing rounds prior to the return trip.

We were sitting, our glasses nearly empty, chatting away, when there was a bustling at the starboard doorway into the lounge area. You couldn't really use a seagoing phrase to describe it, it really was a pub lounge. 'Hey up', Buster said in a stage whisper, 'Here's the big fella. Ships company ho!'. We all put our glasses down, sat bolt upright in our seats and folded our arms across our chests. Not a muscle moved, we treat him as if he were one of our officers. He bustled through without even a glance in our direction and was gone. 'Easy', said Buster, 'Well done lads'.

The steward called across, 'Do you need any more coke or lemonade?' 'No, we're OK thanks'. This time there were no other passengers seeking refreshment. The steward went out on deck for a breath of air, coming back a few moments later saying he might as well shut up shop, as those who had come aboard were already lining the rail calling for Hughey. With that he pulled down the shutters, and came across to join us. We repeated our earlier call upon the duty free shop, sharing out another two bottles of spirit in the same fashion as on our first crossing. The conversation continued, getting louder as the intake of alcohol took effect. We drifted off as individuals to get the duty free allowance of our choice. In a short time there were carrier bags at everyone's feet, and still we were drinking. The ships electrician came in with a set of steps and started to re-lamp the lounge. The greenie element was giving him a hard time. Eventually, laughing he gave up, came over, and joined us.

I don't know where they were getting their booze from, well I do really, the bar only appeared to be locked up. Gradually more and more crew members appeared, and the lounge took on an almost party atmosphere. We were all chatting animatedly, when another steward appeared with the largest silver salver I have ever seen. It was piled high with sandwiches of every kind. He dropped them on the table, 'There you are, everyone dig in, compliments of the Captain'. With that, he too joined the party.

Eventually we arrived back in Dover, our arrival being heralded by an extra big roll as we ran in through the harbour entrance. The party reluctantly broke up and we made our way down to the car deck. We stood there for some time waiting for the civvies to get their cars off. We were all fairly drunk by this time having all consumed as a minimum one pint of beer and two fifths of a litre of spirit each. George was in fine fettle, and Buster was getting argumentative. The same official who had seen us off, met us on the ramp. 'Enjoyed your trip lads?' he enquired. 'You need to go through Customs, even though your berthed in a duty free area', he instructed us in the direction to take to comply with this minor requirement.

As we walked into the Customs Hall, we were met by the sight of a great number of tables arranged herring bone fashion. Obviously designed for handling a great number of ferry passengers in a very quick time. The hall was empty, there wasn't a passenger in sight, but at the end of every table was positioned a Customs Officer. 'Oh ****', mutters Buffer, 'The rummage squad, were going to be turned over'. At a given signal the Officers all turned as one, and marched to the opposite end of the tables, as far away from us as they could get, once again they turned in unison and started to wave, calling out, 'Good night, lads'. We all make our way up the central corridor waving drunkenly back. All that is, except for Buster, who walks towards one Customs Officer saying, 'Go on, search me, I'm over the top'. To the reply of, 'Piss off', from the Officer, we grab Buster and drag him protesting from the hall. As we leave there are howls of laughter from behind us. We must have been an incredible sight, by now all pissed out of our minds, trailing carrier bags, weaving all over the place, talking gibberish that only a drunk can understand. We then had to renegotiate the harbour Police, under whose watchful eye we begin our journey back through the Customs Duty Free area, weaving our drunken way amongst the large articulated lorries and trailers now loading onto the ferry we had just left. George "Fuxall" thumbs a lift in one of these monsters, and disappears.

We arrive in dribbles and drabbles at the ships gangway to much laughter and jollity. The Duty Watch are trying to fish George out of the dock. He vaulted onto the gangway, but missed. He is in the water laughing away, still not sober from his immersion, and oblivious to the danger. We join in the rescue mission and set it back several minutes as the especially drunken advice has to be winnowed out from the good advice for the Duty Watch to get anywhere. Eventually someone makes a big bowline in the end of the rope. George is supposed to put this over his shoulders before he is pulled out. The best he can manage is to put one foot in the loop. The Duty Watch, totally pissed off, pull him out like that, still singing merrily.

Gradually our mess quiets down. George has been put to bed. Well the duty PO's stripped him off, threw him up on top of the lockers which constitute his bunk, and dragged his sleeping bag over him. After several disastrous attempts at swinging my feet up into my bunk, amid much laughter, I climb up on top of the table, then into the top bunk next to mine, crawling forward over the occupant, into my own bunk. The cabin seems to be swaying worse than the ferry, if it would only...I don't remember what I want, I'm out for the count.

Next morning breakfast is a very subdued affair. Buffer has decided that the hair of the dog is the only solution. The coxswain is berating him for going on watch smelling of

drink, to which he is replying that no ***** could tell the difference. He still stunk of spirits from the night before. George is lying in his pit moaning that he hurts all over, steadfastly refusing to believe that he had fallen into the dock the night previous. Despite what everyone says, its only when he sees the massive bruises down his side, does he begin to believe there may be some truth in the story. When he finds his wet civvies in the bottom of the wardrobe, he accepts the horrible truth. Somehow his bottle of duty free survived. That's another bet Ladbrokes wouldn't accept. He makes it into uniform just in time. He looks like a sack of potatoes tied in the middle, and he's had no breakfast. 'Better make yourself scarce', says Buster, Good advice I think, but not for me as the skipper pipes "Specials". We are off back out again, the storm has moderated sufficiently for us to get back on station.

At stand easy someone remembers the Fire Engine. 'What the **** happened last night?' the previous night's Duty Watch were asked. 'Nothing', they said, 'Pretty boring until you stupid bastard came back roaring drunk, why?' 'Well, what about the fire engine then, that wasn't a figment of our imaginations, was it?' 'Oh, Christ, I'd forgotten about them', the Duty Engineer said, 'They turned up just after you left. They'd heard we had come in, and being down this way, called in to see if you wanted to go up to their mess. We told them you had all pissed off for the night, but they were welcome to come back aboard for a pint when they had finished their duty for the night'. The Duty PO chipped in, 'The beer mess is down a few pints, is that OK?', looking at me. 'Yes, I was thinking of putting a free barrel on soon, since we aren't likely to have to put on a cheese and wine party, there's plenty in the kitty.'

The Commodore came aboard by helicopter in the forenoon and did a mini inspection. It was more of a fact finding tour to see what the Reserves were up to. We knew him of old, or at least Buster and a few others had sailed with him before, so there were plenty of anecdotes to tell. So when "Hands to Dinner" was piped there was no mad rush from the beer mess to eat, we were all having a hair of the dog, all that is, except the Buffer, who was on his second hair of the dog. There was a tap at the door, 'Come in', bellowed the Chief. Nothing happened. 'Open the door and see who it is'. The door was opened, there stood the Commodore with his hat under his arm, the time honoured sign that he did not wish to be recognised. 'Come in Sir, shove up there Stan, have a seat Sir', pointing to the space recently occupied by Stan. 'You'll have a beer?' 'Thank you Cox'n, that's very kind of you'. The beer duly poured those that knew the Commodore made small talk with him. The rest of us listened politely, sometimes having desultory conversations of our own between neighbours. An hour passed like the blinking of an eye. 'Gentlemen, said the Commodore, 'If I'm not quick I'll miss my dinner, thank you for the beer. It's been nice having a little chat and I must say I was pleased to learn from the Captain that at least some of the ships company managed to organise some duty frees, unlike other areas of the ship'. With that he left for the wardroom. 'I don't think we're going to get a bollocking after all', said the Coxswain.

The RNR in the Cold War

Mick Donoyou

REPELLING THE SOVIET NAVY

One Weekend in 1974, I was in a crew which was preparing to sail for a weekend in the Channel Islands when we received a report of 3 Russian Cruisers in the English Channel and were ordered to "escort" them out of British Waters. We quickly sailed and soon made contact with the Russian Ships. These ships, being Cruisers, were much larger than our Minesweeper and were capable of speeds of 30 knots compared with our maximum speed of 15 knots and they came down to approx half speed to enable us to "keep up". These ships had multiple armaments of various calibres, missiles and torpedo tubes compared with our own single 40 mm Bofors and twin 20 mm Oerlikons.

We never got to the Channel Islands, spending the entire weekend "escorting" the Russian Cruisers out of the English Channel. When we arrived back in the UK we found the National Press had got hold of the story and the Papers contained lurid headlines in large print such as "RED SAILS IN THE SUNSET" and "PART TIME SAILORS REPEL MIGHT OF SOVIET NAVY".

SWEEPING A RUSSIAN SUBMARINE

During one deployment, our ship was carrying out Minesweeping Exercises off Falmouth when, one day, our CO advised me that he had received reports that our Sweep Gear had caused damage to a "Golf " Class Russian Submarine. This particular CO had an unusual sense of humour and had apparently advised one of my ABs that our sweep wires had sliced through the submarine's periscope standards. As we were not aware of our sweep gear snagging any underwater obstructions, we were sceptical about these claims but I suggested jokingly that, instead of the Country spending millions of pounds of Taxpayers monies on "Hunter Killer" Submarines, it might be more cost effective if the RNR increased Minesweeping Exercises around the UK's coastline.

Confrontation 60th Anniversary

Peter Down

Memoirs of Confrontation by TCA members are recorded on our website under Further Information.

July this year will see the 60th Anniversary of the Treaty of Bangkok, which brought to an end the four years of undeclared war during which Indonesia, under President Sukarno, attempted to destabilise the newly formed state of Malaysia and seize the former British Crown Colonies of Sabah and Sarawak in North Borneo, plus the independent, oil-rich Sultanate of Brunei. He used as a pretext the defunct Sultanate of Sulawesi, dating from mediaeval times, which had formerly held sway over the jungles of North Borneo and the southern islands of the Philippines, claiming that all of Borneo and the adjacent the islands now belonged to Indonesia.

Malaysia had been formed in September 1963, co-incident with the British Government policy of Withdrawal from East of Suez. It brought together as a new country, the Federated States of Malaya on the Malay Peninsula, which had gained independence in 1957, with the two territories on British North Borneo, plus Singapore, as one entity. Brunei remained an independent sultanate and Singapore separated from Malaysia in 1965.

Indonesia adopted the strategy of "Confrontation", seeking to avoid armed conflict by fostering civil unrest, intimidation of officials, strikes, encouraging nationalism and ethnic sentiment, plus the occasional riot, until the occupier tired of the hassle of trying to govern a restless populace, acceded to his demands. He had successfully employed this tactic to gain from the Dutch East Indies, the western half of Papua New Guinea, now called Irian, but it was less successful with Malaysia.

For a start, the civil disorder, which started with a revolt against the feudal government of the Sultan of Brunei (father of the present Sultan), was kicked off prematurely. Azahari, leader of the rebels, who had received training as a political agitator in Moscow, was out of the country, in the south Philippines, trying to drum up support for his cause among the Muslim community there, when his over enthusiastic followers started their rebellion without him early in December 1962. Disorder in Brunei City (Bandar Seri Bagawan) rapidly led to attacks on the police and garrison, resulting in the deaths of some Gurkha soldiers. This was followed by large groups of rebels occupying the oil field at Seria and taking hostage over 50 employees of the Shell oil company and their families, some of whom were Europeans.

Another large group of rebels occupied the town of Limbang in Sarawak, just over the border, where they seized the police station, with its armoury (which contained Bren guns and Armrolite automatic rifles), killing four police officers and taking hostage eleven Europeans, including the District Officer (an Australian) and his wife. The rebels threatened to execute their hostages if their demands were not met.

Other small towns situated on important routes were also seized.

However, Malaysia and Brunei both had defence treaties with Britain and there were still substantial British forces in Singapore and the Malay peninsula. Moreover, the British had contingency plans for dealing with insurgencies, developed during the recent Communist Terrorist Emergency in Malaya. Within 24 hours of the news of the rebellion reaching Singapore, relief troops, ships and aircraft were en route for Borneo.

On 12 December Lima Company of 42 Commando, Royal Marines fought a sharp action at Limbang and released the hostages, roughed up but relatively unharmed, although five Royal Marines were killed in the fighting. The Marines had been taken upriver in requisitioned civilian craft crewed by sailors from FISKERTON and CHAWTON.

In parallel, the Queens Own Highlanders were airlifted to Seria where they recaptured the oil refinery and freed the captives.

Gurkhas and other army units mopped up the other occupied towns in the next few days and by Christmas the Brunei Rebellion was over.

Azahari returned to Borneo and evaded capture for two years until he was surprised in a jungle hideaway by a Gurkha patrol.

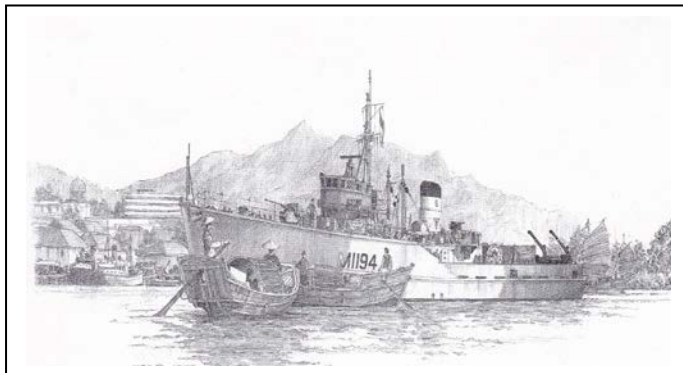
Confrontation moved to its second phase with direct involvement in raids along the 1000-mile jungle frontier into Sarawak by Indonesian armed forces and “volunteer freedom fighters” of TNKU, the self-styled National Army of North Kalimantan”

An extensive “Hearts and Minds” programme was launched to persuade the native peoples of Borneo that the Brits were better friends than the Indonesians, who often robbed them of their food. In return, the jungle tribes informed British patrols of the whereabouts of Indonesian groups

The British counter involved all arms. The army patrolled town and routes and established hill-top forts for artillery bombardment of Indonesian raiders. These forts were re-supplied by helicopters of the Fleet Air Arm. Special forces, including some Australians, carried out patrols across the border (limited to 10,000 yards and known as Operation Claret), to disrupt the Indonesian camps. The RAF brought additional troops and supplies from Singapore and fighter aircraft flew low level sorties over suspected Indonesian positions. The RAF was however, forbidden by the Ministry of Defence from bombing their main bases in Indonesia. The Navy patrolled the rivers and inshore waters to disrupt incursions, in which TONs played a major part. Sweepers were assigned from Singapore and Hong Kong and others reactivated from reserve, the Royal New Zealand Navy providing crews for two of them. The Royal Australian Navy sent four of its TONs to Borneo and four Ford-class Seaward Defence Craft were brought out from Britain as deck cargo to strengthen the Inshore Flotilla.

When checked in Borneo, Indonesia attempted to make landings in Johore on the Malay peninsula, hoping to foster unrest. TONs and smaller patrol vessels of the Royal Malaysian Navy (Tentera Laut di Raja) joined the patrols of the inshore waters of the peninsula and east and west coasts of Borneo. Over 80% of the attempted landings were foiled by these patrols, although there were often firefights, leading to casualties on both sides.

For comprehensive details of this conflict, see “Confrontation” by military historian Nick van der Bijl.



A camouflaged WOOLASTON at Tawau on the east coast of Borneo, adjacent to the Indonesian border.

Confrontation came to an end in 1966 with the downfall of President Sukarno, brought about by infighting between his supporters and the Communist Party of Indonesia, which led to the Treaty of Bangkok.

Responsibility for safeguarding the waters of North Borneo was handed over to the Royal Malaysian Navy in the person of Lt Cdr Malcolm Alvisse, C.O of the TON MAHAMIRU, in Kuching.



Casualties were - Allies: 130 killed (19 British), 229 wounded. Indonesian: 590 killed, 222 wounded, 771 taken prisoner.

Memoirs of Confrontation by TCA members are recorded on our website under Further Information



Ton Class Association Reunion 2026 Booking Form



To be held at the:

The Holiday Inn

Peartree Roundabout Woodstock Road, OXFORD OX2 8JD
Friday 9th October - Monday 12th October 2026

Reunion includes:

- 2-3 Nights En-Suite Accommodation
- Full English Breakfast and Choice of Evening Meal
- Saturday Morning AGM with "Up Spirits"
- Saturday Night Private Dining Five Course Gala Dinner, Wine Reception, Tot of Port
- Sunday Church Service
- Complimentary Car Parking
- 2 Nights ... per person £218-00
- 3 Nights ... per person £278-00
- (2 adults sharing a twin/double room)

Personal Details

Name:

Address/Postcode.....

Telephone
Number.....

Email Address.....

Names of other persons included on this booking form:

Number of Persons.....

Rooms Required: Double.....Twin (2 Nights £218-00 per person, 3 Nights £278.00 per person)

Double Room for Single occupancy(includes single supplement .(2 Nights £228-50 per person, 3 Nights £331-00 per person)

Special Requirements such as diet/walking & room requirements.....

Every effort will be made to accommodate all special requests, this will be done on a first come, first served basis and not guaranteed.

Book Now as places are limited

A non-refundable booking fee of £25 per person is required with this booking form to confirm your booking, to be paid by the 1st July 2026 and final payment due on the 30th August 2026.

Cancellation charges do apply

Cheques payable to THE TON CLASS ASSOCIATION(Reunion NAME) - Please return this form with remittance to

Mr James Virgo, 24 Spencer Gardens, Saltash Cornwall, PL12 4PE

To make a card payment or a pay direct by bank transfer: Barclays Bank UK PLC LEICESTER LE872BB

TON CLASS ASSOCIATION Sort Code 20-49-08 Account number: 60339547,Please use reference

REUNION(SURNAME) Please can you donate raffle prize,

CALL: 07813855024 EMAIL: Jimvirgo55@gmail.com for further details.

Committee Meeting Photos



Minutes of the Committee Meeting Sat 14 March 2026

Matthew Salisbury

PRESENT

Ian BARDEN, Sam COOK, David WOOLGAR, David WALKER, Terry WOOD, Jim VIRGO, Robbie REID SINCLAIR, Clive DENNISON, Chris GREEN, Terry FOREMAN, Allan BROWN, Malcolm KEMP, Bob DEAN, Trevor FILTNESS, Rob HOOLE, Matthew SALISBURY. By teams: Peter DOWNS, George O'CONNOR. In attendance Mike McBride.

CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME

Ian Barden greeted all to this 39th Committee meeting. The frontline of the TCA is its membership, and the committee's function is to support the membership. The model of HMS BOSSINGTON is in place in Gunwharf, ready for the presentation this afternoon. The chaplain will provide a blessing and Sam Cook will cut the ribbon.

1 CROSSED THE BAR

Sir Benjamin BATHURST, Terence WESLEY, William COPELAND, John SHELL, John WATLING, Harvey BURWIN, Roy EDWARDS, Peter HARRISON, Christopher FENTIMAN, Davis AXFORD, Donald McLEAN, Derek NEWMAN, Mike OSMAN, Richard OSMAN, Joseph McALLISTAIR.

2 APOLOGIES

Dennis COOK, Paul MUIR, Dave PARRISH

3 MINUTES OF MEETING, March 2025

Proposed by Ian Barden, seconded by Robbie Reid Sinclair to be a true record.

4 MATTERS ARISING

Chris Green had attended the meeting but was not recorded in the minutes.

5 ELECTION OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS

6 CHAPLAINS REPORT

Regarding zoom/teams, the chaplain said that he used Teams extensively in the course of his work. He will forward a comprehensive Online Meeting Etiquette to the secretary to avoid some of the confusion that has been experienced previously.

7 SECRETARY'S REPORT

The biggest problem had been addressing Royal British Legion's requirement for very many more information headings for participants in Spread Sheet format than previously demanded. There had been a greater number of applicants than for a few years previously. In addition to routine activity the secretary had been pleased to assist with some of the arrangements for the AGM in Cardiff in October.

8 TREASURER'S REPORT

The association's finances continue to be in a satisfactory position. The subscriptions cover the cost of Ton Talk and the website. But administration costs take our annual expenditure over income. We have substantial reserves and formally resolve to use the reserves to cover the shortfall and maintain subscription levels. In January we received a substantial legacy from the estate of Mrs Trickey of £10143.99 which has been put in reserves. (Mrs Trickey is the widow of Captain Frank Trickey, a larger-than-life officer well known to many present.) Bob Dean was requested to send a tribute of Captain Trickey for Ton Talk. We now hold over £25,000 in Reserve and Welfare funds. In the past few years we have simplified the bank accounts, closing Stores, Reunion, Welfare and Reserves and managing them as sub accounts in our No. 2 Account. We could open a savings account to earn interest, but this would make us liable to Corporation Tax and the requirement to submit returns to Companies House. It may be simpler to not make taxable profits which would be £750 per year less £142 tax and £32 Companies House fees. The reunion made a loss of about £700 which was covered by the surplus in the Reunion sub fund which is now about £2000. This includes the cost for the AGM and in future I will separate these costs to general administration costs rather than be borne by those attending the reunion. The stores stock has been transferred from Laurie to various members. The treasurer holds the remaining "tinware" and there have been sales to members by post and at the AGM. There is a good stock of profile and beret badges, but lapel badges are nearly all sold. We now have a debit card for the No1 Account which simplifies payments for stores, postage and booking event space. We have totals of: -

General Account	£2598.96
No 2 Account	£28,822.98
N02 Accounts holds	
Welfare Account	£9758.27
Reserve Account	£14,946.39

9 EDITORS REPORT

Please keep the dits and photos coming. Deadlines are 15 May, 15 August and 15 November. I think we should have area representatives for all areas, currently there are vacancies for Scotland, Kent. And Sussex. It is worthwhile for many members to have a local social group and support for those who need it. The White Rose Group and the Bristol Channel Group have very successful meetings.

10 WEBSITE REPORT

All continues well. Our defences against malware, scammer and phishers are holding up in spite of several incursions. Updates to ships' histories have benefitted from an extension to include the activities of the Royal Naval Auxiliary Service(RNXS). See also new entry under further information page. Enquiries continue at the rate of about five per month. As well as the usual mix of membership queries and requests for grandad's service history, we were recently asked for details of mine hunting operations by an author planning to include a passage about that activity in his forthcoming book. We were happy to oblige. Members are requested to advise if they would like to see any additional topics on the website.

11 MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY'S REPORT

Dennis sent his apologies. We had lost 13 members and gained 14. The membership consisted of the following:-

Full paying members	968
Life	132
Associates	22
Total	1122
Non Paying	
Widows	53
COs	13
Associations	22
Total	88
Grand Total	1210

12 STORES REPORT

Three members used the Slop Room. Three items sold, no special orders. £300 transferred to TCA No1 account from sales, August 24 to July 25.

Balance in Stores Acc 31 July 2025 £1104.56

Receipts from 1st August 2025 to 31/12/25 £20.00

Total £1124.56

Less transfer to TCA Acct 1 £300.00

Total in Stores Account 31/12/2025 £824.26

Value of stock Nil

Total petty cash 23p

All stock transferred to Bob Dean for March Committee meeting. Items transferred: 6 Book Binders, 17 Black foot Ties, 23 Maroon Ties, 2 RN Berets, 100 Mouse Mats, 1 Cash Box, 2 Bosun Calls. Remaining stock will be held by the treasurer.

13 WELFARE OFFICER'S REPORT

Nothing new to report, last welfare activity was in 2023. Robbie suggested that the amount to be offered be increased to £1000, Peter Down remembered that the amount can be doubled at the discretion of the chairman.

14 STANDARD BEARER'S REPORT.

Sam stated that other than the regular parade at Weymouth there had been no requests. In the past HM King Charles, HRH Prince of Wales and President Clinton had all spoken to Sam.

15 ANNUAL REUNION UPDATE

Following a very successful reunion in Cardiff, Jim announced that he proposed that the next reunion will be in the Holiday Inn in Oxford. Sam Cooke proposed and Allan Brown seconded the motion, carried unanimously. Jim offered costings which detailed the costs per member. He also mentioned that he had printed the menus himself at a cost of £300 for Cardiff. This expense can be covered by the raffle. He has made good contacts with the Holiday Inn Group. The contentious single supplement issue was being addressed.

A subsidy can be offered to lower the cost for a single member. This subsidy would also apply to widows.

16 TEAMS REPORT

The treasurer reported that the subscription had been renewed for the current year. Teams was not operating as well as we would like. The bandwidth at the AGM was better but the reception was poor. The connection made by host organisations can be a limiting factor. The basement in the Royal Maritime Centre was not good. Peter Down asked whether it was more difficult using Teams than Zoom. Zoom has its own limitations and TCA subscribes to Team. The secretary has difficulty in recording interjections by members on Teams and said there needed to be a protocol so that those speaking remotely were easily identifiable and spoke clearly. A "Zoom Maistre" was needed to control remote proceedings. The Chaplain volunteered to draft a plan. (This was sent after the meeting.)

ON LINE MEETING ETIQUETTE

Please ensure that your microphone is always muted, unless you are asking a question or contributing to discussions. Failure to do so can result in feedback and other distracting noises using bandwidth and reducing sound and vision quality. The Zoom Maister may mute members if necessary.

Use the raise hand facility in the reactions facility or raise hand on camera if you wish to speak. Write questions or comments on the chat facility. Be aware that these comments are visible to everybody. Chat can be monitored by the Zoom Maistre to ensure appropriate response. Please ensure that your background is not cluttered. You are responsible for your appearance on screen, and that personal details shown will be visible to others.

17 TCA GROUP REPORTS

White Rose Report: The group meets every three months at a Premier Inn and has a good nucleus of members. The next meeting is 12 April.

Derbyshire Group: Report sent re Submariners by Terry Hall.

Bristol Channel Group: Eight members from Cardiff met five from Swansea in a very successful lunch in the Bristol Channel Yacht Club in Mumbles on the Gower Peninsular on 5 January. A further meeting planned for Friday 13 March with 13 members did not happen. A catering firm known as K2 were unable to provide the required buffet. It reminded the secretary that he was invited to go on an expedition to climb K2 in the Himalaya. That did not happen either. The next meeting will be in Bristol Channel Yacht Club on 15 May.

18 HMS FITTLETON

On Sunday 20 September a service is to be held in the village of Fittleton to mark the 50th Anniversary of the loss of HMS FITTLETON, following a collision with HMS MERMAID in the North Sea. A request had been made in Ton Talk for any members who were involved in the tragedy and who wished to contribute anything to the anniversary commemoration to contact the secretary who had been serving in HMS HODGESTON at the time. Only Phil Clarke and Commodore Ian Berry, MCM10 on 20 September 1976

had responded. Ian Berry had mentioned an apposite article written in a book called "Commanding Officers" by David Miller. Phil had been in touch with the new vicar of All Saints Church Fittleton and had got his agreement to hold a service. It became evident by this poor response and from the reaction of members present at the meeting that TCA should not take an active part in the commemoration. HMS PRESIDENT Old Hands Association was believed to be responsible for planning and any TCA members wishing to participate should contact Phil Clarke. A donation of £200 was approved unanimously for the anniversary proceedings and the treasurer was asked to action this. The Chaplain who had written an earlier memorial service in Fittleton, had tried to find the position of the collision, thought to be 70 miles of Texel.

19 OTHER BUSINESS

The chairman expressed thanks to Dave Walker for taking charge of the TCA Cenotaph contingent for several years. Mike McBride of the HMS BRONINGTON Trust offered his impressive personal credentials to the meeting as leader of the ship's restoration project. He had served in the Royal Navy from 1971 to 1997, had headed a mine warfare group and led Weapon System Training. The first attempt to obtain funding by the National Lottery Heritage Fund had been unsuccessful, but it was encouraging that the NLHF had stated that a new application be made. The new application should try to reduce the cost of a feasibility study, find a viable home for the ship, and determine what components can be recovered. Interest in a future home for the ship had been shown by the National Museum of the Royal Navy, possibly Gunwharf Quays and Big Heritage (Dean Paton). HMS BRONINGTON situated in Birkenhead Docks since 2006, is ownerless following the refusal to accept this responsibility by various authorities. Discussions with potential stakeholders have focussed on restoring the whole ship. However, retaining key components of the ship may be a more pragmatic way forward as illustrated by the Argentinian Navy's approach to HMS HICKLETON which features the superstructure. Steps are continuing to consider all possibilities. Three salvage companies have provided Rough Order of Magnitude ROMs costs to cover salvage and delivery to a local shipbuilder. (Phases 1 and 2) Phase 3, Cammell Laird of Birkenhead have provided freely the services of a naval architect to conduct a vessel landing feasibility study. A ROM cost to land the vessel, including all equipment and storage required has been provided. Future plans include finding a viable home for the ship or its key components to underpin the NLHF bid, and with a business partner, determine level of restoration. The support of the Ton Class Association is important to the Trust and Mike McBride and this project. He retains TCA's very best wishes for success.

20 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

To be confirmed by Jim Virgo.

The meeting secured at 1255.

The RN in the Gulf in 1968

John Lippiett

I am penning this in early May while the Strait of Hormuz is closed, and blockades by both the USA and Iran create a near impasse for any commercial shipping. Predictably, a severe global recession is being forecast. Hopefully, by the time you might read this, there may be more clarity of where we are all heading. I will not touch on my thoughts about the legality or the dubious aims of this war, but it does stir me to offer a view about history coming around yet again.

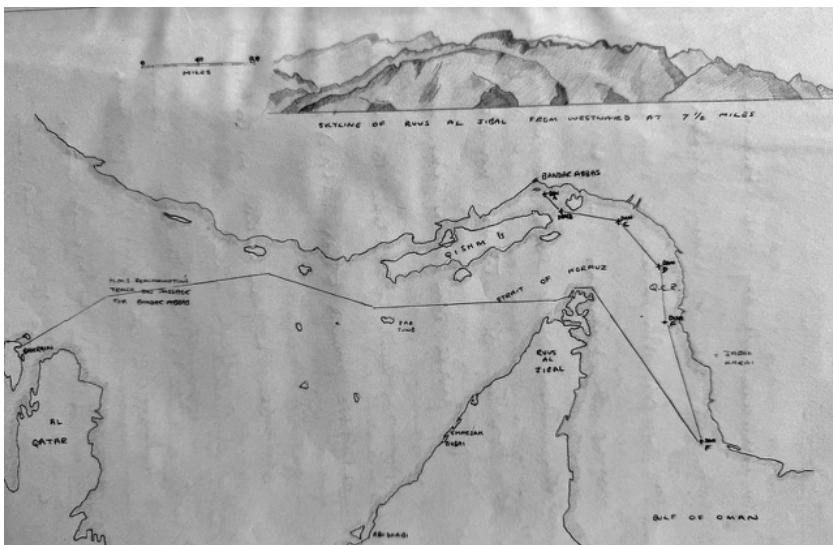
The summer of 1968 saw Midshipman Lippiett fly out with the RAF to Bahrain to join HMS *Appleton* (M1106) alongside in our base, HMS *Jufair*. There were 5 minesweepers in the 9th MCMV Squadron, together with a Leander Class frigate permanently stationed there. I have just pulled out my Midshipman's Journal, which we had to write up every week, so I am including a few quotes and a drawing from it.



Our prime strategic purpose of being in the Persian Gulf was to keep the sea lanes open to ensure the flow of oil from the refineries in Iraq. In those days, Russia was seen to be the greatest threat, with a rapidly growing navy. Our squadron task was to carry out patrols as gunboats in the approaches to the Gulf, and to be prepared to counter any mining operations, particularly in the Straits of Hormuz, the geographical choke point at the entrance to the Gulf. This was always seen to be one of the most vital potential choke points in the world.

We spent many days streaming our minesweeping gear, those wire cutters on Oropesa floats together with paravanes, the long magnetic loop to pulse electric energy into the water to detonate magnetic mines, and the chunky, massive mechanical hammer that was towed to set off acoustic mines. As many of our members will remember all too well, it demanded good seamanship to stream and operate all this complicated gear astern; that was not always forthcoming, so there were times when a lot of 'knitting' was brought back in. We certainly experienced these problems in *Appleton*, and my journal reports wires wrapped around our propellers. On another occasion when the Squadron was on a Squadex on the "Commodore's Sea Day" there was a 'Danbuoy Race' where each sweeper laid two danbuoys a mile apart and then went at full speed ahead for a mile and raced back to recover both buoys. While we won the race, we hit the buoy while manoeuvring to recover it and bent two propellor blades. There was certainly a great deal of learning the hard way!

We would lay down buoys to mark swept channels, another seamanship evolution that in theory was simple but often ended up in a tangle or, as my midshipman's journal records, the buoy completely sinking because the depth was incorrectly marked on the chart. We exercised as a squadron together frequently, and also with allies in the area. In those days Iran was a member of CENTO (Central Treaty Organisation) and we sailed to the Iranian port of Bandar Abbas before conducting a large joint exercise in the Strait of Hormuz that lasted an intense 12 days. I recorded that the interactions between the two navies left much room for improvement; we saw some near collisions and many misunderstandings. We had trained with Iranian Cadets at Dartmouth so had got to know a number well. (Years later we were to learn that in the Iranian Revolution of 1979, most of these officers were executed.) I am attaching a sketch I made for my journal of our passage and mine sweeping routes from the Gulf of Oman to the port of Bandar Abbas.



Reading my journal entries, I am very impressed by the Squadron's intensive programme of exercises and the amount of time we spent in company, with frequent Officer of the Watch manoeuvres, bump-transfers, gunnery practice, and sweeping drills. As a Mid I certainly learnt a great deal in those early days, and it stood me in good stead for when I took command of HMS *Shavington* 8 years later.

Our patrols in the strait had us on the lookout for smugglers heading west across the Strait of Hormuz and indeed we had some interesting incidents that I might relate in another article. Pertinent to the current situation, I remember that on these patrols we were directed to sail past a number of small islands in order to report back to the Headquarters which national flag was flying; both Iran and the various small emirates claimed these tiny and uninhabited (I think) little barren dry craggy lumps. The British were due leave the Gulf, closing HMS *Jufair* in 1971 and my journal reports that "two things might happen. Firstly inter-state rivalry might flare up - it is just beneath the surface at the moment. The territorial waters might well contain valuable oil fields and there is constant rivalry that sometime flare up into actual take-overs by force. Bahrain is itself claimed by Iran". I go on to argue that our naval forces and base should remain open; "Surely the cost of keeping a squadron of minesweepers, a frigate, and various shore bases is a very small proportion of the annual income we receive from the Gulf, let alone our investments". My Captain, who marked the journal weekly, put an emphatic YES against this remark.

It was not to be and HMS *Jufair* shut down as planned and the US took over the facilities. In 2018 the UK once again established a new HMS *Jufair* with a Type 23 frigate and squadron of 4 minehunters stationed there, resurrecting the 9th MCM Squadron. In December 2025 HMS *Lancaster* (one of the ships in my squadron when I was Captain F9) was decommissioned out there after 34 years of service; the Type 23s were designed with an 18 year operational life, so she had done remarkably well. HMS *Middleton* (over 43 years old) was our last minehunter in the Gulf and in January this year she started her journey home on a heavy lift vessel, arriving back in the UK in March. Thus our last departure from the Gulf was completed just before the Gulf War erupted.

The threat to the Strait of Hormuz remains the critical choke point today and, as I type this in early May, it remains very firmly closed, with the BBC News reporting that 2,000 ships with 20,000 seafarers are trapped inside the Gulf. Hopefully, by the time of reading this in Ton Talk matters will have eased, and the world economy may be attempting a return to near normality.

Band Concert at a School with RN Traditions

Peter Down

RNA members from across East Anglia joined parents and friends at the Royal Hospital School, Holbrook in Suffolk; just a couple of miles up the River Stour from the former Ganges site, on 7th May for a concert jointly presented by the Royal Marines Band of HMS Collingwood, under the direction of Captain Hannah Trudgeon RM and the School band.



The Royal Hospital School was established by Royal Charter in 1712 to provide education for the sons of seafarers. It was originally located at Greenwich Hospital but moved to East Anglia in 1933. The school is now a leading independent co-educational school with international pupils, but it still retains many naval traditions, including pupils wearing RN uniform for ceremonial occasions.

The concert was jointly presented by the two bands; Warrant Officer Lizzie Morrell, the school's bandmaster, herself a former RM musician, alternating the baton with Captain Hannah Trudgeon RM.



The programme was an eclectic mix of classical symphonies, traditional airs, some heavy rock, a duet performing the Post Horn Gallop, plus the RM Corps of Drums – so no nodding off on the back row ...



Crescendo of the performance took place on the parade ground (bigger than both Raleigh's and Dartmouth's), where the two bands marched as one integrated unit and treated the audience to a Sunset Ceremony, with a ceremonial guard provided by the School's CCF, whose drill was impressive.

The concert was a great success and raised a significant amount for the RN & RM Charity.

Bravo Zulu to all concerned.

Christenings in Ships' Bells

Peter Down, Webmaster

Following the enquiry from Ms Joanne Driver about her quest for the ship's bell of HMS HOUGHTON in which she was christened in 1967, we have received another, similar enquiry via the TCA website.

Mrs Jane Graham advises that her daughter Lindsay was christened aboard HMS WILTON in 1978 and her name was engraved in the bell. Her husband was Sub Lt Carl Graham, at that time serving in WILTON, then Senior Ship of STANAVFORCHAN.

Mrs Graham asks if anyone can advise her where the bell may now be and, if possible, she would like to obtain a suitable photo of the engraving.

Regrettably TCA does not hold this type of detail; only the date when the ship was struck from the Navy List and often, the name of the breaker's yard.

Our contact in the Ship Disposals Office in Portsmouth advises that when an RN warship is finally de-commissioned any sensitive equipment is removed for re-cycling to another ship or for use as spares, and then the hull and fittings may be offered for sale to another country, or for scrapping.

Unless a former C.O. or other "significant person" (?) puts in a bid for the bell, they are usually sent to an auction house and may end up anywhere. The Disposals Office does not keep records.

If any TCA member knows of the whereabouts of the bells of HOUGHTON, WILTON, or any other Ton, or even earlier sweepers, please contact the Webmaster at tcawebmaster1@gmail.com so he may update the Ship Histories with this interesting detail.

Force 10 Jolly

Glenn Marley



Ships have sailed in force ten gales before, and sailors have been sick before.

But when 400 sailors ride a fleet of little minesweepers head on into a force 10 at 12 knots, the result is...400 sick sailors. Well, some of them may not have been sick... some may just have vomited a little.

It happened on the run to Hamburg by nine Ton Class minesweepers and the minelayer Abdiel from HMS Lochinvar at Port Edgar on the Forth.

LIKE THE PLAGUE

They left the South Queensferry base at 10am on November 13 and by the time the fleet reached the river mouth the first of 'les miserables' were hitting their hammocks. By November 14, sea sickness had swept the fleet like Bubonic.

But still the ships ploughed on over the North Sea, racing to honour an appointment with the civic dignitaries of the West German city.

The purpose of the expedition was a show-the-flag visit. A cocktail party had been arranged for civic and consular officials aboard the Abdiel at 7.30.

The fleet commanders decided to be there at all costs to show Hamburg the *stout stuff* British ships and fighting men are made of. And they did.

PARTY IN PROGRESS

Many of the minesweepers arrived as the party was in progress, and as soon as their ships were berthed, the officers went aboard the *Abdiel* and, in amused fashion, apologised for being late.

The North Sea crossing, the worst that most of the sailors had ever experienced, was over, but the run-ashore – which was the best that most of them would enjoy – was about to begin.

On one ship, the *Belton*, only two men were not sick. One was the captain, Lt. Cdr. Tony Wilkes, and the other was the civilian Press officer, Jim Gray.

On another, the *Chilcompton*, one of the handful of men not sick was another land-lubber newspaperman. Alas, it was not the writer of this article, who was indeed a victim of the cruel sea.

CAPTAIN THE COOK

One of the stories of the storm which will live on was of the humour of the *Chilcompton's* captain, Lt. Jeremy Sanders. In defiance of the elements which had downed his cook and most of his crew, Lt. Sanders prepared dinner for his officers. The meal, cooked in conditions more suited to a rodeo cowboy than a chef, was excellent, I was told.

As a civilian sailing for the first time with the Navy I found a new respect for the sea, a new admiration for the Navy, and a great liking for the Jolly Jacks ashore in a foreign port.

Rough crossing included, I wouldn't have missed the trip for anything.

The "Ton" class coastal minesweepers, named after villages with the suffix "ton", are of 425 tons (full load) displacement. They are 153ft in length overall, with a beam of nearly 29ft.

Hotelier's son rescues man in raging sea

Leading Seaman Glenn Marley, whose parents run the Crawford Hotel, Clarence Road, Bognor Regis, risked his life to save a survivor from the Greek car ferry, Heraklion, which sank off the Crete coast last week.

Glenn, aged 24, was in charge of the upper deck seamen on board the British minesweeper H.M.S. Ashton which had been diverted to the drama scene by Naval Headquarters, Malta.

By the time Ashton arrived the ship had sunk. Many bodies were floating in the area.

Glenn spotted a deck locker floating nearby with a man clinging to it. The man attempted to swim towards Ashton but was too weak.

EXPERT SWIMMER

The young British seaman, an expert swimmer and sea diver, ordered his men to tie him to a long life-line and dived into the raging sea.

"It took some time to get to him," said Glenn who is married with a baby daughter. "I went under several times and without the life-line would have been a goner.

"When I got to the man he was barely alive. I managed to tie a harness to him and he was pulled aboard. He kept murmuring 'Thank God, Thank God.'

"We gave him a light meal. After a sleep under warm blankets he soon pulled round. It was all a bit worrying at the time but I felt I could make it to him."

Ashton with sister ship Leverton picked up 26 bodies in all with another survivor.

NEW REGIME FOR SLOPS

A new regime is in operation for TCA Slops.

Embroidered items of clothing should be ordered directly from our suppliers BS Embroidery Plus of Liskeard. Phone: 01579 345 562 e-mail: sales@bs-embroidery.com This range currently includes: Fleeeces, V-neck sweaters, Round neck sweat shirts, Iron Man Tee shirts and Polo shirts, Ties (Blue), TCA Mug, TCA Baseball Caps (Logo 1 &2), Blazer badge (embroidered), TCA Beanie/Ski Hat. State size and colour option required when ordering. Current prices on application. Payment with order to be made to BS Embroidery by cheque or card.

Printed items including TCA Notepads with TCA Pen and Car Stickers can be purchased from Webmaster Peter Down. Phone: 01449 721 235 e-mail: peter.avoca@gmail.com Payment with order by cheque made out to TCA or by Credit transfer (see below)

Last of the Wooden Walls book, in A4 hardback or e-book format can be ordered directly from publisher www.halsgrove.com £24.99

Remaining Items can be ordered from Treasurer David Woolgar. This range currently includes: Beret Badge, TON Profile Badge (Gold & Silver). Lapel Badges are now sold out. Also available are Maroon Ton Class Ties and Blackfoot Ties. All items priced at £5, incl Post and Packing. *Please note that when stocks are exhausted, these items will not be re-ordered.* Phone: 07410 988 470 e-mail: djwoolgar@gmail.com

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Membership Update

To comply more closely with GDPR Data Protection rules, contact details of members are not disclosed but can be obtained from the Membership Secretary, subject to member's permission.

NEW MEMBERS – Welcome Aboard

David Hall (RO)1 RN, Northumberland. Tel: - E-mail> Served in HMS WILTON 88-91 F2624

William Hughes. (MEM)1 RN. Hampshire. Tel: - E-mail> Served in HMS LEWISTON 74-76 F2625

LOST CONTACT

James D Blisset Last known address Edinburgh Scotland F0300

Gerald Tormey. Last known address Gosport Hampshire F0333

William Robertson. Last Known Address Dundee Scotland F2300

John Collins. Last Known Address Bexhill on Sea East Sussex F1048



Crossed the Bar

Richard S Stenlake Capt RN. Tiverton Devon. Served in HMS HICKLETON
58-59 HMS BURNASTON & HMS LEWISTON 76-78 F0800

Michael Elton S/Lt RNVR. Camberley Surrey. Served in HMS FENTON 56
HMS SHAVINGTON 56 F1635

Edward Savage. A/B RN. Waterlooville Hampshire. Served in HMS
CONISTON 53-54 F0680

Robert E D House Cdr RN. Romsey Hampshire. Served in HMS
THANKERTON 65 HMS WISTON 67-68 HMS HIGHBURTON 74-75 HMS
HUBBERSON 76-77 F0466

Robert J Sexton POMW RN. Peterborough Cambridgeshire. Served in HMS
IVESTON 67-68 HMS BRINTON 75-76 HMS WALKERTON 81-82 London
RNR 83-84 L2027

John Reed MEM1 RN. Littlehampton. Served in HMS HICKLETON 56-57
L1862

David Miles. PO ELEC RN. Hook Hampshire Served in HMS CONISTON 55-
56 F1453

David Low RN. Colchester Essex. Served in HMS HUBBERSTON 69-70
F0911

May They Rest in Peace

Post Bag

From: Martin Bisiker

I am looking to speak with anyone who may have served on HMS Burnaston during the Aden emergency [1963-67]. I have a short extract of Lord West speaking about his time onboard and am looking for other accounts. I would be grateful for any help you can provide.

From: Peter Down

Several members have built models of TONs, often scratch built, some of which are fitted with ingenious radio controls for speed, steering, navigation lights, rotating radar aerials and Bofors.

The website continues to receive requests for information about suppliers of kits of TONs.

It is understood that UK suppliers such as Airfix have discontinued the TON model but that a Japanese supplier still has one.

CAN ANYONE LET US HAVE MORE RELIABLE INFORMATION?

Also member Howard Hollingsbee asks if any of our model makers would be prepared to make a model of his favourite ship HMS TILFORD?

Please contact Howard on
howardhollingsbee@icloud.com

From: George O'Connor

If you are looking for a model kit of the Ton Class, try the following website:
<https://atlanticmodels.net/kits/>

Atlantic models sell a range of models of HM Ships, at 1/350 scale, so a Ton is just over 5" long.

HMS Bossington Model Presentation



HMS Bossington Model Presentation

