

# ***TON Talk***

**Newsletter of the TON Class Association**

**Edition 233**



**March 2026**



## **HMS BILDESTON**

**1953 Vernon Training Squadron**

**1954-58 50<sup>th</sup> MSS at Port Edgar**

**1958-68 In Reserve at Hythe**

**1968-83 1<sup>st</sup> MCM, Port Edgar and Rosyth**

**1984-86 3<sup>rd</sup> MCM at Rosyth**

# TON Class Association



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**TCA Membership**  
**£15 per annum, £150 Life Membership**

**Front Cover**  
**HMS BILDESTON**

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**[www.tcaminesweepers.co.uk](http://www.tcaminesweepers.co.uk)**

**Founder: Jack Worth MBE**

## Editorial

**Dits and Photos:** Thank you for the articles submitted for this Ton Talk. Please send in any stories, serious or funny, preferably with a photo or two. 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.

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

**George O'Connor**

### **Remembering the Iraq War – 15 Years On**

The Royal British Legion are hosting a daytime commemorative event at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire on Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2026 to mark the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of Operation TELIC. They warmly invite those to attend from the serving and veteran communities who served in the Iraq War (Op TELIC: 2003-2011), families of those who served in Iraq (including the bereaved), and those who worked as civilian contractors supporting British Forces and civil society in the country.

If you know of any individuals who may be interested in attending, we ask that they register their interest via this link: <https://rbl.org.uk/telic15o>

## Chairman's Corner

Dear Members: I hope all of you had a really great Christmas and as such I welcome each and every one of you to a very Happy and Prosperous New Year in 2026.

With our Bi-Annual Committee (BAC) Meeting at the RMC Portsmouth fast approaching (13-15 March) I hope as many of you as possible will be able to attend as I 'think' there is going to be a very busy and interesting agenda to achieve within a tightened time frame ie:1100-1400.

I mention this as now that our Vice Chairman will have completed his renovation of the Member donated HMS Bossington (mentioned in the last TT), he and I will be delivering it to the Old Customs House for placement at 1000hrs then returning for the revised time BAC Meeting.

Following our BAC completion at 1400hrs, we will then return to the Old Customs House (OCH) together with as many of you 'Attendants' as possible, for the Official Blessing by our Reverend Trevor Filtness, followed immediately with the formal 'Ribbon- Cutting' by our VC Sam Cook of the Bossington's final placement.

When all this has been completed, the OCH senior staff will invite us into their Bar area for food and drinks (specifically chosen and purchased by yourselves) to get to know us better.

On my final note, I just wish also to ask each of you to both send George O'Connor and our FB page as many dits and pics from your memories as possible. Let's make 2026 a really memorable Year for the TCA and You – our much-appreciated Members!

Kind regards to you all,

*Ian Barden*

## Vice Chairman's Corner

Well, here we are fully entrenched in another year. What will it bring for all of us, who knows?

Since Oct, I have put a hold on building my squadron of ton sweepers. The reason being, we were gifted last March 25 a model of a Ton class Bronington. Now this model is rather large, too big for the average house at 50 inches long, height 28 inches and 11 inches wide. So, our chairman, along with our president, went looking for place where it could be put on display for viewing by the general public.

Finally, the custom house in Gunwharf Quay said they would be delighted to put in on show in their entrance. By the time you read this it will be in its new home, as we will be unveiling it on March 14<sup>th</sup>, after the committee meeting....

Back to why I halted work on my tons..... The model was old, and was in need of a considerable need of fixing, parts mended, repainted as much as I could. Re-do the rigging, but you get the picture, and as I write this end of Jan, I have about another 2 week's work. So, plenty of time if I find something wrong. Been asked to do another prestige restoration, more on that if it comes to fruition.

I know we still have some time to go before the AGM, but it comes round very quickly. Time to me seems to fly by! Keep an eye open for Jim's commutation regarding booking a room etc. Hope to catch up with some of you there.

Out to Malta end of spring. I hope to get the memorial booked in for a regular clean, if not I will carry on cleaning every time I go out.

I expect like a lot of you, my mind is drifting towards the garden, what veg and salad crops to plant. Must admit I won't be planting as much as I use to, thinking more of sitting in the sun reading a good book. Which brings me to a couple of my favourite authors, Simon Scarrow; he writes about ancient Rome, all fiction. But there are some famous names mentioned and Julian Stockwell writes a series of books about a young lad who joined up in Nelson's time and rose to become an admiral, once again fiction, but again some famous names mentioned.

Hopefully in the next issue there will be some photos of the model in its place in custom house and a write up.

Till we meet again or connect on Ton Talk.

All the best, *Sam (Driftwood) Cook*

# TCA Who's Who

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## COMING EVENTS

March 2026	14	1100 Biannual Committee Meeting. Royal Maritime Club, Portsmouth
April 2026	11	1300 White Rose Meeting Premier Inn, York North West
May 2026	23	Bristol Channel Group Lunch at Bristol Channel Yacht Club, Swansea
September 2026	20	HMS Fittleton Service of Remembrance, Fittleton, Wiltshire
October 2026	10	Reunion and AGM

## Chaplain's Chat

I don't about you, but I've become very last minute in some of the things I do, perhaps it's older age! For example, I had noted in my I-phone diary that I had to write this piece for our Easter Ton Talk so that George, our editor, would have it in good time. Yes, the reminders worked but I then got sidetracked and put it to one side saying to myself: plenty of time for that'. Thus, I am now writing this one day before the deadline but only because George sent out a final demand. Far worse, a few weeks ago I even forgot to select the hymns for a Sunday service I was leading. I wonder whatever happened to that keen naval person who planned everything to the n<sup>th</sup> degree and got things done well before final deadlines. I suspect I've just got older but not perhaps any wiser. I seem to have become a 'Mister put it off until tomorrow'!

It so happens that, as I write, today is Shrove Tuesday (pancakes for tea) and tomorrow is Ash Wednesday marking the beginning of Lent, the great Christian penitential season that ends with Holy Week and Easter Sunday, the Resurrection of Christ. For Christians, Lent marks a very personal time when we consider how we stand with God. The sort of: 'How am I doing Lord' moment. Actually, every service has this element in it where we seek personal forgiveness, but Lent is a time for greater and deeper reflection.

I think we all need time to reflect on our lives and challenge ourselves to change some things or one thing perhaps but of course there are many 'what if's' and discouragements, for example health as we age can limit options. To be fair, most faiths and secular approaches to life have an element of this refreshment and change, so I am not claiming a kind of Christian high ground but for Christians Lent is a must.

The one thing about Christianity is that we have an ever-forgiving God, it's never too late to ask for forgiveness and to put things right in our lives should we need to do so. And this is the message of Easter and why Christ died on the Cross. We have human deadlines which drive our lives and which sometimes make them unbearable, but God works in his own time and it's never too late to call on him, well until we come face to face with him perhaps.

These are perhaps heavy thoughts but we all need time to re-assess our lives, perhaps to realign, to stop doing some things and to start others less burdensome. I do hope that I can stop being Mister put it off until tomorrow but it's going to take a lot of praying!

With every blessing for a wonderful Easter with family and friends.

*Trevor*

## Area Representatives

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Area 6 Sussex		<b><i>Any Volunteers?</i></b>
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Area 8 Hampshire and Isle of Wight	Bob Dean	fenton1135@gmail.com 01730 233596

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.

## Bob Dean's TCA CV

I was 'Recruited' into the TCA by Sam Cook TCA Founder Member early 1990s. Soon after I joined, Sam asked if I would be the TCA Hampshire Rep.

My subsequent active roles in the TCA in no particular order: -

- Organised ship visits and transport for events like Remembrance Sunday in Whitehall.
- Commissioned a TCA Display which attended Navy Days at Chatham, Plymouth & Portsmouth. Also attended Open Days at HMS Sultan and HMS Collingwood. This display consisted a gazebo & associated equipment ie display boards & tables etc which I populated with memorabilia, photographs and documentation including a section devoted to HMS Fittleton plus an area depicting HRH & the Bronington.

This was a dual purpose display in conjunction with the TCA Slops Officer. We had a dedicated team of TCA Volunteers who assisted with manning the display (all travel & hotel accommodation funded by the individuals attending).

- TCA Confederation of Naval Associations (CONA) Representative
- Constructed and administered a new TCA Website which had a good reputation and was used by many including visitors who subsequently joined the TCA.
- TCA Historical Group (TCAHG). Initially I was the administrator & compiler of information supplied by a small team of researchers and TCA members. Subsequently I was assistant to Captain Jeremy Stewart (TCA Founder Member & President) researching all Ton histories, logs and members dits. The whole then loaded onto CDs which were supplied to a few interested parties but mainly to the Naval Historical group in Portsmouth dockyard and, I believe, Jeremy sent a copy to the IWM. The Association Constitution included a section requiring the TCAHG to provide a bi-monthly report for publication in Ton Talk containing updates and anecdotes. This report was a joint venture between Jeremy Stewart & myself. This came to an end when the relevant section of the constitution was deleted.

# 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 5), CHIDDINGFOLD (N/A), HURWORTH (Crew 8), LEDBURY (Crew 3) and MIDDLETON (Crew 4) plus the Sandown class minehunter BANGOR (Crew 10). Only CATTISTOCK and LEDBURY are currently operational. Both have been running from Portsmouth and CATTISTOCK visited Zeebrugge at the end of January. MIDDLETON is being returned to the UK leaving no RN MCMVs based in the Gulf for the first time since 2007. The US Navy has also removed its four Avenger class minehunters, DEVASTATOR, DEXTROUS, GLADIATOR and SENTRY from Bahrain. BANGOR, heavily damaged by CHIDDINGFOLD during a harbour manoeuvring incident in Bahrain in Jan 2024, returned to the UK on board a heavy lift ship in Nov 2025 and is in refit to extend her service life to 2030.

## 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.

## 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). MTXG units have been in the Gulf utilising REMUS UUVs (Unmanned Underwater Vehicles) for mine detection, seabed mapping and underwater surveys. Since the New Year, MTXG's Yankee Sqn 1 has operated the Gavia UUV for detailed seabed mapping and threat classification and trained on MMCM (Maritime Mine Counter- Measures), the newest system being developed by Thales UK for rapid, high-precision mine detection and neutralisation. MTXG's OCU (Operational Conversion Unit) has completed a three-week Atlas SeaCat MUUV (Medium Unmanned Underwater Vehicle) course for Yankee Sqn Unit 2. As of the end of January, the OCU has delivered 18 courses across four systems, providing cost-effective training for MTXG personnel.

See my latest MCM news on the Minewarfare & Clearance Diving Officers' Association website at [www.mcdoa.org](http://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

A brief report on the first meeting of 2026.

Present were Terry Foreman, Trevor Dixon, Clive Dennison, Phil Fluke, John Rogers, Alan Hewitt, Jim Virgo, Dave Parrish, Pincher Martin and myself.

Apologies from Bob and Dee Dean and Steve and Nancy Ruck.

We also welcomed new member Graham Brayshaw who served on HMS Wotton, Gavinton and Crichton.

It has become our practice to stay over in the hotel in January from Friday to Sunday so it was a good chance for everyone to catch up.

An elite squad has volunteered to go to the deep dark south to do missionary work on the weekend of 13 -16 March. Hope to see you all at the committee meeting.

Jim Virgo gave a brief report on the last reunion and some thoughts on this year's reunion.

Date for the next meeting is Saturday 11 April in the Premier Inn, York North West. 1300 in the function room.

After intriguing us with some more artifacts (Clive has photos) Phil spoke about a project he was contacted about after his caulking demo. A group has formed to bring a Motor Anti-Submarine Boat back from its present state of dereliction in Norfolk . He is sending George an article for TT. We had a whip round to send a donation to the project.

After " Up Spirits " the ladies joined us for our meal.

Another great weekend with good mates.



## HMS Fittleton Memorial Service

Phil (Nobby) Clarke

I had a meeting with the new Vicar of All Saint's Church, Fittleton in February. He is happy to hold a memorial service on 20th August 2026 (the 50th anniversary of the Tragedy). I have provided him with the order of service that was used at the dedication of the memorial plaque as well as a brief overview of what took place that day.

I intend to try and contact as many of the survivor's relatives, from the list that I had for the memorial service, as possible. If you know of anybody who would like to attend, my email address is philcl@rke.me.

The Old Hands Association will also be putting a notice in its forthcoming newsletter. I think that the church, although small, could accommodate about 100 people. The Parishioners are prepared to provide refreshments after the service, but I have said that the OHA, and hopefully the Ton Class Association, would ensure that they are 'not out of pocket'.

## HMS Bronington update

**Mike McBride**

Led by our professional fundraising consultants the HMS BRONINGTON Preservation Trust submitted a feasibility study heritage funding application (22 December 2025). A successful bid will fund a 9-month study during 2026, which will consider all restorative options for HMS BRONINGTON, and ultimately determine her future in whatever form that takes. Furthermore, the study will explore options for further business partnerships, public engagement/STEM learning, additional funding and most importantly a sustainable home for HMS BRONINGTON.

**2026** is a significant commemorative year for HMS BRONINGTON:

- 75 years since she was first laid down in the Cook, Welton and Gemmell Shipyard in Beverley, Yorkshire in 1951.
- 50 years since she was Commanded by King Charles III, the then Prince of Wales in 1976.

Although a big ask, some of Bruce Forsyth's magic would be good today

'You Bet' he could save HMS BRONINGTON!!!??

For further Information about project HMS BRONINGTON contact:  
mike.mcbride@ntlworld.com

# HMS Bildeston in Navy News 1984

Gary Faulkner

'Bildy-the oldest and boldest!

It would take more than a good crystal-gazer to forecast the future of HMS Bildeston. For her programme, like that of all Mine Countermeasures vessels, is under review.

But while the Navy's oldest operational ship awaits news, Bildy continues her workaday life on routine survey work in the North Sea under the Command of Lt Cdr Rod Higham.

Laid down on May 18th 1951 at the yard of JS Doig in Grimsby as the second of the Coniston class, the Bildeston, first ship of the name in the Royal Navy, was launched in June 1952 and commissioned in April 1953.

Since then she has logged a varied career which began in Portsmouth as a member of the Minesweeper Training Squadron at HMS Vernon. In September 1954 she headed north to join the 50th Minesweeping Squadron at HMS Lochinvar.

Then with four years' service to her credit it was the Doldrums for Bildy, with nine years in reserve at Agamemnon Boat Yard, Hythe. Southampton, until the signal came for her to head for Rosyth and conversion to a Minehunter. Fitted out for her new role she was commissioned in 1968 for the First MCM squadron where she remained in NATO's Standing Naval Force until 1980.

Now 31 years after entering service she is a member of the Third MCM Squadron, which she forms with HM ships Sheraton, Gavinton, Maxton, Brinton and Upton. They pride themselves on being the 'oldest squadron afloat - and probably the youngest at heart'

In her deployment she has carried out surveys, recovered missiles and aircraft and anti gun running off Northern Ireland and clocked up over 250,000 miles in 16 years.

As she steams up and down the East Coast adding to her colossal mileage, she passes the Suffolk village she was named after and with which she maintains an active affiliation.

Foot Note: My daughter was Christened in the Bell on Trafalgar Day 1973, and many years later my daughter and I were VIPs at the ceremony in Bildeston when the Ship's bell and Ensign were laid-up in the village church.

## Extra Sea Time

Graham Gatehouse

In 1977 as a young POMEM watchkeeper, I did my fortnight's sea training with Tyne Division RNR, onboard HMS Wiston. What seemed strange at the time that this was a single ship training period and what I can remember, from the time, we were to monitor the shipping lane segregation in the Dover Straits. A Dover Patrol?

We slipped our berth on the Tyne and proceeded straight down the East coast and on to Dover. What I can remember of the crew, about from me, the only others from London Division RNR, were Graham Morley, the XO and possibly the WEO.

My watchkeeping LMEM was older than me and his last ship in the RN was HMS Belfast! The Chief MEA and one of the other POMEM's were ex-RN. One of the other POMEM's was Davy Kyle, a real Geordie! Every Division has its characters, and he certainly was one of them. I came to know Davy rather well later in my time in the RNR, as he became my DMEO on a River Class fortnight.

I think by the end of the trip I had somewhat got the understanding of Geordie speak! I cannot remember any other ship relieving us as we did much of our sea time as day running, with perhaps the odd night at sea. We were based in Dover for the best part of a week, returning to the Eastern mole every time after a period at sea.

I cannot remember who came up with the idea, but one of the Senior Rates came up with the idea of a mess run, to France, on a Ferry! So, after returning to Dover on an afternoon and after secure at 1600 we all got changed into a civvies and walked around to the Ferry Terminal. In those days you did not always need a passport to leave the country, just a travel document, so one by one we used the photo booth to obtain our mug shots, filled in the temporary travel document, paid our money, (return fare of course!) and boarded a ferry.

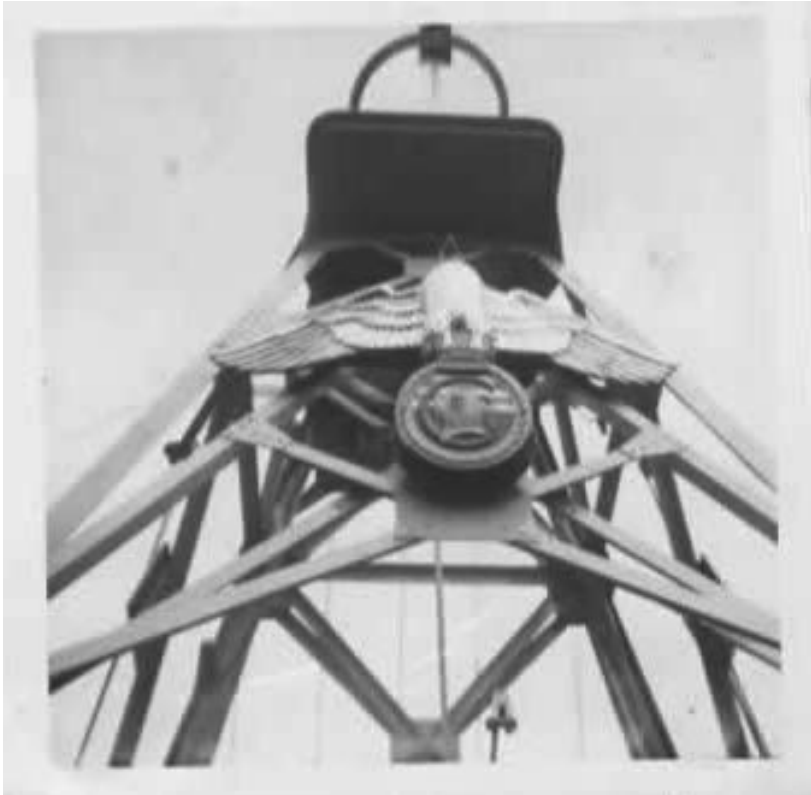
I believe the trip was to Boulogne, but I cannot be sure as we never got off the Ferry! We stayed in the lounge and had big eats and of course liquid refreshments. And as good Senior Rates we were back onboard Wiston within the correct time.

The second part of the sea training took us around to Portsmouth and possibly Plymouth, before visiting Great Yarmouth for a couple of days jolly. Then a return up the East Coast, back to the Tyne.

## HMS Brinkley Ship's Badge

Mike Waddleton

HMS Brinkley (Ley Class Inshore Minehunter) circa 1960 in R Thames (I was a 12 year old Sea Cadet when I took this)



# The Royal Naval Auxiliary Service

Maurice Gordon, ex C.P.O. Marine Engineer, Chatham Unit 1972 – 88

The **Royal Naval Auxiliary Service (RNXS)** was a uniformed, unarmed, civilian volunteer service, administered by the Royal Navy to operate in the ports and anchorages of the United Kingdom in times of emergency. It was formed in 1963 from the amalgamation of the Royal Naval Mine-Watching Service and the Admiralty Ferry Crew Association in response to the perceived nuclear threat to British ports. Over 30 RNXS units were formed covering all coasts of Great Britain, including Shetland and the Channel Islands.

The Minewatching Service had been formed in 1952 to man observation points overlooking ports and strategic waterways to report mines dropped by enemy aircraft. In many ways it paralleled the activity of the Royal Observer Corps, a civil defence organisation intended for the visual detection, identification, tracking and reporting of hostile aircraft which operated between October 1925 and December 1995.

The new RNXS adopted the ensign of the Mine Watching Service.



Duties of the RNXS included assisting officers of the Naval Control of Shipping in forming convoys and, in the event of an attack on Britain, dispersing faster merchant ships to safer anchorages overseas.

They also patrolled ports and anchorages and inspected any suspicious vessels.

**Personnel** Those who served in the RNXS were volunteer reservists and are therefore veterans of HM Armed Forces. RNXS were divided into 'Afloat' and 'Ashore' sections, Afloat personnel manned the service's dedicated vessels and the Ashore personnel manned the Port Headquarters (PHQ) positioned in major ports around the United Kingdom. The Afloat section comprised seamen, engineers, and communications personnel, while the Ashore section consisted of communications, plotting and general duties staff.

All RNXS personnel were termed Auxiliarymen, regardless of gender. Women volunteers served in all specialisations; thus RNXS had the first women serving at sea.

Volunteers came from many backgrounds; some were RN or Army veterans, others were retired from the Merchant Service, but many were from a wide variety of civilian occupations, with no prior military experience but blessed with a sense of adventure and a wish to contribute to the national interest.

**Pay** RNXS volunteers received no pay, other than a small allowance for courses and exercises, which covered out of pocket expenses and 15 pence a mile for using private cars. They even had to buy their own food for sea time.

They were counted as uniformed civilians and not bound by Queens Regulations, so discipline was fairly laid back.

**Vessels** Initially RNXS utilised the redoubtable Admiralty MFV's but in the mid-1960's, they were replaced by ten mothballed Ham Class Inshore Minesweepers: Birdham, Odiham, Pagham, Portisham, Puttenham, Saxlingham, Shipham, Shrivenham, Thakeham, and Tongham. These, in turn, were replaced in the 1980's by ten 75 ft Loyal Class Fleet Tenders, subsequently augmented by four re-engined P2000 Archer Class Patrol Craft. RNXS craft were unarmed, with minesweeping equipment removed. Where their duties might involve boarding suspect vessels, Special Forces troops were embarked.

Craft were termed XSV and commanded by a Skipper (CPO equivalent) with a mate (Petty Officer equivalent) as First Lieutenant.



*XSV SHIPHAM - Note over-sized navigation lights*

Similarly engineering specialists could advance to Chief Engineer (Charge ERA equivalent) and communications specialists could advance to Chief Communicator (PO Telegraphist/Radio Operator equivalent) and Chief Plotter. All specialists were trained in RN standards and procedures.

**Uniforms** In the early days, uniforms were heavy serge Civil Defence battledress. Officers' braid was silver until RN uniforms were introduced in the late 1980's. Command Naval Auxiliary Officer (4 rings), Area Naval Auxiliary Officer (3 rings), Port Naval Auxiliary Officer (2½ rings), Area Engineer Officer (2 rings) and Section Naval Auxiliary Officer (Heads of Unit) (1 ring).

**Ratings Badges** were red



*Crossed mine watching sights*

N.X. (Naval Auxiliaryman), would have just the crossed sights on the right arm.

Q.N.X. (Qualified Naval Auxiliaryman), would have the crossed sights on the right arm with branch badge below: (Ships wheel for Seamen, Propellor for Engine Room, Wireless Wings for Communicators and Spiderweb/Screen for Plotters, as appropriate).

L.N.X. (Leading Hand) would have the crossed sights with star above and branch below on the right arm and an anchor on the left arm.

C.N.X. (Charge/Chief) would have a crown above the sights with branch below, plus a larger crown on the left arm.

**Sea Time** RNXS craft were at sea most weekends for practical training. They participated in national and NATO exercises, as well as local and out-of-area training cruises, ranging from the Channel coast to Scapa Flow and have assisted in the clearance of oil pollution and Search and Rescue tasks.



*Chief Mo – Taking readings on the Paxman engine*



*Exercising with RAF Air Sea Rescue*

Some exercises were more challenging than others. Maurice recalls one passage in XSV Thakeham from Chatham, aiming for Falmouth, which ran into very heavy weather in the Channel. As the bows dug into the waves, sea water entered through the forward deck hatch and down the hawse pipes to the chain locker. It also penetrated aft, possibly through loose propeller gland – remember these were old wooden hulls. The ship had left Chatham with one generator in bits but now the second one packed up, possibly due to water in the fuel supply, and the only electrical supply was the battery.

Free surface effect of the flooding below decks made the ship unmanageable in heavy cross seas. Radio messages were sent calling for Urgent Assistance and the crew mustered in the superstructure, preparing to abandon ship, but the RN did not have a surface ship within easy reach and the bad weather precluded launching a helicopter.

The vessel struggled on and eventually found shelter in Devonport, where they secured alongside a frigate. After prayerful thanks, 36 tons of sea water was pumped out of the hull and attempts were made to dry out and bring order below decks. Falmouth was forgotten and several days later, a chastened crew made an uneventful return to Chatham.

**Endex** RNXS was disbanded in March 1994 among other budget cuts by the Ministry of Defence. In 1990 over 3200 volunteers were serving in RNXS. The saving was a paltry £3.2 million but our nation lost trained personnel and a capability still needed in these uncertain times and challenging to re-activate.

**Acknowledgements:** Wikipedia for some background. Photos © Mo Gordon

## Ton Class Speech

**Made by Ian Powe in about 1983, and sent to Ton Talk by his widow  
Deidre and his son Jonathan**

What is the spell, the magic, that sustains our interest in events that began in my case (and it's longer for others) more than 30 years ago? As a matter of fact, it's not a question that I had ever put to myself until Jack Worth made two editorial decisions for the September issue of 'Ton Talk', which brought me up with a round turn and took my mind straight back to the Mediterranean 25 years ago.

One was a short article about the Seventh MCM Squadron's Sicilian earthquake adventure, the other a cover picture of my Squadron in a perfect straight line. I make no bones about it – the emotion that those pieces provoked was pure pride. Furthermore, it was pride in achievement and pride in the teamwork and the common cause that made the achievement possible. But to stay on that theme would be incredibly pompous, excruciatingly boring, and definitely not British.

So let me instead, go back to my first experience of the Ton Class and tell you a few tales about a shaggy dog who became one of my closest chums while, at the alarming young age of 25, I had command of HMS Crofton and her crew of jolly pirates.

Now, to start with, with the sailor who conned me, one day in Famagusta, Cyprus, to allow a certain fluffy puppy to join the Ship's Company, please stand up? The conversation occurred on the touchline after a soccer match against an army team whose regiment was about to go back to UK but had given shelter to this little scrap. Surely, said the sailor forlornly, we couldn't allow it to be abandoned again. And, after all, we were one of the few ships in the squadron without a dog without a wo-wo to call their own – everyone else had their Sippers, their Oink, their Chokka, so...

Well, looking down at the wet little nose peeping out of the soccer shirt, the soft pleading eyes, the silken ears, how could I refuse? So, the deed was done and the dog was ours. It was a nice, naive gesture, typical of my inexperience because, had I first consulted my wise First Lieutenant, he would've suggested that we first look at the animal's paws. Had we done so we would have seen that the little ball of fluff already had paws the size of a pusser's saucer, and of course puppies grow to a size determined by the paw. But in this case, as time was to prove, the paws got bigger as the rest of the dog tried to catch up. Another curious thing happened – when the little scrap came aboard that evening, while we were refuelling in readiness for a patrol the next morning, he made straight for a puddle of diesel oil on the deck and lapped up every drop of it. So, there and then, Diesel became his name.

And over the next few months we watched in amazement and some awe as Diesel grew at the rate of a young donkey. But when we got back to Malta, we nervously asked a friendly vet if he could give us an idea of his origins and when, if ever, he might stop growing. His best guess was that this was probably the outcome of a happy liaison between a Cypriot wolfhound and an Alsatian with a touch of lurcher thrown in for good

measure and further stature. Nor was it out of the question that the diet of diesel oil had stimulated the growth hormones.

But it was by now apparent that this was a hound of great discrimination, impeccable taste and some determination. He saw for example no democratic reason why I should be the only chap on board who had a cabin to himself; and this would instead provide him with a kennel befitting such a prince among pooches.

And we soon found that, at least at heart, he was quite a benevolent beast. He got on well with everyone provided they were not females wearing trousers, postmen, sailors from anywhere except his own squadron, or anyone who looked remotely like an Arab. He was quite tolerant too to the other dogs. But, as he was already twice their size by the time they came to say hello on our return to Malta after Christmas, they did treat him with deep respect, waiting at the gangway as they came on board, for his tail to wag permission for them to come aboard.

So, there I was, lumbered with this amazing canine curiosity, having to explain to my wife Deirdre that she must never come on board in trousers (but what about the ladders and those naughty sailors? Ah, better glimpse of golden thigh than a nip on the ankle, don't you think?) and hoping to high heaven that we wouldn't have a visit to an Arabic country. Which, of course, we very soon did! Sfax, in North Africa, for a British trade fair – best behaviour, British Ambassador will be there, a lot that depends on it, sure you'll do your stuff, went the briefing from the staff in Malta.

Jeeves put his mind to this problem and came up with what seemed the perfect solution. "I think we should confine the animal to the galley, Sir, where surely the aroma of the chef's pot mess will prevent any whiff of Arab from reaching his sensitive nostrils."

Confident that all was well, I stood quietly by the gangway, awaiting the Ambassador's arrival for the official cocktail party, at which he was to be co-host, when with a noise reminiscent of a Geni emerging from a bottle of pusser's rum - and we've all seen a few of those in our time - Diesel shot out of the screen door, did a 90° turn to port, quickly re-gathered speed and cleared the guardrail with the ease of a national winner taking Bechers for the second time around, ears flat aback, teeth bared, eyes ablaze and an expression on his face that meant only one thing: "I smell Arab". The expression on my face meant only one thing too – "I wonder what it's going to be like to be court-martialled at the tender age of 25?"

But miracles do happen. As he landed on the jetty and shaped up for the chase, he stopped dead in his tracks, sat warily down and howled. He had severely hurt his foot and gave us that moment of grace to put him back under a lock and key before the Ambassador and his entourage arrived to be followed by more Sheikhs and Princes than you see at your average OPEC meeting. A close run thing!

Two evenings later we sailed, by which time I and most others onboard except the damned dog, were absolutely knackered. And within 24 hours, I faced the prospect of a second Court Martial, but this time I couldn't blame the dog.

We sailed for what, in those days, was an unusual exercise. This idea was to proceed as a convoy, with three other ships of the squadron, from North Africa to Sardinia, and to do so with no radar, no radio and by night, no navigation lights. A simple little trick. There would be another convoy of French minesweepers heading for Toulon from a port slightly further along the coast and the enemy included the submarine Sea Devil, operating out of Malta under the command of my good mate, Charles Baker.

It started well. We made a sunset rendezvous with the squadron senior officer, Ian Mackay, in Walkerton, who had Shavington and Leverton in company and, as a moonlit night fell, we turned towards Sardinia in radio and radar silence, with the ships about half a mile apart, me on the starboard wing and already aware that we had a bit of a problem with the compass, but never mind, because we could see our chummy Leverton in the moonlight, couldn't we? So I went to bed.

The trouble began at midnight, when the new officer of the watch, despite his predecessor's assurance that the rest of the squadron was "just over there", called me up to the bridge because he felt that all was probably not well. How right he was. The night was by then Stygian black – one can forget that the moon, like the stock market, can go down as well as up – and I certainly couldn't see a thing. So I decided to switch on our navigation lights so that maybe somebody else might do the same. Not a sausage.

And then, winking in what seemed like the far distance, we saw a red flashing light, obviously sending Morse code, but so dim as to be almost unreadable. And then slowly and almost unbelievably, I and the bunting tosser, one Irving, a lovely lad, agreed that the message was "xxxx off". But who would send such an uncouth message in the middle of the night? Why only an uncouth smelly submariner of course. It had to be Charlie Baker on the surface, dashing along to catch us. Pausing only to send back a one-word, very rude expletive on our own red lantern, we switched off the lights and got on with a business of wondering where our mates might be. And then, at about 2:30 in the morning, a shout of Eureka from the officer of the watch as a gap appeared in the clouds and, by starlight, there was a line of three ships about 2 miles on our port beam. Waiting only until we had again closed the distance to about half a mile, I stumbled back into a bed already warmed by the great dog Diesel, who had taken the opportunity of my absence to get really comfortable.

Just before 5am, by which time Jeeves had taken over the watch, his mellow tone called me to say that he thought I should just pop up to the bridge as there were a couple of things he needed to chat to me about.

"Sir," he said, "it does seem to me that either somebody has moved the pole star or something very odd has happened to our compass. The other little difficulty is that I think I can smell garlic. That could just mean that the ships we've been with are not our chums at all but are Johnnie Frenchman and his amis from Toulon".

As dawn began to break, so did the truth. Our compass was deeply sick, we'd wandered right off course in the night, we'd met a horrid submarine and now we were joined up with a parcel of Frogs.

And of our mates, not a sign from one side of the horizon to the other. You've heard about the loneliness of command but, believe you me, loneliness begins in the middle of the Mediterranean at five in the morning, surrounded by tricolour ensigns and the whiff of garlic.

Well, eventually we found Sardinia. We arrived just after midday, six hours later than the rest, which meant we'd been 90 miles off track. As we came round the headland of the anchorage, the boss's signalling lantern spelt out the inevitable message "You see me, swords and medals, now."

So over I went in the ship's putt-putt motorboat to be greeted by a stern-faced First Lieutenant of the Leader, who ushered me into The Presence.

"Where the hell have you been, Crofton?" he glowered (you always know things are serious when a senior officer calls you by the ship's name!). Well, I spluttered away about defective gyros, patrolling submarines and dark nights, but it was apparent that something else was bugging him even more than the little matter of arriving six hours adrift and establishing my own entente cordiale on the high seas.

"What," he said, "is your explanation for this signal in response to mine ordering you to switch off navigation lights?" And he handed me a typed message form, which simply said: FROM CROFTON TO WALKERTON "ARSEHOLES"

Apparently, I went as white as my Sunday best uniform and then as yellow as my Korean medal pinned proudly upon it, as I realised what had happened. Not Charlie Baker in his submarine saying "xxxx Off", but Ian Mackay in Walkerton saying switch off navigation lights when I had temporarily switched them on hoping that someone would see us. He had!

But that was then, and this is now.

# Bruce Forsyth and HMS Iveston

Mike McBride

Nice to see you Brucie, to be at sea with you nice!!

A recent version of the late Bruce Forsyth's 'You Bet' game show now hosted by ITV's Stephen Mulhern reminded me of the day when MCM2's HMS IVESTON was the star of the show.

In 1989 showbiz star Bruce Forsyth and his television Production Team spent a day onboard HMS IVESTON alongside in Number 3 Basin, HM Naval Base, Portsmouth. The team were onboard to film the popular 'You Bet' TV show. By reluctant agreement, the Production Team took over the Wardroom and Brucie had exclusive use of the Senior Rates Mess.

As expected, throughout the day there was continuous banter between the Ships Company and Brucie, who was full of mischief and gave as good as he got.



The format of the show was that a panel of celebrities, the audience and Bruce would bet on the ability of members of the public to achieve unlikely challenges. An incorrect prediction forced Bruce to do his forfeit. His explanation for this part was, "You're now betting for the fate of Forsyth in the form of a forfeit. "If you're right, I'm alright; but if you're wrong, I'm right in it!"

A team of fire fighters bet that they could pull a Royal Navy ship an agreed distance using only a rowing boat, and Brucie plus audience said they couldn't.

With our encouragement from the forecandle, the fire fighters achieved their aim, no favouritism, but we wanted Brucie to do his forfeits. The fire fighters celebrated their success by jumping into the Basin; they were oblivious to the mysterious creatures lurking in the murky depths – and survived!!

His prediction was wrong and Bruce had to complete his forfeit. He scrubbed the forecandle on his hands and knees and washed the pots and pans in the galley. To his

credit, Bruce energetically completed both tasks, and his 'indignity' was filmed for the amusement of the British TV viewing public.

It was a privilege for the Ship's Company of HMS IVESTON (pictured below) to spend a day with the showbiz legend Sir Bruce Forsyth, and he had a great time too!!



HMS Iveston under tow by a rowing boat!



Ships Company of HMS IVESTON in 1989, with the much coveted Plessey Mine Warfare Trophy

# HMS Wolverton for only a year, but All Worthwhile!

Maurice Fairall

First things first; my thanks to the TCA for admitting and welcoming me as a member!

Guess I've duly qualified for this membership as resultant of my seemingly brief but enjoyable service onboard HMS Wolverton during the from May 1968 until May 1969. Based at Port Edgar, I was drafted to the vessel after completing a UW 2nd Class course at HMS Vernon with it certainly proving a different experience in comparison to the first warship that I served on, the Leander Class frigate HMS Arethusa, upon which I was privileged to see and visit various foreign ports and countries, on an almost world tour.

Onboard the Arethusa I had gained good operational experience and knowledge of different seamanship duties, as well as daily cleaning and maintenance of the 'Limbo' Mark 10 three-barrelled anti-submarine mortar unit, together with its functioning capabilities and purpose when closed-up at action stations, or on periodical exercises!

However, I was totally unprepared for the demands and rigours of working on a sweep-deck, and the complexities of preparing, streaming and recovering minesweeping equipment, and operating the same. What with attachments to the actual minesweeping cable such as cutters, oropesa floats, etc, as well as preparation of dan buoys, active experience was essential, and just as important when also streaming an alternative MM11 electric and magnetic pulsing sweep as well.

Despite observing these complex operations, I was generally apprehensive about my lack of sweep-deck knowledge and participation, and with 'freshening the nip' about the only practical task that I was entrusted with. This helped to ensure that the sweep wire would not become permanently 'kinked' as it passed out and over the Molgogger.

Maybe my exclusion, albeit friendly, from joining the sweep-deck crew was the reason that I was then duly appointed as the "tanky", which involved me in the tasks of victualling, chef's assistant, occasional wardroom steward, and responsible to the Cox'n for these duties. Maybe that was 'fore-ordained' a while ago as, according to a fading newspaper cutting in my possession, from an edition of the 'Herts Advertiser' of long ago, my late father also briefly served on a coastal minesweeper too, during the 2nd World War, and volunteering as the vessel's chef. He was later forced to abandon the burning vessel though, together with other crew members, following a fire in the engine room, and thankfully, not the fault of my father through a misdemeanour in the galley!

Following the deployment of Arethusa and the multitudinous visits to plenty of fascinating countries and ports, the 'home waters draft' to the Wolverton could have seemed somewhat dull and mediocre in comparison, but not so, given what actually happened! Being unfamiliar with the entire West coast of the British Isles, the vessel's visit to Barry, in Wales proved fascinating. Although unable to join those who may have enjoyed the 'sights and sounds' of Barry because of my onboard duties, I did manage to borrow the ship's bicycle and have a brief 'nose around' the 'steam engines graveyard' near to where we were berthed, all quite intriguing! When the time of departure from Barry occurred, it

was then slipping the mooring lines and duly returning southwards back to the English Channel, course set for the North Sea, and a scheduled visit to Hamburg. Phew ... the North Sea was really rough, with much of my spare time spent on the upper-deck, taking in the fresh air, wishing for a long drink of any fizzy drink to settle my queasy stomach, and trying hard not to puke over the side and get it all back into my face with the wind!

What a relief to eventually enter the River Elbe, and finally the very busy port of Hamburg, and calmer more placid waters. The infamous Berlin Wall was still intact then, and I can vaguely recall some protesting literature about its oppression somehow getting onto the vessel but, being an avid tea-drinker, I was maybe more concerned about securing a supply of fresh milk for our 'wets', rather than political issues. As to be expected, my shipmates enjoyed some runs ashore at the port, likely including those dubious areas of low repute, familiar and well known in that German city! Sometime later, maybe after we had returned to Port Edgar, the vessel also paid a visit to the Danish port of Helsingor, or Elsinore as it is also known, and reputedly known as the setting for Shakespeare's play of 'Hamlet'? Not sure any of my shipmates were greatly interested in the works of the great playwright, but likely more interested in the pleasures of nearby Sweden, just a brief ferry ride across between the two close neighbouring Scandinavian countries? Before my eventual departure from the Wolverton though, I was also able to enjoy the vessel's visit to Great Yarmouth as well, with Norfolk being one of my favourite English counties and, of course, the birthplace of Horatio Nelson, the esteemed Naval hero, but who allegedly also experienced bouts of sea-sickness?

With the Cox'n being my boss onboard the vessel, we would both work together in the wheelhouse when departing, or entering port, with me following his orders regarding operating the ship's engine room telegraphs, relevant and required for vessel manoeuvres.

I remember an incident following a service refit, just as we were preparing to leave our berth near to the Loop Shed at HMS Lochinvar, to head off to sea. Giving me the order "Slow Ahead" as received from the bridge, I duly complied, operating the telegraph lever, and awaiting the confirmation ring signal from the engine room. Goodness me, the vessel began going astern, heading back towards the Loop Shed!!! The Cox'n understandably duly hollered at me a repeated "Slow Ahead" – but then quickly noticing that the telegraph was indeed located at the requested position, he abruptly reached across, grabbed the telegraph handle and wacked it into the "Stop" position, and just in time to prevent our stern embedding itself into the building! Due investigation then revealed that a 'dockyard matey' somehow likely got his wires crossed, as it were, so we were delayed from going to sea until the problem had been rectified.

Another fascinating feature of life onboard a 'ton' was the unique 'graunch transfer' procedure between two vessels. With fenders overboard on the intended transfer side, the two vessels would skilfully set the ship's and course towards the other vessel until carefully embraced together, through means of keeping the respective rudders in opposition of each other, and obviously maintaining a similar speed. When properly and safely positioned, the transfer would then take place of either personnel, or whatever, usually over the guard rails of the upper midship area, as appropriate. Sometimes providing the opportunity for some mischievous behaviour, a few crew members would

duck down and hide themselves below the garden wall, having rigged up a fully charged fire hose in preparation. Upon eventual detachment of the vessels, they would then suddenly arise, and attempt to give the crew of the opposite vessel a good soaking upon their parting, all done in good fun, and without any intended malice



All-in-all then, a seemingly brief, but most memorable time for me, serving onboard one of the 'wooden walls of England' and despite not learning very much about actual minesweeping equipment and procedures, I nevertheless enjoyed the time spent with some good shipmates, including a lasting friendship made with John Cropley, a bunting tosser and signalman who served onboard HMS Soberton, also part of the port squadron of vessels, but with John now having 'crossed the bar', sadly! My departure saw me re-drafted back to HMS Vernon, now an acting 'killick' rather than the AB rating upon first arrival, to undertake the UW 1st. Class training course. This was successfully completed, and then with a requested draft back to Scotland, I became part of the 'skeleton refit crew' onboard the Tribal Class frigate HMS Gurkha, but this time north across the Forth, and based in Rosyth Dockyard instead, where she was undergoing refit. Some interesting experiences also ensued, not only enjoying

'stand-easy' episodes in the dockyard matey's canteen, supping a brew and chomping on a mutton Scotch pie, but also being encountered and duly reprimanded by the dockyard police patrol, who discovered me having a sneaky driving lesson in an isolated area of the dockyard, using the Gurkha's allotted Dormobile vehicle transport!

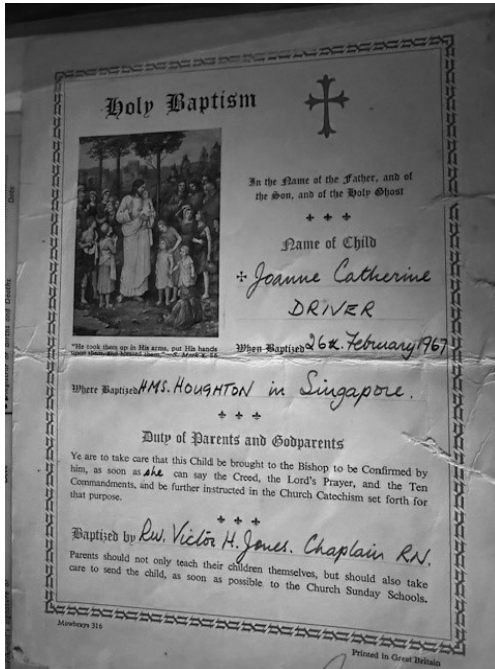
Promoted to the privileged position of being the 'Buffer's Yeoman', little did I realise then that as 1971 dawned, my days of Naval service were duly numbered, with me having to leave the Gurkha upon her arrival in South Africa in June 1971, whilst enroute to the Persian Gulf, because of family compassionate reasons. Indeed, a compassionate discharge from Naval service was duly granted, with an administrative visit and sign-off at HMS Victory in Portsmouth bringing to an absolute close my saddening departure from a promising and progressive career.

Treasured memories remain and continue though, but I beg all the readers of TON Talk to kindly excuse and forgive me any errors that I may have inadvertently committed in my usage of minesweeper terminology, etc – but trusting that my jottings may have also provided some interesting contemplations and reading for those who have also served onboard such vessels too? Age may have somewhat dimmed absolute accuracy as far as memory is concerned, but a small price to pay in order to keep and retain precious recollections, I guess? Truly – all very much worthwhile indeed!

## HMS HOUGHTON Ship's Bell

Joanne Driver recently contacted the TCA Website to enquire if we knew of the disposal of the ship's bell of HMS HOUGHTON.

Joanne was christened aboard the ship on 26 Feb 1967 and her name was engraved inside the bell. Her father was Radio Operator Ian Driver. Joanne is compiling her family history and would now like to find a photograph of the bell, possibly one showing the engraving.



At that time HOUGHTON was still leader of the 6 Mine Sweeper Squadron, based in Singapore. Might any of her ship's company at that time remember the occasion and perhaps be able to provide a photo?

OR does anyone recall what happened to the bell when the ship was paid off for scrapping in 1969, having returned to UK via the Pacific in company with WILKIESTON?

Please send any information to TCA Webmaster Peter Down at [tcawebmaster1@gmail.com](mailto:tcawebmaster1@gmail.com)

# 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 Maroon & Blackfoot), 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](http://www.halsgrove.com) £24.99

**Non-Clothing items** can be ordered from Treasurer David Woolgar. This range currently includes: Lapel Badge, Beret Badge, TON Profile Badge (Gold & Silver). 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

Payment with order by cheque or Postal Order made out to TCA or by Credit transfer (see below)

To make a Card Payment or pay by Bank Transfer:  
Use your bank's funds transfer scheme  
Pay to Barclays Bank UK PLC LEICESTER LE87 2BB  
Ton Class Association Number 2 Account  
Sort Code 20-49-08 Account Number: 60339547  
Reference SLOPS + YOUR SURNAME

Items held by Bob Dean until the March 2026 Committee Meeting:

Bosun's Call  
Ton Talk Book Binders  
TCA Blackfoot ties  
TCA Maroon Ties  
RN Berets  
TCA Mouse Mats

# 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**

Ian Cooke S/Lt RNR. London. Served in HMS BRERETON 1986 F2618

Tim Yarker. S/Lt RN. Dorchester. Served in HMS PENSTON 1966  
HMS PUNCHESTON 1968-69 F2619

John Flintoft LSCD2 RN. Dorset Served in HMS BOSSINGTON 1969-71 1973-75  
F2620

Edward Jones. Std RN. Northants. Served in HMS LALESTON 1973-74 F2622

Stephen Hoad. OEMN1 RN. Kent. Served in HMS GLASSERTON 74-76 F2622

Duncan Robinson A/B RN. Hampshire Tel E-mail. Served in HMS ATHERSTONE  
2010-11, HMS LEDBURY 2011-12

## **CHANGE OF ADDRESS**

Simon J Moore. To Dursley Gloucestershire F1887

Christopher Wellings. To Manchester F0196

Robert Lucas. To Wilnecote Tamworth. F2241

Frederick Brooks. To Cranbrook Kent. F1354

## **LOST CONTACT**

Nigel A Monk. Last known address: Paignton Devon F2077

Richard S Stenlake. Last Known address: Tiverton Devon F0800

David Craig. Last Known Address Portsmouth F1345

Alan Summers. Last Known Address: Fareham Hants F1363

William Robinson Last Known Address: Dundee F2300



## Crossed the Bar

**Roy Edwards F0407**

PO(MW) RNR. Dover. Served in HMS CLAREBESTON 1956,  
HMS LANTON 1956, HMS MAXTON 1961-62, HMS CROFTON 1962-63

**Terence Wesley L1826**

POME RN. Lochgelly, Fife. Served in HMS WOTTON 1959-60,  
HMS CUXTON 1974

**Peter Harrison F0529**

CPO RN. Lanchester, Co Durham. Served in HMS KEMERTON 1962-63,  
HMS UPTON/THANKERTON 1964-65 and HMS DUFTON 1967

**Christopher J Fentiman F0606**

A/LEM RN. Edinburgh. Served in HMS KILLIECRANKIE 1953-58

**David N Axford L1399**

RO2 RN. Surrey. Served in HMS KILDARTON 1969-71

**Donald S Mclean F1305**

Cpl 16/5 Lancers. Stoke on Trent. Served in HMS DUFTON 1964

**Derek Newman F0339**

LEM RN. Waterlooville, Hampshire Served in HMS RODINGTON  
and HMS KILDARTON

**Mike Osman**

AB RN Southampton Served in HMS DARTINGTON 1965-67  
HMS MONKTON 1967-68

**May They Rest in Peace**

## Post Bag

**From: Captain Christopher Morrison**

### **The Molgogger**

I wish to pose a question to the membership. Does anyone know the origin or the derivation of the word 'molgogger'? It has been puzzling me for the last 55 years. I have tried searching for the word on the web but it seems to be completely unknown. Maybe it stems from the ancient Greek as fitted in their triremes? Maybe it was the affectionate nickname of an old chief Stoker, now long gone. Perhaps, it was the proposed name for a new class of M Class MCMVs! Or even the forrard Seaman's messdeck nickname for a 'Baron they strangled on the last run ashore.' Who knows? Perhaps these two Sweepdeck hands, Maggot Matthews and Fred Lowings would know. We, and George your editor, were all in HMS Wotton in 1971.



**From: Victor Chatwin**

### **Remembrance Day at the Cenotaph**

I would like to thank all those who helped make the Remembrance Parade at the Cenotaph such a success. This was the first time I had been able to attend and I was struck by how dignified and memorable the occasion was.

# Whaleback High Speed Launch

Phil Fluke

This Project was discussed at the White Rose Ton Class Meeting at York on 17 Jan 2026. A whip round gathered £140 towards this worthwhile project – ASR 63 Whaleback high speed launch made by the British Power Boat Company in 1939, initially as a RN anti-submarine boat, but then used as an Air Sea Rescue Launch. It was sold post war and used variously as a private cruiser, at one time even a Restaurant!

Discovered semi submerged on the Norfolk Broads, it was raised after much hard work by a group of volunteers – even using a diver. The project was named 'Whaleback for the World', the aim being to restore and preserve this important part of naval history in honour of the many lives saved by the Air Sea Rescue Service. At the moment it is moored on Salhouse Broad awaiting funding. The group have applied for Lottery Funding but are also appealing through 'Just Giving' to finance on-going work.

She was built with three 500HP Napier Sea Lion engines giving a speed of 30 knots.

A very good site to visit with more in-depth information is:

<https://asrwhaleback.com>

Hope this proves to be of interest to fellow Tonners.

Maybe we can't save a Ton Class ship but could possibly help save a Whaleback.

I was in HMS Sheraton 1968-70.

I held a Caulking Demo on 14 July 25 at the White Rose Ton Class Meeting in York. This may be useful in the preservation of this boat.



As she was



As she is now

## HMS Kilmorey Painting for Sale

*Message received on the TCA Website from Alan Coulter in Ulster*

*e-mail: [abiacle1@ntlworld.com](mailto:abiacle1@ntlworld.com)*

Some years ago, I spent the longest day of my life aboard HMS Kilmorey, zig-zagging around the Irish Sea as a Sapper with the T&AVR 112 Squadron, 74 Engineer Regiment. I had nothing left to bring up on that cold, blustery day and I wouldn't have cared if we had sunk.

However, I survived and some years later, being an artist, I painted her at sea.



The vessel is M1157, formerly HMS Kirkliston renamed KILMOREY when presented to Belfast Division of the RNR and given the 'Red Hand of Ulster' insignia on her funnel.

I painted it back in 2012, many years after my experience and it would make a great piece of wall art and decoration for an avid collector of Ton Class memorabilia.

*Ship is depicted in open bridge minesweeper configuration before her conversion to Mine Hunter in 1963/64.*

*To obtain a JPG image of the painting, please contact Alan via his e-mail address above. Alan says he would accept any reasonable offer for the original artwork.*

**- Webmaster**