

VANGUARD

THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE ROYAL NAVAL
ASSOCIATION NO.10 AREA OCTOBER 2007



**SEE
HMS VANGUARD
STORY INSIDE**

Visit your area
website at:
www.rna-10-area.co.uk



Cover Picture:
For this issue, the cover
picture is a digital
watercolour of
HMS Vanguard
by Fern Badman.

CONTENTS

| | |
|----|---|
| 3 | EDITORIAL |
| 4 | OBITUARIES |
| 5 | CHAIRMAN'S REPORT |
| 5 | TORQUAY TURKEYS |
| 5 | WILL I QUALIFY? |
| 6 | PRESIDENT'S PULPIT |
| 7 | PC PIN UP PANIC!!! |
| 8 | ONE BAD DAY IN OUR PROUD HISTORY |
| 9 | THE DEMISE OF JACK TAR |
| 10 | CAPE HOPE TO CAPE HORN |
| 14 | LAUGHTER PAGES |
| 15 | WARTIME DODGES USED BY WARTIME SAILORS TRAVELING BETWEEN CHATHAM AND LONDON |
| 16 | HMS VANGUARD |
| 19 | REUNIONS NEWS |
| 20 | DOCKYARD DAYS |
| 22 | THE BATTLE OF THE ISLE OF MAY |
| 24 | THE SHIP IN THE ICE |
| 25 | THE PILGRIMAGE TRUST |
| 26 | AREA REUNION PHOTO GALLERY |
| 27 | SCRANBAG |
| 28 | TIDES OF HISTORY |
| 29 | MANCHESTER TATTOO 2007 |
| 29 | MINISTRY OF DEFENCE – NEW AUTOMATED TELEPHONE SERVICE |
| 30 | WARSHIPS IN COLLISION.....A TRUE STORY |
| 32 | BRANCH NEWS |
| 34 | PICTURE GALLERY |

firstdrinks

THE FIRST DRINKS BRAND PRIZE

The bottle of Wood's Rum prize
for the April 2007 issue went to
Mr T Blunt
of the Skipton Branch
for his letter to the Editor.

The Royal Navy & Royal Marines Children's Fund

Patron: Her Majesty the Queen
Registered Charity No. 1075015

HISTORY

Children of the Royal Naval Services have been supported for over 100 years by the charitable funds, originally as orphanages but now in ways appropriate to present day needs, such as schools, homes, special needs establishments, holidays and in their own homes in times of family crisis.

AIM

The Royal Navy & Royal Marines Children's Fund formed from The RN & RM Children's Trust and The RN & RM Children's Home is the premier charity for providing charitable help to children of serving and ex-serving personnel of the Royal Navy, Royal Marines, The Queen Alexandra Royal Naval Nursing Service, the former Women's Royal Naval Service and the reserves of these Forces.

Where children are in need, hardship or distress.

The needs of children are paramount and help is provided when not available from family or statutory sources.

HOW HELP IS ORGANISED

The Trustees are mainly serving officers or other naval personnel together with civilian Trustees who bring experience in other fields to the problems encountered.

Consideration of every circumstance is therefore given swift and sympathetic attention by people who understand the difficulties of Service and seafaring life.

The RN & RM Children's Fund works closely with many charities dedicated to providing help to children. If the type of assistance falls outside the objects of the Fund, then the applicant will be referred to other charities with the object of creating a care package.

Applications can be made at any time. Those seeking assistance can contact the office direct for an application form.

Applications are also received from a number of sources such as the Naval Personal and Family Service (NPFSS), SSAFA/Forces Help, the Royal Naval Benevolent Trust (RNBT), the British Legion, as well as schools, Local Authorities, Health Visitors and many others.

The Royal Navy & Royal Marines Children's Fund

311 Twyford Avenue, Stamshaw, Portsmouth PO2 8RN

Applications and referrals should be made to:

Mrs M A Bateman or Mrs L Smith at the address above or by phone

Tel: 023 9263 9534

EDITORIAL



THE LAST CHANCE SALOON

If the Strategic Review commissioned by the deputy President last year discovered anything, it brought home to the members of National Council the fact that membership of their Association was draining away at a rate of 7% each year. If this annual loss remains unchecked, in 10 years time the present membership of just fewer than 26,000 will have shrunk to around 15,000 – maybe less. Considering the 2006 membership figure of 26,000, 11,728 of that total are Associate members, or put another way; roughly half of the RNA membership has no RN connection.

So, how are we to stem the continuing loss of membership? – More to the point how do we rescue the Association? Relax my friend: Step forward once more the man from the Strategic Review. Contained within those pages, lies the answer to all of the RNA's problems.

Let us go into the world of spaghetti westerns and enter the 'Last Chance' saloon, where a tall stranger enters clutching a copy of the Strategic Review. He engages in conversation with an old man dressed in an odd looking outfit now known as a blazer: a member of the dreaded Blazer Gang. "Howdy Partner" says the stranger, "I am looking to increase the clientele in this here bar". "And how would you do that"? Asks the grizzled

old timer; lounging at the bar with his half finished tot in the hushed saloon. "My friend," says the tall stranger clutching his copy of the Review; "it is set down here the way forward for all of us. The answer is so simple why has it eluded us for so long"? A deadly hush fell over the bar: the card players paused, and the piano fell silent. "Alright smart guy" said a gun toting hulk of an NCM "let us hear it and it had better be good" Several of his companions, rough looking characters who frequented this dive murmured something similar. The tall stranger ignoring their interruption, launched into his speech. "We get hold of the Sheriff, Mac something or other, and get a posse together – You NCM's look after the saloon till we get back, - this job's too dangerous for you." "Hold it right there mister" said the Bartender hastily hiding the bottles of Pussers and Woods; "What do you need the posse for?" The tall stranger barely paused in his stride, "We are going to round up all the serving sailors we can find, there are 30,000 out there; we'll corral them in the Blazer Gang". Hearing this, the occupants of the saloon made a rush through the batwing doors and onto their trusty steeds. They were last seen galloping out of town.

After several days of hard riding, the posse headed by Mighty Mac and Sheriff Mac rode into the sleepy frontier town of Pompey. Nothing stirred on the main street except the occasional RA man scurrying to his shack looking neither to his left or right. The posse cantered through the deserted township passing the Home Club saloon. Several drunken veterans staggered through its doors, victims of some long forgotten ship's reunion; but once more, there was no sign of a serving sailor. The tall stranger conversed with his companion at the head of the posse Mighty Mac; "Let's head to Fort Nelson they may be holed up there" he said. Wheeling round their tired horses they made their way back along the trail until they came to a grim and weathered fort. A few old timers lounged in the dappled sunlight near its battered looking gates. Not a living thing stirred from within. Mighty Mac addressing one of

the idlers on the sidewalk he enquired, "Where are all the sailors from this here fort?" he asked. His question was met by a hoot of laughter; "Sailors" several of the bystanders hooted, "they left long ago, don't you realise it's Friday, after high noon they all saddled up and rode out of town for the weekend". Taken aback, Mighty Mac enquired; "Who, then is looking after the fort" His query produced more howls of laughter. A particularly old bystander answered him: "what is there to guard? The state government emptied the joint several years ago"

Sadly the posse headed by Mighty Mac and his Tall companion rode back towards the Last Chance saloon in the Manor County, avoiding the Watford pass and the dangerous trails and bad men to the North. They staggered saddle sore and weary arriving at the saloon to drown their misfortunes at the bar. Mighty Mac and the Tall stranger stepped over several inert NCM's and related their tale of woe to the crowded room. Not one sailor had been recruited to keep the tills jingling in the saloon. "What are we going to do Whitey" said the bartender to the leader of the NCM's "Without more cow punchers we won't be able to buy more Red Eye" Again, the tall stranger stepped forward. "Don't panic" he said "I will get the NCMs to sign a 'Memorandum of Understanding' and ride with it to Fort Excellent and ask the sailors there to agree to it" There was a short silence around the bar. Wearily the posse saddled up again and turning their steeds, headed west once more, they galloped off into the sunset. The Barman watched as the Blazer gang disappeared into the distant hills, shrugging his shoulders he re-entered the 'Last Chance' saloon crossed over to the bar and silently turned down the last remaining lamp and left the now empty saloon.

PUBLISHER
Benham Publishing Limited

DESIGN & PRODUCTION
Fern Badman

ADVERTISING
Simon Castell

ADMINISTRATION MANAGER
Lynn Noord

MEDIA NUMBER
1092

PUBLISHED
October 2007

EDITOR
All editorial for publication should be sent to:

Area Secretary, Mr Charles Hutton
Royal Naval Association No.10 Area
c/o 44 Railway Road,
Urmston,
Manchester M41 0XW
Tel 0161 748 6681

NOTICE

Benham Publishing and Area 10 RNA, would like to point out that all editorial comment and articles are the responsibility of the originators and may or may not reflect the opinions of the Royal Naval Association, no responsibility can be accepted for any inaccuracies that may occur or the quality for obvious reasons of photographs reproduced.



Benham Publishing Limited, 4th Floor, Orleans House, Edmund Street, Liverpool, L3 9NG
Tel: 0151 236 4141 Fax: 0151 236 0440 www.benhampublishing.com email: admin@benhampublishing.com

S/M JOHN DIXON CHAIRMAN (No.10 Area)

John Dixon who died on July 4th aged 76 was the Area Chairman of No.10 Area, RNA and the recently elected Chairman of the HMS London Association; he was also the Secretary of the Salford RNA branch.

After an early upbringing in the North West of England, John volunteered for the Royal Navy joining HMS Ganges as a boy entrant in early 1947. On completion of his training he was allocated his port division of Chatham joining HMS Pembroke. He was soon drafted to the Cruiser HMS London which was in the process of preparing for a Far East commission. As flagship of the 5th Cruiser squadron, HMS London travelled extensively throughout the Far East. In 1949 the ship was involved in the "Yangtze incident" and John saw 15 of his shipmates killed and many wounded as a result of the engagement. In September 1949 London arrived back in the UK and paid off: with the ships company dispersing to various ships and establishments. After various drafts to other ships including HMS Cheviot and Hengist, he volunteered for the Chatham division Field Gun crew; unfortunately breaking his leg in training.

On leaving the service his main occupation was with the Royal Mail in Manchester: it was there in 1982 that John and several of his fellow workers who had seen service in the RN formed the Salford RNA branch in 1984 at the then Post Office club in the city. He was elected as the Branch Secretary on its formation – a post he held until his death. He was for a number of years the Standard Bearer for the branch. In 1986 he was invited to join the No.10 Area committee and served on this committee until succeeding the late Shipmate Harry Blythe as Area Chairman in 1994.

Since his appointment as Area Chairman, he was involved in several changes within the No.10 Area: one of these saw the re-introduction of the Area annual reunions to which John played a full part. He was instrumental in providing the entertainment at these functions which ensured their success. Earlier this year he assumed the Chairmanship of the HMS London Association, - the ship that was dear to his heart. He was busily engaged in planning their 2008 reunion in Warwickshire and indeed, researching their 2009 reunion venue. He had not neglected the 2008 Area 10 reunion: having already engaged the artistes for the Blackpool event next April. He was also involved in other important changes to conference organisation such as the introduction of a single delegate representation at Area meetings, and the recent decision to re-time these meetings to a more suitable hour.

John had many friends in the Area and also in many of the other Area's of the Association. He was until 2002, ever present at National Conference until his wife's deteriorating health forced him to stand down as delegate. However, he remained very active in both Area and branch activities.

He is survived by his wife Olive, and Daughter Susan.

S/M BOB MOSES (Atherton)

Shipmate Bob Moses crossed the bar on September 8th 2007. Bob joined the RN in 1936 and became; one of the youngest Petty Officer Seamen in the Service. His ships included Norfolk Devonshire Serene and Newfoundland.

S/M JAMES WILLIAMS (Llangollen)

Known to all his shipmates in the branch as "Bungy" William passed away in Maelor Hospital after a short illness aged 86.

He joined the Navy in 1940 and served in the Flower class corvettes Oxslip and, Borias . He was one of the first persons to be honoured by the Russian Government at their London Embassy with the Russian campaign medals including the Artic Star.

OTHER OBITUARIES INCLUDE;

S/m George Allum
(Bolton)

S/m Roy George
(Founder Member Chester)

S/m V McKeown
(Deeside)

S/m Wyn Knott
(Hazel Grove)

S/m Mrs R Garner
(Trafford)

S/m Ted Jones
(Wrexham)

S/m W Millett
(Wythenshawe)

S/m J Moar
(Llangollen Branch)

John Jackson
(Former Branch Secretary North Manchester)

Ray Bragg
(Former Chairman and Standard Bearer Whitehaven)

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT



The conference in Bolton was well attended at the end of July, although there was an air of sadness, due to the absence of our Chairman, Shipmate John Dixon, who had "Crossed the Bar" suddenly, earlier in the month, his passing will leave a great void in our lives. And at future proceedings, we will miss his quips and wry sense of humour. Personally, I will miss his guidance, although, the other Members of the Area Committee are very supportive, and give their advice where necessary. With their help, I will try to follow his work as well as I can, although it will be a very hard act to follow. And I will need the help of every one of you, too,

In spite of the inclement weather there was a large attendance at John's funeral on the 13th of July, where our President, Commander Harry Harley gave a moving eulogy for his personal friend; which was greatly appreciated.

Thanks also go to Shipmate "Jan" Thomas and the Shipmates of Bolton branch for making us so welcome with a good hot pot, and "Tot".

We now look forward to the October conference in North Manchester. And hope that there will be a good attendance after the summer holiday season.

We also have the Re-Union and Conference in Blackpool next year. John had already completed the arrangements, as usual, he was always well ahead with preparations, almost before the current reunion had finished.

*Yours Aye
Barbara Jones
Vice Chairman*

TORQUAY TURKEYS

So who was that RNA Shipmate grinning like Bernard Matthews and muttering "bootiful, bootiful" as hordes of ill informed turkeys scrambled to vote for an early Xmas at the June 07 Torquay Conference? Answers on a postcard please: in a plain brown wrapper.

WILL I QUALIFY?

I am about to renew my passport and I am concerned that 38 years RN service, including 6 years in NATO appointments, may not be sufficient to demonstrate "strong ties with Britain".

One consolation I will have, if I do fail to qualify, will be knowing that I will belong to a very distinguished Club, the honorary President of which is a MR TUL BAHADUR PAN, a man I would be proud to salute and call SIR!! Mr Bahadur Pan during World War 11 set about a Japanese machine gun position, charged it and put it and its occupants out of harms way. For that act of supreme bravery he was awarded the VC.

However, when applying for his British passport Mr Bahadur Pan VC did not qualify as "having sufficiently demonstrated strong ties to Britain", according to some useless jobsworth who had never so much as charged the entrance of his local village fete. If taking on a British enemy machine gun post is to be considered "insufficient demonstration of strong ties" then I had better start packing my battered pussers suitcase and prepare to become stateless!!



“NOTHING, NOTHING IN THE WORLD, NOTHING THAT YOU MAY THINK OF OR DREAM OF, OR WHAT ANYBODY ELSE MAY TELL YOU, NO ARGUMENT, HOWEVER SEDUCTIVE, MUST LEAD YOU TO EVER ABANDON THE NAVAL SUPREMACY ON WHICH THE LIFE OF OUR COUNTRY DEPENDS”

Hands up anybody who does not understand the above statement; well done class, I'm impressed; at least I would be if that quote by Winston Churchill was anything else except crystal gleaming clear.

So, why have a succession of politicians and military brass failed to respond to that declaration in anything but a positive manner?? It isn't feasible that all of them were back classed for failing to grasp the fundamentals of both history and geography - is it.? How could all of the dunderheads fail to observe that we are an ISLAND RACE.?? Even a recently departed Sea Lord devoted many of his public declarations to referring to the colossal amount of trade which was seaborne to and from our shores. That begs the question, why has our Fleet been deliberately reduced in size and capability to a degree never seen during ANY Royal Naval Association Presidents lifetime.

Today's warships, so we are repeatedly assured, are so sophisticated and so packed tight with technological wizardry that every hull is capable of doing the Times Crossword, before 0600. However, if hull Alpha is engaged in the Indian Ocean there is sod all that it can contribute to naval affairs off Cape Verde Islands, except e-mail hints on the finer points of cheating at Monopoly. (Until you have charged your opponent rent for a Monopoly property which you do not own - you have NEVER played Monopoly!!)

Elevation to UK decision making positions correctly embraces all creeds, race and religions, whilst raising incompetence to an art form.

THE ARMY AND THE RAF HAVE THE BEST TUNES – WHY

Movie music from war films appears to be dedicated to our chums in khaki or light blue whilst the SENIOR SERVICE is poorly served. Take any band concert or brass band parade and you just know that you will be tapping your feet or swinging along to themes from the LONGEST DAY, WHERE EAGLES DARE, THE DAM BUSTERS AND 633 SQUADRON (The latter was a utterly dire film but its theme marches, literally, on and on and on!!!)

So where is the surface or sub surface music then? Post WW11 that talented man Richard Rodgers created the marvellous “Victory At Sea” musical feast, but that was for the American market. No such recognition was awarded to The Battle for the Atlantic. If ever any event deserved to be recognised by a stirring musical tribute then what greater claim than the longest battle in history?

The superb CRUEL SEA lacked a lasting, memorable musical score and everybody recalls riveting films of the RN, from IN WHICH WE SERVE, ABOVE US THE WAVES, MORNING DEPARTURE and BATTLE OF THE RIVER PLATE to COCKELSHHELL HEROES and BILLY BUDD. But nobody marched out of the Odeon’s of Chatham, Guzz or Pompey whistling the themes of those movies.

A particular favourite maritime movie of mine has long been CAPTAIN HORNBLLOWER RN, with the talented Gregory Peck portraying Mr C.S.Foresters hero with all of the diffident mannerisms the author creates within his fine series covering that Nelsonion period. (Yes I

know that the likes of Prof. D. Chandler would insist that it was known as the Napoleonic period but the least references made to that ultra aggressive French dictator the better).

Robert Farnon provided an interesting theme for the HORNBLLOWER film but it features all too briefly and was never developed, as it deserved to be. It awaits some musical resuscitation.

Many moons ago I wrote to the Royal Marines School of Music, providing musical details concerning some sixteen movies which featured the RN. I still await a response and that could explain why we dark blue folk continue to tap our fingers or step out to the refrains of a BRIDGE TOO FAR or THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN.

“That’s All Folks”!!!

PC PIN UP PANIC!!!

You could not make it up folks. Navy “Top Brass” have “asked “personnel to “act sensitively, respect their shipmates/ comrades and be aware that some page 3 pictures may cause offence”. So what happens when a “Shipmate” has a relative who makes it onto page 3? I recall that Norman Stanley Fletcher of “Porridge” fame had several such relatives displayed on his locker. “Those two are the wife and that one is the wife’s sister”!

I know the above news item is true because the MOD (N) ‘s own pet kitten The Navy News (sic) managed to deny and confirm it on the same page of the July issue. A vocal minority claim that political correctness simply ensures that minorities are treated fairly and respectfully. Rubbish! By pressure and by edicts PC stamps upon freedom of expression and individuality.

ONE BAD DAY IN OUR PROUD HISTORY

That “one bad day etc” soundbite is supposed to explain away that egregiously awful episode which remained front page news for weeks? I think not. The HMS Cornwall incident ripped away the veneer of current reality and revealed **COMPLACENCY, WOEFUL LEADERSHIP AND PLANNING, DREADFUL DISCIPLINE AND SLOPPY REACTION TO INTELLIGENCE.**

Even the Navy’s talking heads admitted to failures of “Command, Training Intelligence and PR”. That is pretty nifty for one day! Of course the “intensive inquiries” (there have been two to date) found that the ever elusive MR NOBODY was to blame – again. Just a fraction of such “shortcomings” would have been enough to blight my blossoming career on the Corsham Petty Officers School Course (808class). but failure today bears a sharply different interpretation from the Fleet in which we all served Shipmates.

Ministers, Senior officers, apart from kissing the Blarney Stone, are all fully paid up members of the same Mafia to which the BBC officials belong. All of them are, apparently, immune from something called RESPONSIBILITY! Regardless of what goes awry during their Watch their careers, expense accounts, pensions and gongs are off limits with regard to any failures or humiliation. I am far from convinced that the talented Gershwin brothers had such an interpretation in mind when they composed NICE WORK IF YOU CAN GET IT!!

Just noting edited high lights of the post CORNWALL CHAOS findings is enough to raise the question – what the hell has been going on within our RN? Just note the following shipmates ... “numerous shortcomings and failures”, a “series of vulnerabilities”, “operational focus and preparedness were found to be wanting” and, oh dear me, what a surprise.” an unfortunate accumulation of many factors”. To put it mildly, all of the foregoing looks pretty messy but despite “COLLECTIVE FAILURE OF JUDGEMENT” no individual was at fault. Personally, having a great deal of experience working within NATO, I would expect that type of weasel like squirming from some other nations but not from my own.

The active encouragement of “officialdom” to have the HMS Cornwall crew members sell their “stories” was claimed to be unavoidable due to the intense pressure which media folk were applying to families and friends. That is a very weak argument. The folk of the 4th Estate have always applied pressure to get quotes. I know because I have been a member of that profession. You cannot court the media “beast” because its appetite is never satisfied. You can cooperate, but from a distance. Those media “hounds” baying at the gangway were not there to do the RN any favours and anybody who thinks along those lines must not be placed in any position of decision making.

It seems clear to me that this New Navy we seem to have decided, after more than a week long discussion, to resort to using smoke and mirrors and release several smokescreens. That attempt to distract and obscure failed miserably of course.

This New Navy in a moment of stupidity, sold off its soul and has been scrambling to get it back ever since. Similar media pressure was alive and active that night long ago in the garden of Gethsemane – and we all know what price was paid then!

There was and remains a very simple explanation for this Navy disaster – it is, as ever, the plague of reorganisation. Monetary cutbacks, invariably leads to training reductions bit has been REORGANISE, REORGANISE, BLOODY REORGANISE for decades. The fever of the New Broom. The “I create change, ergo I exist” syndrome. Remember what Caius Petronius, 66AD, told us.. “reorganisation serves as a wonderful illusion for progress”.

Reorganisation, budget reductions, reorganisation, dilution of training expertise and more disruptive reorganisation combine to reduce quality. Never has that adage YOU GET WHAT YOU PAY FOR been more excruciatingly revealed than throughout the Navy we have today. A deluge of humiliation swamps and stains our proud history and throughout the chain of command the cry is ..NOT ME CHIEF!!

Of course old Petronius fell from favour due to his expressed opposition to a ruthless dictator, name of Fiddling Nero. I do wonder if DNA tests might identify the Nero gene among the current hordes of Whitehall Wallies.

One thing has become crystal clear of late – if sound bites were ships we would have one hell of an impressive fleet.

How do you like our New Navy shipmates? Personally I much prefer the old one. It was less glitzy, less showbiz but a damn sight more honourable. Fight the good fight Shipmates

HGH

THE DEMISE OF JACK TAR

The traditional British sailor was not defined by his looks, he was defined by his attitude, his name was Jack Tar, and he was a happy-go-lucky sort of bloke. He took the good times with the bad. He didn't cry victimisation, bastardisation, discrimination, for his mum for his often self destructive actions.

He loved to laugh at anything or anybody's rank, race, gender, creed or behaviour, it didn't matter to Jack, he would take the piss out of anyone, including himself, and if someone took it out of him he didn't get offended, it was a natural part of life. If he offended anyone, so be it. Free from the many rules of polite society, Jack's manner was somewhat rough, and his ability to swear was legendary.

He would stand up for his mates, Jack was extravagant with his support of those he thought needed it. Jack's mate was one of the luckiest people alive. Jack loved women, he loved to chase them to the end of the earth, and sometimes he even caught one. (less often than he would have you believe though) his tales of the chase and its win or loss is the stuff of legends.

Jack's favourite drink was beer – and he could drink like a fish, his actions when inebriated would, land him in trouble, but he took it on the chin, did his punishment, and then went out – and did it all again. Jack loved his job, he took immense pride in what he did, and his radar was ever the best in the fleet, his engines always worked better than anyone else's. His eyes could spot a contact before anyone else, and shoot at it first.

Jack was like a mischievous child, he had a gleam in his eye and a larger than life outlook, and he was as rough as guts. He had to be pig-headed and thick skinned to survive. He worked hard and played hard. His masters tut-tutted at some of his more exuberant expressions of joy de vivre, and occasional bouts of number 9's or stoppage of leave let him know where the limits were.

The late 20th century has seen the demise of Jack. The workplace no longer echoes to ribald comment and bawdy tales, where someone is sure to take offence. Where as those stories of 'derring do' and ingenuity in the face of adversity, usually whilst drunk, lack the audacity of the past. A wicked sense of humour is now a liability rather than a necessity, Jack has been socially engineered out of existence, doing what come naturally to Jack is now considered offensive. Denting someone else's over-inflated opinion of their self worth is now a crime.

Political correctness has usurped Jack's world friendship and neighbourliness is from a time now lost. Yet Jack's world was a microcosm of the time. 30 plus matelots would live on a small messdeck, sure, there would be disagreements and the occasional fisticuffs, but there it ended. Respect for

senior hands led to mess deck rules being observed, personal hygiene and respect for each other's space meant learning to live together. It took a special person to live, eat, sleep and sometimes work in the same space, one had to be tolerant, gregarious, and forgiving of others.

Protestants lived Catholics, but no one asked "what religion are you"; whites lived with blacks, Geordies with Glaswegians, Scousers with Mancunians, Cockneys with Brummies, Welsh with Irish, no-one ever wanted to know another's politics.

Indeed, those that today are considered natural enemies were then best of pals and Jack's creed was look after your 'Oppo', Jack was no Philistine, he would not knowingly walk by on the other side, and his natural curiosity made him a Samaritan, sometimes to his cost.

Jack could moan and complain about his lot, about his ship, but woe betide anyone ashore who had anything disrespectful to say about it; insult one sailor and you insult them all, Jack's gospel was togetherness. The ship and its crew were the very essence of community, reflecting what was good about England and Great Britain.

Here among the hearts of oak was the heart of Albion, sadly gone now, replaced by political correctness which nurtures suspicion, replaced by the minority dictating to the majority which creates distrust, replaced by the grasping money led opportunists fuelled by peer pressure, which creates hatred. What happened to the heartlands, to the tolerant caring and supportive society? Jack had both in his ship and ashore. Gone is the family, put the old away, leave the young without direction, leave the ship to flounder? not Jack, the ship was his home, the crew his family. How sad this has all but disappeared.

AND SO A CULTURE DIES.

Dave Tollerton (Crosby) and Brian Mitchel (ex HMS Ark Royal)

CAPE HOPE TO CAPE HORN

“In an earlier edition (Spring 2004) I related some of the events, which took place during the first commission of HMS Leopard between 1958 to 1960. The following are details of the content of the commission which covers our adventures upon leaving Simonstown for the last time”

By January 1960, our days in South Africa were drawing to a close. With the end of January our refit came to an end as we not only had to restore order in the wake of the dockyard, but also make ready for the departmental inspections by the Commander-in-Chief's staff in the first week of February. It is at this point that I feel that an extract from the Daily Telegraph of that time is appropriate:

TOP HEAVY

“A single British frigate, HMS Leopard, patrols the vast stretch of water between South America and South Africa. It is known as the South Atlantic Squadron and that is all there is of it at the present.

In control of this lone warship are: - one Admiral, one Captain, four Commanders, and four Lieutenant Commanders, all of whom are shore based in HMS Afrikaner, Simonstown.

It is not the fault of these officers that there are so many of them to control so few sailors. The fault lies with official policy, which has left us scandalously short of operational ships at a time when the need for sea power and military mobility are paramount for the protection of British interests.

The public knows what the Navy needs: more cold steel and less gold braid”.

NEARLY FIFTY YEARS LATER AND NOTHING HAS CHANGED, SAME OLD STORY.

So we have another inspection coming up, could this reflect on the above? The Commander-in-chief's staff are obviously bored or they are trying to justify their existence. You can imagine the Admiral having a chat with his followers: - *“I know Flags, the swimming pool is being cleaned and my golfing partner is away, let's go down to the jolly old Leopard and give her another inspection. I'm sure old Gaunt won't mind! Might get a couple of sniffers as well, just to round it off nicely?”*

And so it happened. All that week the various staff officers were to be seen clambering about the ship and the process culminated on Saturday 6th February, when the Commander-in-Chief inspected divisions and said goodbye to us. No doubt he went back to his golf and other hectic naval chores.

8th February 1960 – At 0800, we sailed for exercises, under the name of 'ALEX', accompanied by our old friends SAS Vrystaat and SAS Good Hope as we sailed to Durban, where we arrived on Saturday 13th.

Durban. Once again there has been little enough said of our recreational activities in Durban, which were even more enjoyable than on our last visit, but there are two events, which deserve a mention. At the request of the Chaplain of the Seamen's Institute the concert party gave a charity performance on Friday 19th. To make sure the public got value for money, The Chaplain arranged for a number of local performers to supplement our own acts. The concert party went into frenzies of rehearsals to ensure that they were worthy to appear in this semi-professional company in a big city – a very different matter to the usual slap-happy frolics at the back of beyond.

The result was a marathon entertainment. In fact, some of the later had to be cut. Overall a profit of £100.00 was made for the Institute and the concert was highlighted with an announcement to the packed theatre, that Her Majesty the Queen, had given birth to a son, Prince Andrew (19th February 1960).

Under the impact of this news, those of the ship's company ashore that night were deluged with overwhelming hospitality and great interest was taken when we paraded in full uniform and fired a Royal Salute – not to mention “splicing the mainbrace” – at noon the next day. All of the Natal papers featured the ceremony prominently and the great South African public were able to see our 'Butcher' enjoying his tot on the local newsreels. Then each of the saluting gun's crew of that day was allowed to retain one of the spent cylinders as a souvenir.

22nd February 1960 – We bid farewell to Durban having said fond farewells to our many friends there, and on Wednesday 24th arrived back in Simonstown, where we spent a busy few days cutting our ties with South Africa.

1st March 1960 – At 1100 hours, played out by the band of the South African Navy, we slowly drew away from the jetty and a couple of minutes later cleared the harbour entrance at a speed that drew gasps from the crowd bidding us farewell.

Seven hours later we were on our way back. Our recall was caused by the plight of Mauritius, which had been devastated by two successive cyclones. After a brief call at Simonstown to embark disaster relief gear, we headed at high speed for Durban, making plans to bring relief to the stricken island as we proceeded.

7th March 1960 – A Thursday. In the afternoon we reached Durban, where we waited for further orders. Although kept at a state of readiness at short notice, we were able to renew contact with the



astonished friends we so recently taken leave of. However, the general uncertainty prevented any whole relaxation until we were told on Saturday afternoon that the island authorities had decided that they could manage without us. We left Durban on Sunday morning and this it was for the last time. After three hours at Simonstown to disembark disaster relief store, on Tuesday morning, we headed westwards in earnest. Our passage to Port Stanley in the Falklands Islands had been planned to last 18 days, but in order to catch up with our original programme we travelled a good deal faster and, in fact, arrived only one day late.

19th March 1960 – Port Stanley. We were extremely lucky in our crossing of this dreaded stretch of ocean, having had only two or three days of 'roughers'. However, it was bad enough on the approach to Port Stanley to make it necessary for the RFA Wave Knight to put to sea to replenish us. It wasn't until the dog watches that we actually entered harbour and gazed at this remote outpost as the wind whipped the murky waters of the harbour into a yeasty turmoil. Little did many on board realise that 22 years later they would return to these same waters in less happier circumstances.

We stayed in Port Stanley for only two full days; enough time to give both watches a run ashore. We sailed again on Tuesday the 22nd, a beautiful crisp morning, on which we enjoyed a rendezvous with HMS Protector. We were in company for about an hour during which the Captain made a courtesy call, by helicopter, on the captain of the Protector. During this time Mother Nature gave us a display of over 50 whales and innumerable penguins within a mile of the two ships.

Forty-eight hours later, we entered the Straits of Magellan, which were disappointingly wide and flanked by regrettably dull shores. To the South lay Tierra del Fuego (Land of Fire), which was flat and uninteresting, while to the North the coast of the continent was little better, although a range of hills along the

coast broke the monotony. All ideas of picking a tortuous and treacherous passage between towering passages while naked savages rained fiery darts on us had to be shelved.

24th March 1960 – We approached Punta Arenas at 1400 hours and, as we turned and slowed to fire national and personal gun salutes, the full force of the westerly wind, which had been with us all forenoon, became apparent. Standing still, at 'Attention', on the upper deck during the prolonged salutes was almost a feat of strength in a wind gusting up to 30 knots. As soon as the ship was fully secured alongside and the gangplank safely down, a warm mess and a hot drink was welcomed by all.

Prior to our arrival we were instructed by the Captain not to mention our recent visit to Falklands; this message was to be repeated when we visited our first Argentinean port. The "Islas Malvinas" was a taboo subject. Both Chile and Argentina contesting over its sovereignty.

We only had one full day at Punta Arenas, the most southerly city in the world, and Chile's most southernmost naval base. Over the 200-foot ridge immediately behind the town lie vast flat plains, divided for the most part between estancias. On these a flock of 90,000 sheep is not considered excessive. They must be a ready source of provender for what we had recently learned in South Africa to call a "braaivleis", and now has to call an "asado" (barbecue); and the asado given for players and spectators after the soccer match on our second day was the excellent forerunner of many more. Giving these open-air roasts is almost a Chilean and Argentinean national sport.

26th March 1960 – A Saturday. We sailed at 0630, having embarked a Chilean naval officer as pilot, on what was to prove the most beautiful and yet the most worrying voyage of the commission. We continued up the Straits until they headed west, when we turned southwest into the Magdalena Channel, keeping the mainland of Tierra del Fuego to port. With Cape Froward, the southern most tip of the South American continent, disappearing astern, the desolate beauties of the Tierra del Fuegan channels really came into sight.

At first they were indescribably dreary. One felt the Almighty had deliberately left this region to show what the raw materials of creation were like; the very mountains were so uninspiring that one couldn't imagine the most ardent mountaineer wanting to scale them. However, the scenery slowly developed a stark grandeur and, after a warning from our pilot that the sunny weather would not last long, cameras appeared like rabbits from a warren. The Contrameistre or Quartermaster Glacier, the first of many we were to see, was much photographed. This was the only time we saw a glacier in sunlight, the whites, blues and greens of the ice made it a wonderful sight.

Passing the glacier, we turned west into the Cockburn Sound, and then came the low cloud and intermittent rain, which was to be with us for much of the trip. The Cockburn Sound is wide and deep and contains several islands whose names reflect those of the English naval officers who first navigated these channels over a century ago. It was here that we came across odd pieces of floating ice; they looked like small icebergs and were the result of the ice breaking away from the glaciers. It was a relief to get past them, as a collision would have been very embarrassing.

Once the novelty of jagged snow-capped mountains, narrow creeks and barren islands had worn off, there was little worthy of note until we reached the south-western end of Cockburn Sound. Here. In showery gusty weather, we began to catch the Pacific swell, and the ship rolled heavily as we entered the Pacific Ocean itself. By now the wind was

CAPE HOPE TO CAPE HORN (CONTINUED)

gale force, but visibility was still good as we turned east into the first of the channels south of Tierra del Fuego. We had been in the Pacific for only half an hour, but were glad to get round into the flatter waters of Brecknock Pass.

Through the Brecknock Pass in deteriorating weather, we passed south of Cape Atascadero on Tierra del Fuego, where a dangerous rock is buoyed 250 yards offshore. Once past this threat and into Whale Boat Sound, a three-degree gyro error became apparent, which in the confined waters of these channels was rather an embarrassment.

Towards the end of Whale Boat Sound lies Londonderry Island. It was in Puerto Engano, a small bay on the north side of the island that the pilot recommended a night anchorage and by 1910 hours we were anchored.

The night was far from quiet. The wind gusting up to 40 knots again brought violent sleet and hailstones over the hills, and the 'anchor watch' huddled behind 'A' gun turret. On the enclosed bridge it was icy cold and our windscreen wipers came into their own, for ice was forming all over the upper deck. The sound of the wind blowing down from the mountains was rather like an express train, and having to anchor in confined waters in such conditions, it is hardly surprising that we were more than pleased when daylight came to relieve our anxieties.

We weighed anchor and proceeded at 0840 and moved into the northwest arm of Beagle Channel. The mountains all around us were snow-covered and the rocks black – altogether a colourless but impressive sight. We felt very small at times, with the foothills of the Darwin Range of Tierra del Fuego rising to over 3,000 feet, straight out of the water to port, and the Londonderry Mountains to starboard. During this time the sun never shone and many of the mountains were shrouded in mists.

Further down the Beagle Channel's north - west arm we began to get into glacier country again, where a series of glaciers poured their ice into the channel to port. The loveliest of all, the Romanze, curls down from 1000 feet, accompanied by a huge waterfall. Further on the Allemana and the Italia glaciers lie close together.

With Tierra del Fuego still to port and the snowy mountains of Navarin Island to starboard, we moved down the mile wide Beagle Channel. Soon we saw the unmistakable landmarks of Mount Olivia, a sharply pointed conical mountain, and the dinosaur – like spines of the Five Brothers, all sign posts to Ushuaia. At 1230 hours we made the dogleg turn to port round a group of islets to enter Ushuaia Harbour.

Ushuaia, at that time had a population of maybe 2000 persons and we were only 30 miles from Cape Horn. It is the Argentinian equivalent of Scapa Flow and is the southernmost town in the world, at the tip of Tierra del Fuego; less than 1000 kms/620 miles from Antarctica. The population in 1991 had risen to 29,000. It is a free port and naval base and has industries including lumbering, sheep rearing and fishing.

In the Ona tongue Ushuaia means 'the quiet place'; if one went ashore and climbed a little, to turn and overlook the wide and peaceful bay surrounded by the sheltering mountains, it was easy to see how it got its name. The town itself was straggling and rather ramshackle, offering very little but a plentiful supply of Japanese toys, but we received the warmest of welcomes from the Argentine Navy.

This was only a two-day visit, enough for any man. It was bitterly cold and damp. A waste of time cleaning your shoes prior to going ashore. What roads there were, were

slush and ice ridden. If there was a thawed area, it was just mud. Amongst the entertainment provided was a party in the naval base for senior rates and if it hadn't been for the 'asado's put on by the Argentine Navy. I don't think many would have ventured ashore.

CHILE AND ARGENTINA

29th March 1960 – We made an early start at 0500 and, with the British Ambassador to the Argentine, his wife, and the British Naval Attaché and his wife embarked, we set out on the return trip through the channels to Punta Arenas. With dawn we made most of the passage at 20 knots, slowing down only for shallow waters and rocky patches. The sky was overcast, as it had been on our trip down, and rain fell intermittently.

We landed our Chilean pilot, whose expert services had been most helpful and remained at anchor overnight. According to the Chilean Authorities, our return from Ushuaia had been the fastest passage on record, our time of 15 hours beating the previous 'record' by 19 hours. It is believed to be the first time that one of Her Majesties Ships had passed through the northern part of Whale Boat Sound and Brecknock en route to Ushuaia. We had hoped to pass around Cape Horn on our return, but lack of time forced us to content ourselves with a near miss. I don't suppose it was anything to do with the passengers we were carrying – no, not much! !.

30th March 1960 – It's farewell to the Magellan Straits and back out on to the more uneasy waters of the South Atlantic, plodding steadily up the Argentine coast until on the 1st April, we entered the Golfo Nuevo and anchored off the little town of Puerto Madryn. There was very little to do here on the fringe of Patagonia, but we did repair the desperately derelict jetty. The soccer team travelled to the nearest town of Trelew and once again got a trouncing from the natives. The locals put on a good dance for us and the ship hosted a

cocktail party, which was attended largely by the Welsh – speaking locals, who had migrated to Patagonia 50 or 60 years ago and were thrilled at this first visit by an RN Ship since the light cruiser Delhi in 1935.

Whilst in the Guelfo Nuevo there was an incident with a submarine. This was very “hush hush” and the full facts were never revealed. Having departed Puerto Madryn, after what was supposed to be a quiet visit, we had a not so eventful weekend at sea, before arriving in Puerto Belgrano.

4th April 1960 – When we steamed up the long channel to the harbour of Puerto Belgrano, we were passed by the main part of the Argentine Fleet on its way to sea for exercises, and were impressed by the look of the training cruiser Argentina. Soon after our arrival, the “non paying” guests, the Ambassador and his party, left us to return to Buenos Aires. Prior to his departure he presented us with a silver cup, the Sir John Ward Trophy, in remembrance of his stay aboard HMS Leopard. (I wonder if I gave a nice silver cup to Cunard Line, they would in return give me a nice little cruise across the Atlantic).

Just across from our berth in Puerto Belgrano was the battle cruiser General Belgrano (formerly the USS Phoenix) sold to Argentina nine years earlier in 1951. General Belgrano had survived the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour but was to meet her fate during the Falklands War of 1982, when she was sunk by three torpedoes from the British Submarine HMS Conqueror, resulting in the tragic loss of 323 men.

Also alongside was the aircraft carrier Independencia, formally HMS Warrior. When HMS Warrior had visited Argentina in 1957, Vice Admiral Rojas, then the Country's Vice President, had presented the ship with a handsome silver tray. Now that the Warrior had taken on a new lease of life as the Independencia, our Captain was given the pleasant task of re-presenting the tray to her former home.

The little ceremony was much appreciated by the Argentineans.

Puerto Belgrano was a fine fine big dockyard with the garden city of Punta Alta outside its gates housing a purely naval community. The Argentine Navy once again were the perfect hosts. To those who wanted to get away from all navy matters, it was possible to venture a little further to the city of Bahia Blanca. I found this quaint city a great run ashore.

8th April – After four very enjoyable days we sailed, and as we moved down the harbour Argentine ships were manned and guard and bands paraded to bid us farewell. Once again we had shown the flag and it had been appreciated.

9th April – Arrived at Mar del Plata, the first big city for seven weeks and also the holiday resort of Argentina. We all looked forward to a good run ashore and a chance to break the bank at the Casino, which at that time was the world's biggest.

On our second day, a group of us were invited to a guided tour of the Casino. We were met at the door by a very elegant, not so young lady, dressed in the full regalia of ball gown and wrap; bouffant hair-style and dangling earrings. After introducing herself, she proceeded to give us a wonderful tour of what was without doubt, a wonderful place. We stopped at various tables and she described the game being played at each one. A few free drinks were graciously accepted, and on completion of the walk around, we were each presented with chips to the value of 1000pesos (230 pesos to the pound sterling). We were now free to try our luck at the tables. Well the £4 didn't last long; the Casino soon got its money back. There was no more free beer, so it was time to leave.

More asado's were attended, the best one by far, was held by gauchos at a local ranch. Besides the usual beef and sheep roasting in the middle of nowhere, the local plonk (wine) was the stimulant to get you on the back of a horse with one of those loveable, mad gauchos. After this event, we all had the high pitched voices of a boy's choir.

One of the bars in this lively town was owned by a survivor of the German Battleship Graf Spree. He was proud to show everybody his photograph albums of his life in the German Navy, especially his links with Graf Spree. The walls of a room at the back of the bar were covered with German naval memorabilia; the only thing missing was the Swastika.

The ship had been open to visitors in many ports prior to here, but this was to be something new in our experience. That first Sunday afternoon, when we coped with 4,326 visitors and had to turn away a queue about six deep and half a mile long on shutting shop at 1700 hours will live long in our memories. The pressure kept up pretty well during the following week and altogether we had over 10,000 visitors during the four days we were open.

14th April 1960 – We sailed at 1400 hours, after a crowded three weeks, which had taken us from the stark desolation of Tierra del Fuego to the sophisticated joys of Mar del Plata, and caused us to revive our ideas of Argentina pretty extensively. Thank you, wonderful Argentina.

Sent in by S/m Peter Wilkie (Atherton Branch)

LAUGHTER PAGES

A Minneapolis couple decided to go to Florida to thaw out during a particularly icy winter. They planned to stay at the same hotel where they spent their honeymoon 20 years before.

Because of their hectic schedules, it was difficult to coordinate their travel schedules. So, the husband left Minneapolis and flew to Florida on Friday, and his wife was flying down the following day. The husband checked into the hotel, and unlike years ago, there was a computer in his room, and he decided to send an email to his wife. However, he accidentally left out one letter in her E-mail address, and without noticing his error, sent the email to the wrong address.

Meanwhile somewhere in Houston, a widow had just returned home from her husband's funeral. He was a minister who was called home to glory after suffering a heart attack. The widow decided to check her E-mail, expecting messages from relatives and friends. After reading the first message, she screamed and then fainted. The widow's son rushed into the room, found his mother on the floor, and then glanced up and saw the computer screen which read: To: My Loving Wife Date: Friday, October 13, 2007 Subject: I have arrived!

"Dearest Love: I know you are surprised to hear from me. They have computers here now, and you are allowed to send E-mail to your loved ones. I have just arrived and have been checked in. I see that everything has been prepared for your arrival tomorrow, and look forward to seeing you then. Hope your journey is as uneventful as mine was."

PS. It sure is hot down here!

After his check up, the doctor told Harry that his lifestyle of wine, women and song would have to change. "In fact, you will have to give up the first two" said the doc "but you can sing as much as you like"

Two men were marooned on an iceberg in the middle of the Atlantic. Suddenly a big ship comes into view. "We're saved! We're saved!" cries Bob. "Great, what's the name of the ship?" asks Bill. "The Titanic," replies Bob.

Farmer Brown lost control of his old jalopy on a bend and ended up in the river. He managed to climb on top of the car roof to await rescue. He heard one car stop; it was his neighbour Bill Jones, then another car arrived it was his other neighbours, Mr and Mrs Balls. "God, I'm so glad you got here first Bill," said Farmer Brown, "I'd hate to have been pulled out by the Balls!"

A Girl Guide leader in the Northwest advised her group of youngsters; "The best way to make a fire using two sticks is to be sure that one of them is a match!"

Married 25 years, I took a look at my wife one day and said, "Honey, 25 years ago we had a cheap apartment, a cheap car, slept on a sofa bed and watched a 10" black and white TV, but I got to sleep every night with a hot 25 year old blonde. Now, we have a nice house, a nice car a big bed and a plasma screen TV, but I'm sleeping with a 50 year old woman". "It seems to me, that you are not holding up your side of things"

My wife is a very sensible woman. She told me to go out and find a hot 25 year old blonde, and she would make sure that I would once again be living in a cheap apartment, driving a cheap car and sleeping on a sofa bed!

A woman had a heart attack and was taken to hospital. While on the operating table she had a near death experience. She saw God and asked, "Is this it?" God said, "No, you have another 30 to 40 years to live". She figured that if she had another 30-40 years to live she would make the most of them. Upon her recovery, she decided to stay in hospital and have collagen shots, cheek implants, and a face lift, liposuction and breast augmentation. She even had her hair dyed.

Walking out of the hospital after the last operation, she was hit by a speeding ambulance and died of her injuries. She arrived in front of God and said, "I thought I had another 30 to 40 years?" God replied "Sorry, I didn't recognise you".

Working people frequently ask retired people what they do to make their days interesting. Well for example, the other day I went into town and went into a shop on High Street, I was only in there about 5 minutes. When I came out there was a Police Officer writing out a parking ticket. I went up to him and said "Come on mate, how about giving a pensioner a break?" He ignored me and continued writing the ticket. I called him a not very nice name. He glared at me and started writing out another ticket for having worn tyres. He finished the second ticket and put it under the windscreen wiper with the first. Then he started on a third ticket. This went on for about 20 minutes. The more I abused him the more tickets he wrote. Personally, I didn't give a damn I came into town by bus – well you have to have a bit of fun, don't you?

Baroness Noakes had a final pop at the Chancellor on Monday night when debating the Income Tax Bill, accusing him of increasing complexity to the point where the UK might overtake India as the "Country with the longest tax code".

Thankfully, the Baroness has been helping with a rewrite of the rules, a talent of hers. She holds the (unofficial) award for the raciest House of Lords amendment having once asked for a change to the Sexual Offences Bill.

"Page 32, line 1" she said, "leave out 'genitals', insert 'penis'" (Daily Telegraph)

The young wife wanted to impress her husband that she was a good cook, so she rang him to ask if he could bring home a live chicken. He bought the chicken at the market and then realised his car was being serviced and would not be available for another two hours. He decided to pass the time by going to a movie, and hid the chicken by stuffing it down his trousers.

Once in the cinema he became absorbed in the movie and was oblivious to the fact that the chicken had stuck its head out of his fly. Two women were sitting next to him and one nudged the other and said; "You should see what's sticking out of this blokes trousers!" Her friend was blasé, "Seen one, seen 'em all" she said, not taking her eyes off the screen. "Yeah, but this one is eating popcorn!"

ODE TO CHRISTMAS

On the first day of Christmas my true love said to me,
I'm glad we bought a fresh turkey, and a proper Christmas tree.
On the second day of Christmas much laughter could be heard. As we tucked into the turkey; – a most delicious bird
On the third day Christmas we entertained the people next door, the turkey tasted just as good as it had the day before.
Day four relations came to stay, poor gran is looking old.
We finished up the Christmas pud and ate the turkey cold.
On the fifth day of Christmas outside the snowflakes flurried,
we were nice and warm inside, we had the turkey curried.
On the sixth day, I must admit, the Christmas spirit died,
the children fought and bickered, and we ate turkey rissoles fried
On the seventh day of Christmas, my true love he did wince, when he sat down at the table and was offered turkey mince.
Day eight, nerves were getting frayed – the dog had run for shelter,
I served turkey pancakes with a glass of Alka Seltzer.
On day nine our cat left home – by lunchtime dad was blotto, He said he had to have a drink to face – turkey risotto.
By the 10th day the booze had gone except for home made brew,
As if that wasn't bad enough, we suffered turkey stew.
On the 11th day of Christmas, the tree was moulting.
The mince pies were as hard as rock, and the turkey was revolting.
On the 12th day, my true love had a smile on his lips,
the guests had gone the turkey too – and we dined on fish and chips.

A RUM COMPLAINT

The old matelot held out a hand that shook,
Like leaves on a windblown tree
He begged the quack to give him relief
From the ghastly malady.
The Doc gave him a thorough check
With sure and competent touch;
"There's nothing wrong with you", he said
"except that you drink too much".
"That's all very well", the old fellow said
"You can blame the rum if you will,
But it's not the rum that's getting me down
It's the bloody amount that I spill.

*Contributed by S/m Norman Holland
(Wansbeck Branch No11 Area)*

WARTIME DODGES USED BY WARTIME SAILORS TRAVELING BETWEEN CHATHAM AND LONDON

Do you remember trying to stretch 28 shillings a fortnight, i.e.; two bob a day?

By the time you got your fags and nutty ration and taken the odd run ashore there was naught left to travel on Friday or Saturday leave, by means of the train. So, what did Jack do, based at Chatham? He bought a Rochester return, having on his last leave, purchased a New Cross return from London Bridge. So the return half was used outward and the boarding half used going back. By this dodge, you got a return to London for about a shilling, remembering to get your one station returns ready for the next leave!

This dodge was used with great success until one Monday morning, returning to Chatham, the train went straight through Rochester (BIG PANIC)! We got off the train to a reception committee of the Barracks Commander, Railway Police and Naval Patrol. We were lined up and asked for our tickets and, out of about 200, only 20 had valid tickets, with the rest giving every excuse under the sun as to why they had not! We, the Great Wartime Train Robbers, were fell in and marched back to barracks, where we were torn off a strip by the Commander, who (off the record) said all wartime travel for servicemen should be free, but he was dismayed that so many had been caught!

As a reminder to be more careful in future, we were given 14 days stoppage of leave.

Contributed by S/m P. Burton - Area 6.

HMS VANGUARD

A short history of Britain's last battleship by Roger Fry

Bearing one of the oldest and most illustrious names in the Royal Navy and boasting some fifteen honours from Armada to Jutland, the thirteenth *HMS Vanguard* was both the largest and last of Britain's line of battleships. She was not intended to be so – even before she entered service, the 1945 building programme continued to show the names of her (possibly 60,000-ton) successors, *HMS Lion* and *Temeraire*, with the Royal Navy still considering the battleship essential to a balanced fleet, able to support all classes of ships and as the most likely and most powerful unit to destroy enemy forces, especially when conditions prevented aircraft carriers from launching air strikes. However, on 15th October 1945, an Admiralty Board decision was made to strike this pair from the programme, considering that there would be little likelihood of a pauper exchequer financing them as well as the more pressing needs.

For a ship not completed until June 1945, it may come as a surprise that the first designs were prepared prior to the outbreak of war as 15/A, 15/B and 15/C, the staff requirement of 1939 being for an eight, 15in gun battleship using the twin mountings and guns, stored since 1924, from *HMS Courageous* and *Glorious* which had converted to aircraft carriers at that time. These designs were put before the Board in July, and as well as including the 15in mounts (which would hasten completion by many years), eight 5.25in twin mountings and two aircraft were shown in a 38/40,000-ton hull with a speed up to 31 knots. In February 1940 design 15/D, based on 15/C, was commenced and approved on 20th May when the builders, John Brown of

Clydebank, assisted in the preparation of drawings and calculations. As a result of early war reports, amendments to the design included increasing the beam from 105ft 6in to 108ft to reduce draught, which consequently denied the use of Portsmouth and Rosyth for future dockings, but was still thought expedient as Admiralty Graving Docks at Devonport (No 10), Gibraltar (No 1), and King George V at Singapore could still accommodate her, as well as British and Empire commercial docks at Liverpool (Gladstone), Southampton (King George V), Durban (Prince Edward), Cape Town (Sturrock), Sydney (Captain Cook), and those at Esquimalt and Quebec in Canada. Design 15/E incorporating this and other amendments was approved on 17th August 1941, the final order having been placed with the builders on 14th March. The first keel plate was laid on 2nd October but in September 1942, a revised legend and set of drawings were approved by the board which omitted the aircraft but enhanced close range weapons, as well as other alterations made in the light of war experiences. A proposal to build her as an aircraft carrier was considered but rejected on 15th July. This revived specification is listed below, with 'as built' actuals to the right.

| | 15/E | Completed |
|--------------------------|-------------|----------------|
| Overall Length | 813ft | 814ft 4.375in |
| Overall waterline: | 800ft | 799ft 11.125in |
| Extreme beam: | 108ft | 108ft |
| Standard displacement: | 42,300 tons | 44,500 tons |
| Deep displacement: | 49,200 tons | 51,420 tons |
| Standard draught: | 29ft 10in | 31ft |
| Deep draught | 33ft 10in | 35ft |
| Standard freeboard – fwd | 36ft 8in | 35ft 6in |
| Standard freeboard – mid | 22ft 8in | 21ft 6in |
| Standard freeboard – aft | 24ft 8in | 23ft 6in |

As can be seen, standard displacement had increased by some 2,000 tons and this will be referred to later but the final analysis of weight read:

| | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------|----------------------|
| Hull: | 18,657 tons | |
| Armour and protection: | 14,741 tons | |
| Machinery: | 3,251 tons | |
| Equipment: | 1,247 tons | 1,847 deep condition |
| Armament: | 6,718 tons | 7,606 deep condition |
| Oil fuel: | | 4,925 deep condition |
| Lub. Oil: | | 52 deep condition |
| Water and water protection: | | 460 deep condition |

ARMOUR

Designs 15/A to D envisaged 15in and 14in armour belts but in order to help reduce draught, these were reduced to 14in and 13in in 15/E and extended from A to Y turrets.

To prevent splinters from a shell which might strike underwater below the armoured belt from reaching the magazines, 1 ? in non-cemented armour was added to main and secondary armament longitudinal bulkheads. Vertical protection included 560lb cemented armour abreast magazines, barbettes and turret fronts, 340 – 440lb for sides and back, with various lesser weights distributed throughout the hull and superstructure.

240lb non-cemented armour was employed horizontally over the magazines, 200lb over machinery, lower deck fore and aft and 240lb on turret roofs, reducing to 80lb on the conning tower roof and less on the other protected areas.

The double bottom, with four-foot gap, formed some protection from bottom explosions, whilst the sandwich system of inboard compartments surrounding an inboard bulkhead of two thicknesses of high strength steel covering much of the citadel was considered proof against a 1,000lb TNT warhead. It was considered that some 470 tons of the increased displacement was due to increased armour.

ARMAMENT

The final arrangement of weapons and control systems, which had been constantly revised throughout the design and building stages in the light of war experience, was the eight 15in guns mounted in four twin turrets, two forward and two aft. Each gun was allocated 100 rounds plus a further nine practice shells, whilst the sixteen 5.25in HA/LA guns in twin turrets each had 391 rounds per gun, plus 25 rpg star shells, 25rpg low angle and 50 high angle practice. Close in weaponry was all 40mm Bofers: ten Mk V1 six-barrelled, one twin STAAG mounting and eleven Mk V11 singles. Considerable problems were encountered in altering and fitting the main armaments mountings which were originally designed for ships with magazines above the shell rooms – interwar building had dictated the reverse, to provide additional protection for the magazines. To remedy this in *Vanguard*, the cordite handling rooms were sited above the shell rooms and fixed, armoured hoists were constructed between them and the magazines well below. Flashlight doors were fitted top and bottom and as an extra precaution, the charges were transported in boxcloth wrappers. Here might be a good point to report that, whilst it is true to say that *HMS Vanguard* never fired a shot in anger, it is not true that her guns did not – all had fired against German cruisers in 1917 whilst mounted on their previous owners.

The standard allowance of 1,564 rounds per barrel for the 40mm Bofers could not be stored despite the constant rearrangement of magazines. RU magazines and lockers. The best that could be achieved was a total of, 92,636 rounds, a reduction of around a fifth to 1,269rpb. There were two directors for the main armament and four MK37 (US fire control system) directors disposed in a diamond arrangement for the 5.25in mountings. It is not clear whether control systems for all close-in weapons were ever fitted but it is mainly in this area the 420 tons of overweight was accounted for.

MACHINERY

The main propulsion system was divided into four units, one for each shaft and each with its own boiler room and engine room in separate watertight compartments. Cross connections for emergency and routine use were provided but each unit acted independently in action and comprised a pair of superheated, 400psi Admiralty three-drum boilers feeding steam to two main turbines in series, driving one shaft through double helical gears at 350psi and 700 degrees F to give 30,000shp at 245rpm. Oil and diesel fuel stowage formed part of the hull protection and thus was sea water compensated in use, to preserve integrity. Two harbour machinery room and ten action machinery rooms accommodated the auxiliary machinery which included four 450kW diesel generators, four turbo alternators of 480kW and a variety of air compressors and pumps, four of which provided hydraulic power to the main turrets.

During trials off Arran in July 1946, the main machinery developed 136,000shp and speed obtained was 31.57 knots at 45,720 tons, 30.38 knots at 51,070 tons – some 1.50 knots and 16,000shp higher than envisaged. The four manganese bronze propellers were of 14ft 9in diameter, the pitch of the outer pair of three bladed was 14ft 6in, whilst that of the inners (five blades) was 14ft 1in. The rudder had an area of 386 square feet and was balanced, with 30 feet of the area forward of the stock. Over 1,000 tons was added to the design weight by alterations and additions in electrical, ventilation, pumping/flooding and other equipment.

HULL ETC

Launched in secret by Princess Elizabeth on 30th November 1944, *HMS Vanguard* was the first British battleship to be built with a transom stern which, after experiments at Haslar, projected an additional half-knot from the same rpm to achieve 30knots. She was also designed to have a pronounced (and handsome) fo'c'sle sheer forward of 'A' turret to keep the foredeck drier in heavy seas, a problem frequently reported in the 'King George V' class battleships built with an almost non-existent sheer. It was accepted that this steep rise would reduce the amount by which the foredeck mounted turret guns could fire over/off the bow at low elevation.

With five decks within the flush decked hull, excluding a short deck within the sheer, from the wooden planked and caulked, armoured upper deck rose a massive superstructure of conning tower, bridges, main and secondary directors, two masts and a pair of tall, distinctively-capped funnels. The eight 5.25in turrets were positioned at different levels, two to each 'corner', whilst Bofers mountings, their directors and ship's boats fought for available space.

The twin Bofers STAAG mounting was sited at the after end of 'B' turret roof (spare a thought for that crew in action!) and another a little forward of the ensign staff.

Early stages of the design indicated a crew requirement of 76 officers and 1,412 men as a squadron flagship but by completion, this had risen to 87 and 1,806 as a private ship, 128 and 1,882 as a fleet flagship, mainly as a result of increased small calibre weapons and electronic improvements. Overcrowding was considered probable when the complement exceeded 115 officers and 1,860 men. In January 1945, the design reduced the allocated central messing dining halls space to increase to increase mess space to 18 square feet per man in enclosed messes and 14 sq.ft in broadside messes, but resultant overcrowding in dining halls resulted in messes converted to dining halls and cabin flats to messes. In 1948, *Vanguard* was refitted with stainless steel bathroom fittings, hot & cold water, new furniture, water coolers, an ice-cream machine, electric deck scrubbers, polishers and vacuum, washing machines and the installation of barber and tailor shops. She was fitted with heating equipment for service in the Arctic and air-conditioning in prime locations for the Tropics – the former addition added over 50 tons to her weight. In order to be able to navigate the Panama Canal, all over-the-hull equipment had to be portable to leave her 'clean-sided'. An action information centre, prepared at Portsmouth prior to installation, incorporated an operations room, radar and air plots as well as gunnery control coordination. Some 14,000 gallons of rum were also shipped!

At a total cost of £11,530,503, which included £3,186,868 for new armament systems and the

HMS VANGUARD (CONTINUED)

modernisation/installation of the main armament what did the Royal Navy receive in terms of operational capability? One problem immediately became apparent during trials, after which the director of Naval Construction calculated stresses on the hull to be in excess of those expected in a new ship. The Commanding Officer and all Admiralty departments were informed that *Vanguard* must never put to sea if the displacement exceeded the design figure (i.e. 49,200 tons), except at a time of real emergency, and a maximum limit of 35 mean draught was imposed to prevent excessive strain on the hull in heavy weather. Furthermore, any future additions to equipment had to be had to be accompanied by a recommended weight for weight compensating reduction.

Commissioned on 25th April 1946, she moved down the Clyde to Tail of the Bank, off Greenock, where on the 12th, Princess Elizabeth attended the Blessing before trials commenced. Soon after their completion on 9th August, *HMS Vanguard* was taken in hand for part conversion for use as a Royal Yacht, for the cruise to and tour South Africa by King George VI, Queen Elizabeth and the two princesses. This involved turning compartments into State Apartments, many furnished and fitted with items from the by then unseaworthy *HMV Victoria and Albert* which lay at Portsmouth for several years into the 1950s. A sun deck was built on and out from the aft superstructure which rendered 'X' turret immovable and some aft magazines were also adapted for Royal use. A viewing/saluting platform replaced the Bofors mounting on 'B' turret and it is understood that little or no main armament ammunition was carried and for the smaller calibres was much reduced. *HMS Vanguard* left Portsmouth on February 1st 1947, escorted by two cruisers, a destroyer and the aircraft carrier *Implacable* of the Home Fleet, the 17 day, non stop passage relieved by flying operations from the carrier and the meeting, at a latitude off Freetown, with the cruiser *HMS Nigeria* and frigates *Snipe* and *Swallow* of the South Atlantic Squadron to continue escort to Cape Town.

On her return, she spent a period with the Home Fleet before another refit, at Devonport, to prepare her for a second Royal cruise, this time to Australia and New Zealand. In the event, this was cancelled due to the unfortunate and

sudden illness of the King and on completion of a shorter than expected time alongside, she was allocated to the Mediterranean Fleet until 1949, which happily coincided with the rundown in carrier strength in that Fleet and provided a most welcome and prestigious addition at a time of renewed tensions in the Mediterranean. Before returning to the U.K. she carried out a main armament shoot, mainly to boost morale with few caring that she was not utilising all turrets – except for the crew who as well as being deafened, were subsequently over-run by a plague of cockroaches which had fallen with acres of asbestos from the deckheads! This was not only the last 'broadside' from a British battleship in the Mediterranean but the last occasion on which one was stationed there.

In November that year, she transferred to the Training Squadron at Portland, temporarily flying the flag of C-in-C Home Fleet for the 1950 Autumn Cruise and 1951 Spring Cruise, although she also participated in the Summer Cruise with *HMS Indomitable*, *Indefatigable* and *Vengeance* in the biggest Flag Officer Submarines 'Summer War' to date. In September, she left for refit at Devonport, having previously replaced her STAAG above 'B' turret. At about this, she was allocated to NATO in the Mediterranean in the Admiralty war plan, on 90 days notice and as a more reliable 'Sverdlov' killer than aircraft. This notice seems reasonable in hindsight but still with the Royal trappings installed, 'X' turret and aft magazines unoperational, insufficient crew to man the guns and magazines of the other three and no main armament ammunition aboard, many at the time, especially gunnery specialists, thought this far too optimistic. Added to the above problems, only two of the secondary turret (used to fire starshells during exercises) and four Bofors mountings were operational and the latter also complement of directors, many of which were stored ashore. As well as the specialists required to overhaul and install the inoperative/missing equipment, it was estimated that an additional 700 men, mostly trained in gunnery, would be required aboard to operate 85% of the weapons – this at a time when manning in the Royal Navy was a very severe problem.

THE LAST BRITISH BATTLESHIP IN COMMISSION

As the last British battleship in active commission, she was fast becoming a means of projecting Great Britain still as a world power during an uneasy peace. For this reason, Winston Churchill and the Admiralty Board were anxious to see her remain in commission. Thus, to enable her to (at least partly) fulfil her NATO role, she completed her refit in mid-1952 and appeared devoid of the Royal accoutrements and was declared 'fully operation'.

Although it is doubtful if she was manned and ammunitioned as such, she did take on live rounds for all her weapon types and for fleet prestige and morale purposes, carried out the occasional shoot with some of her big guns. As Flagship, C-in-C Home Fleet, she joined the Heavy Squadron which comprised the new *HMS Eagle* as Squadron ship, the ageing *Illustrious*, light fleet carrier *Theseus* and fast minelayer *Apollo*, in time to participate in the September 1952 NATO exercise 'Mainbrace'. This simulated NATO response to an attack on Norway with C-in-C EASTLANT providing support for C-in-C NORTH. The main NATO Striking Fleet comprised an American battleship, four carriers, *HMS Vanguard*, *Eagle* and *Illustrious* plus escorts, while *Theseus*, *HMCS Magnificent* and an American CVL formed a separate ASW group. *HMCS Quebec*, *HMS Apollo* and others were disguised as Russian 'Sverdlov' Class cruiser raiders of the Orange Fleet

After taking her place as Home Fleet flagship in the line at Spithead on 15th June, the September 1953 NATO exercise 'Mariner' was the largest to date and covered the entire Atlantic and Channel areas from Norway to Gibraltar. Convoys were formed and escorted against aircraft and submarine attack whilst the Striking fleet moved north towards Denmark Strait in the Greenland-Iceland-UK gap. This comprised *USS IOWA*, three American cruisers, two 'Essex' Class carriers, *HMCS Quebec* and seventeen destroyers, (including trios of 'Daring's', 'Weapons' and 'Battles'), whilst the Heavy Squadron, comprising *HMS Vanguard*, *Eagle*, and *Sheffield* (replacing *Theseus* on 'Flail' duties), joined from Invergorden. The whole exercise took place in atrocious weather conditions which not only hindered but curtailed many intended operations and ultimately led to abandonment after the collision between *HMS Diamond* and *Swiftsure*. However the 'star' of the show was *HMS Vanguard* alone able to steam at 26 knots with

REUNIONS NEWS

no more than a 12 degree roll. "With hardly a movement on her and the spray flying out from either bow . . . directly into the gale . . . a magnificent sight that few of us will ever forget". Interestingly, *USS Iowa* did not perform nearly so well, frequently rolling to 26 degrees with her bridge hidden in spray. *Eagle* also appeared drier than the larger American carriers. *HMS Vanguard* was later directed towards an enemy raider (*HMS Sureswift*) and being judged undamaged from a bomb attack by US Skyraider aircraft in error, she proceeded to engage and 'sink' the cruiser.

By this time, the First Sea Lord stated " *Vanguard* alone may not have a fighting value as decisive as the rest of the fleet in the opening stages of a war but I have come to the conclusion that despite the heavy costs of keeping her in commission, she has a value for prestige purposes that makes it important to retain her..." She therefore remained in active service into 1954 leading the Home Fleet to the Mediterranean for joint exercises with the Mediterranean Fleet and the US Sixth Fleet that year. She then went to refit at Devonport for her new role as Flagship, Reserve Fleet and NATO Headquarters ship, first at Devonport and then Portsmouth. Paying off in June 1960, she unwillingly left Portsmouth under tow for Faslane on 4th August for breaking. Perhaps because of her handsome lines, massive bulk and awesome firepower, from the finest large calibre guns ever mounted in a ship of the Royal Navy, her short and mediocre career did not diminish the high esteem bestowed on her both within Navy circles and by the public at large. Wherever she went, she was feted and I count myself very fortunate that, not only did I see her alongside on several occasions, but was just once able to step onto those well scrubbed decks of the last of the line.

Grateful thanks to Roger Fry and Ships monthly for permission to reproduce this article.

Coming soon; the story of what happened when *HMS Vanguard*, finally left Portsmouth.

HMS AMBUSCADE ASSOCIATION

Plymouth Road Show/ mini reunion November 16th 2007
Contact mark@sharplesgroup.com or 01925 839592 (working hours only)

HMS ANDROMEDA ASSOCIATION

Our next reunion will be held in Coventry at the Britannia Hotel 23rd/24th/25th February 2008
For full details of membership and booking forms for the reunion please contact either the Hon Secretary Des (Birdie) Cage on 01394 461082 e-mail chriscage@btinternet.com or Rick Matthews at rickmatthews@btinternet.com.

HMS HERMES ASSOCIATION

The 22nd reunion will be held at the Royal Fleet Club Devonport from Thursday April 10th to Monday April 14th 2008.
All commissions welcome.
Reunion details from Mike Evans on 01691 661870 or Richard Tipping 01752 787697

HMS LOCH FADA ASSOCIATION

The 2008 Reunion will take place at the Mill Rythe holiday village Hayling Island on March 7th -9th 2008
Details from S/m Bob Harris 02380 391848 or e-mail bobharrisf390@supanet.com

HMS PENELOPE ASSOCIATION

2008 reunion at the Stretton Hotel Blackpool
February 15th -17th 2008
More details from S/m R Thomas 07717 685657

HMS PROTECTOR ASSOCIATION

2008 reunion at the Britannia Metropole Hotel Blackpool
April 11th -14th 2008
More details from dougatspindrifft@aol.com

NO.10 AREA RNA

Spring Area conference /reunion weekend at the Britannia Savoy Hotel Blackpool on April 25th – 27th. (Inclusive) 2008.
More details from S/m C Hutton 0161 748 6681 or e-mail chutton01@aol.com

DOCKYARD DAYS

In 1893 that tough old naval character Charles 'Rough' Fitzgerald was given what he regarded as the best Captain's appointment in the Service – Superintendent of Pembroke Dockyard.

"A delightful two years it proved to be. A good home, an excellent garden, a nice compact little dockyard a good long way from London and the Admiralty, and the kindest and most hospitable neighbours I have ever come across"

The dockyard at Pembroke was established in 1814 and flourished for over a century, producing more than 250 warships for the Royal Navy, from the great wooden three-deckers to the most modern steel battleships of the Edwardian era.

Naval shipbuilding in Pembrokeshire began during the Napoleonic war at Milford where warships were built by a private contractor. When the builder failed, the Navy Board took over the yard and completed the ships. Milford would have become a Royal Yard but for the high price required by Greville, the Milford landowner. The Navy Board therefore moved operations up the harbour to Government land at Paterchurch near the ancient town of Pembroke.

Here the first two warships, the frigate *Ariadne* – the last ship commanded by the Naval novelist Captain Frederick Marryat – and *Valorous* were launched in February 1816.

The Royal Navy greatly reduced in size with the end of the long French Wars and warships were paid off in their hundreds. However an Order in Council of 31st October 1815 gave assent to 'the yard forming at Pater' to be a Royal Dockyard.

Many established workers from Plymouth Dockyard, as Devonport was then known, were transferred to Pembroke, and they introduced Tregenna, Trevena, Treweeks and other West Country names. It also provided a boost for Methodism, and South Pembrokeshire had not absorbed such a foreign influx since the Flemings arrived in the 12th century. The Cornish and the Welsh shook down together and built fine ships. Although remote from the home ports, the new yard was well sited with access to the

Forest of Dean for timber. And when iron and steel replaced timber in the 1860's, Pembroke was conveniently near the foundries at Landore near Swansea.

So the infant establishment survived and, with its 13 building slips, developed into the most productive building yard in the country. Pembroke had one dry dock but was never provided with a basin. Fitting-out facilities were always limited and wooden hulls were sent under jury rig to Plymouth for completion.

In later years, metal ships had to be engine, their armament fitted and completed for sea trials. However throughout the 19th century the only alongside berth was at Hobbs Point, outside the dockyard. The first 45 years saw the construction of 19 first and second rates. Notable among these was Stepping's *HMS Rodney* of 1833, the first British two-decker to carry 90 guns or more. She was towed into action at Sebastopol in 1854 by the Pembroke-built paddler *HMS Spiteful*. Where her broadside of fourteen 70-pounders was employed to effect. "What a dose of pills for the enemies of Great Britain" exulted the *Nautical Magazine*.

The *Rodney* paid off in April 1870, the last wooden capital ship in active seagoing commission. She was followed by Symonds' outstandingly successful *HMS Vanguard* – with a beam of 57 feet, the broadest ship in the Navy and the broadest ever built in Britain.

Pembroke Dockyard played a pioneering role in the development of early steam propulsion. The *Tartarus* of 1834 was the first of a series of paddle-wheel steam vessels that included the famous *Gorgon* of 1837 and culminated in the 1851 launch of *HMS Valorous* – the last paddle frigate ever built for the Royal Navy.

Throughout the 1850's, Pembroke built many of the Royal Navy's last wooden line-of-battle ships. The three-decker *HMS Duke of Wellington* was launched as the *Windsor Castle* on May 14th 1852, the same day as the *Iron Duke* died. The ship's name was changed in his honour a few days later.

She and the other big wooden liners of the decade were converted to carry steam engines while still on the slips, being 'cut asunder' and lengthened to make room for boilers and engines. The *Duke of Wellington* served as flagship in



the Baltic during the Russian 'Crimean' war

Pembroke was in the forefront of iron ship construction and was the first yard after Chatham to get a specialist plant. The first of the iron ships built was *HMS Penelope*, a twin-screw corvette launched in 1867. A year later she was followed by *HMS Inconstant* which remained afloat for 88 years and was the last Pembroke-built ship afloat. Other remarkable vessels were *HMS Iris* and *HMS Mercury*, the first British warships built of steel and the fastest fighting ships in the world.

During the last two decades of the 19th century Pembroke built a series of major capital ships, beginning with *HMS Edinburgh* in 1882 and followed by *HMS Collingwood*, *Howe*, *Anson*, *Nile*, *Empress of India*, *Repulse* and in 1896 – by the heaviest built at the yard, the *Majestic Class* battleship *HMS Hannibal*.

The fitting-out of these battleships in the 1880's and 90's were feats of extraordinary improvisation. Thereafter Pembroke was employed on cruisers of ever-increasing size including the armoured *Drake* (the longest ship ever built at Pembroke Dock) - *Duke of Edinburgh*, *Warrior* and *Defence*. The last three fought in the First Cruiser Squadron at Jutland, where both *Defence* and *Warrior* were lost.

Pembroke was also remarkable for having built five Royal Yachts for Queen Victoria, the last being the screw yacht *Victoria* and *Albert* launched in 1899. As there was no alongside berth available she was fitted out in dry dock.

When the dock was flooded in 1900, the ship slipped off her blocks and was seriously damaged.

A major inquiry established that she was top heavy and the Admiralty admonished her designer, the eminent naval architect Sir William White.

Naval histories record the battles and the glory, but the dockyard workers and their families also paid the high price of Admiralty in full. The physical hazards of dockyard work were many. Falls from staging around ships were frequent and often fatal. With the introduction of iron and steel came forges, furnaces and machine shops – and with them burns, injuries with machinery and eye damage caused by flying metal during riveting.

Almost every addition to the Navy List from Pembroke Dockyard was also marked by a gravestone in a south Pembrokeshire churchyard. A typical case was that of Samuel Ellis Ball, a 54-year-old shipwright who is buried just inside the gates of Llano Cemetery. In February 1881, during preparations for the launch of the 465-ton composite gunboat Cockchafer, he fell from a stage at the stern into the bottom of the ship 22 feet below. Ball was taken with multiple injuries to the hospital hulk Nankin, but died two days later. Many more like Samuel Ball were 'Discharged Dead'. William Williams aged 45 Labourer No 1899, had been greasing cogs in No 2 Fitters Shop on May 21st 1900 when he

was caught in machinery. He was taken to the Dockyard Surgery with a fractured skull and his right hand was amputated – he died the next day. His widow received £193.14.11d in compensation from the Admiralty.

The following year the Admiralty informed the Captain Superintendent that coffins for workmen accidentally killed in the dockyard were no longer to be provided at public expense and directed him to recover from Williams' widow the cost of the coffin the dockyard had supplied.

The decline of Pembroke Dockyard began soon after the turn of the century. In the final years it built light cruisers and a few submarines; the Great War brought repair work.

The future US President Franklin D. Roosevelt, then Assistant Secretary of the US Navy, visited Pembroke in 1918 and thought it "an old and small affair".

The last launching was of the oiler Oleander in 1922. It must have been a pale shadow of the great launching days seen down the years.

After the Great War, Pembroke Dockyard was surplus to requirements. The decision to close it was a mortal blow to the town. Admiral of the Fleet Earl Beatty, First Sea Lord, set out the admiralty's position starkly at the Lord Mayors Banquet in 1925. "Whether these yards (Rosyth was included in the closures) are necessary for Naval purposes, the Admiralty is the only competent judge. As to whether they are necessary for political or social reasons is for the Government to decide. The fact is that so far as upkeep of the Fleet is concerned, they are entirely redundant".

Pembroke closed in 1926 but the Royal Navy has never really left Admiral Fitzgerald's 'nice compact little dockyard a good long way from London and the Admiralty'. The western part of the former dockyard continues to support the Fleet and the Carr Jetty provides the Royal Navy with the most secure berth between Devonport and Faslane.

Grateful thanks to Lawrence Phillips, and Pembrokeshire Life for permission to reproduce this article.

WOOD'S[®] 100

THE REAL ORIGINAL

Wood's 100 Old Navy Rum is imported from Guyana in the Caribbean. Made from the finest sugar cane grown along the banks of the Demerara River, it is made in traditional pot stills, a method unchanged in 150 years, producing a dark rum of rich flavour, aroma and uncommon strength.

Enjoy Wood's 100 responsibly.

THE BATTLE OF THE ISLE OF MAY

Readers of such historical works as Corbett and Newbolts five-volume 'History of the Great War: and Arthur Marden's 'From the Dreadnought to Scappa Flow' will find no mention of the naval manoeuvre codenamed EC1 which took place in the Firth of Forth, 25 miles from Edinburgh, at the end of January 1918. It is known colloquially, if known at all, as 'The battle of the Isle of May' after the quiet island, now a bird reserve, at the mouth of the Forth where this tragedy took place. Histories of the Royal Navy fail to mention this tragic incident which leads to the loss of two ships, damage to two others and the death of at least 105 men, with no enemy involvement whatsoever.

Despite the death-toll, the authorities denied that anything untoward had happened. After a German claim was broadcast in February 1918 that there had been a disaster with heavy loss of life in the Forth area, the Secretary to the Admiralty announced; "there is no truth to this statement, nor has there occurred any incident on which a rumour to the above effect could be based". It is therefore hardly surprising that the incident has fallen into obscurity. What exactly happened was as followed.

On the night of 31st January 1918, units of the Grand Fleet put to sea from Rosyth to take part in a training exercise which involved submarines exercising with heavy capital ships. Although the main body of the Fleet was based at Scapa Flow, Rosyth had been the base for Admiral Beatty's 5th Battle Squadron for

most of the war. Now that Beatty had succeeded Admiral Jellicoe in overall command. Rosyth was confirmed as a vital base for command and control of the North Sea.

The ships and submarines taking part in the exercise that dark January night were stretched over a distance of nearly 30 miles, from the Forth Bridge to the Isle of May. *HMS Ithuriel* was heading the 13th Submarine Flotilla, which comprised of 5 'K' Class subs; K11, 12, 14, 17, and 22, all surfaced. There followed four battle cruisers, headed by *HMS Inflexible*, with *HMS Fearless* leading the 12th Submarine Flotilla comprised of a further four 'K' Class submarines K3, 4, 6, 7, also surfaced. Finally, bring up the rear, were three battleships and a number of destroyers led by *HMS Barham*.

STEAM POWERED SUBMARINES

The 'K' Class submarines were described as 'fast attack vessels' of 1,880 tons displacement (surfaced), steam powered when on the surface and incongruously fitted with 'retractable' funnels. The probable reason for the Admiralty's denial of the tragedy at the time was because the 'K' Class submarines were still on the secret list. In an incident which took place the previous year, over 30 members of *K 13's* crew had been lost when she went out of control on trials in Gareloch.

This was not uncharacteristic of the class. *K3* had plunged into the mud at the bottom of the Solent with Prince Albert (later to be King George V1) as a passenger in 1916. When safely back on dry land the prince innocently described the near-death incident as "most interesting and a great experience.

All the surface warships and submarines taking part in the exercise on 31st January in the last year of the World War One sailed with minimum navigational lights.

One crewman records that only a hooded blue light shone astern from each 'K' Class. With radio silence imposed, alarm and confusion were sure to occur if the formations were broken suddenly.

Ships at the rear of the column had still to get underway when the 13th Flotilla ran foul of a force of minesweeping trawlers working out of Granton. The trawler's masters were later to profess total ignorance of naval manoeuvres in the area, but the immediate result was for *K22* to go to emergency stations to avoid ramming a trawler, which suddenly emerged out of the darkness. *K22's* rudder jammed causing her to go out of control. She then struck sister ship *K14* slicing off *K14's* bows and killing two crewman. *K14's* first lieutenant is recorded as having single-handedly closed a watertight door against the incoming water to restrict the damage to the forward compartments. (Evidence of this act of bravery was published in the February 1988 issue of 'Scots Magazine' in an article by Edward Broomfield.

Mr. Broomfield's father Leading Stoker Charles Broomfield, was serving on *K14* that fateful night and he recalled that his father had joined the submarine service believing that the conditions were more congenial than on surface ships!)

Both submarines were now stopped dead in the water and with their low profiles; the crews were understandably worried that their vessel might not be seen by the oncoming ironclads in the darkness. Flares were fired and radio distress calls were sent out in apparent disregard of the previous order. After that the crews could only hope and pray that they would be seen. They were not.

HMS Inflexible hit *K22* at 30 knots, sheering off her ballast tank and bending her bows round to an angle of 90 degrees. Although temporarily awash, her crew managed to restore control and she was able to limp off westwards to Rosyth and safety.

Meanwhile, *HMS Ithuriel* picked up distress messages and realised that she had lost two of her charges. In reversing direction, her captain failed to take into account the increasing speed of ships coming behind. The three remaining 'K's followed and immediately ran the gauntlet of heavy ships bearing down on them. Whilst the cruiser made five emergency course changes to avoid collision, she was spared the experience of the crew of *K12* which avoided collision with the battle-cruiser *Australia* by just three feet. It was reported afterwards that watch officers on the latter vessel were able to see down the 'K's funnels to the furnaces below.

As if this was not enough of a disaster, *Fearless* was following the ironclads and now entered the melee. At 2023 the cruiser struck *K17* just forward of her conning tower. The submarine sank in just eight minutes, in which time all her crew managed to take to the water.

Worse was to come. Following *Fearless* was *K6* which rapidly found herself bearing down on *K12* from *Ithuriel's* squadron. Desperately taking avoiding action, she ploughed into *K4* from her own flotilla. The latter began to flounder, dragging down *K6* whose bows were deeply embedded in *K4*. Only by going astern drastically, did *K6* pull herself clear. *K7* narrowly avoiding collision with both vessels. *K4* sank immediately, taking everyone aboard with her. She is believed to have hit the bottom upside down, making escape impossible for anyone left alive inside.

BATTLESHIPS ENTER THE FRAY

The three-year old battleship *Barham*, accompanied by two other capital vessels and a number of destroyers, now added their weight to the carnage. At *K3* was narrowly missed by no fewer than three surface ships, but tragically, the following destroyers had not been asked to watch out for *K17's* crew, now in the

water, and sailed through them at full speed. All but nine crewmen perished.

In his book, 'The 'K' Boats' historian D.E. Everitt describes that night as "an agony of confusion, bewilderment and indecision". He does not record the casualty figures, which has been calculated at 105 by your author working from the Royal Navy's 'Book of Remembrance' for the crews of *K4* and *K17*, plus the record of the two fatalities on *K14* taken from Charles Broomfield's account. It is entirely possible that there were fatalities on *K6* and on the cruiser *Fearless*, which lost nearly 30 feet (9.1 metres) off her bows this would take the death toll even higher.

Two courts of inquiry were held in the immediate aftermath of the 'battle' in the Firth of Forth. Full attention was focused on the confusion in radio signalling and five officers on the 'K' boats were reprimanded. Also blamed was the captain of *K22* for allowing his vessel to be rammed by *Inflexible*, but it appears that the Fleet's overall commander, Admiral Beatty, refused to accept such an extraordinary finding. The real culprit was the tactician who believed that submarines should operate alongside surface ships. Obviously, such a tactic nullifies the submarine's principal value as a weapon – that of surprise – as well as exposing the submarine to the danger of collision, particularly at night or in poor visibility.

In World War II, it was understood that submarines would operate individually, striking where and when least expected them. As recently as 1982 the nuclear submarine *HMS Conqueror* carried out her attack on the Argentinian cruiser *Belgrano* while taking orders direct from Fleet Command at Norwood in the UK, and not from the localised command structure. Additionally, the presence of submarines sailing with surface ships might inhibit commanders of the latter in their own ship-handling.

In January 1917, twelve months prior to the tragedy in the Forth, a captain is recorded in the Grand Fleet Secret Packs (accessible in the Public Record Office) as observing that the 'K' Class submarines "should be kept clear of the main fleet so as not to hamper deployment". Ironically, the writer was Commander C.J.C. Little, of *HMS Fearless*.

UNLUCKY NUMBER THIRTEEN?

K22, the instigator of the tragedy, arrived back at Rosyth on 1st February. Engineers examined her rudder and attempted to simulate her steering failure but her rudder worked perfectly. Those of a superstitious nature would no doubt find significance in the fact that *K22* was originally the ill-fated *K13* which had floundered on her trials and was subsequently raised and renamed.

The final resting place of submarines *K4* and *K17*, 13 miles from the Fife coast, was discovered in 1962 by *HMS Scott*. Both submarines were at rest 140 feet down in the cold water of the Firth of Forth.

The only commemoration to the event is a monument to the crew of *K4* in St Margaret Pattens Church in London's Cheapside. Constructed from wood, it was erected on the initiative of a relative of the captain of *K4*, Commander D.D.B. Stocks. There is no monument to commemorate the incident on the Isle of May, nor does any official commemoration exist to mark the events which unfolded during that disastrous cold and dark night in 1918.

Grateful Thanks to Ships Monthly for permission to reprint this article by Sandy Mullan

THE SHIP IN THE ICE

In 1851, sailors aboard a navy brig patrolling Baffin Bay between Greenland and Canada spotted an amazing sight. It was summer, and the Arctic ice pack was melting, breaking up into ice floes which drifted south into the North Atlantic. Perched on one of these ice floes, so the sailors later reported, were two abandoned ships, frozen into place.

The brig followed this strange apparition as best it could and the sailors gained a good view of the vessels before the ice floe finally disappeared. From the description they gave, it was apparent that the two ships in the ice were the Terror and the Erebus, neither of which had been seen since 1845 when they sailed from the Thames to search for the North-West Passage – the ill fated expedition led by Sir John Franklin.

It was a dramatic end to the remarkable career of the Erebus, a career which had begun a quarter of a century earlier when she slid down one of the greased slipways at Pembroke Dockyard and into Milford Haven, the 28th vessel to be built and launched at the new naval dockyard. The launch, in 1826, was a relatively low key affair; no-one present could have guessed that the new vessel would turn out to be one of the most historic ships the dockyard produced. Named after a Greek god of the Underworld, Erebus was a bomb ketch, an unlovely two-masted floating platform for firing mortar shells and nothing like as glamorous as the 46-gun Nemesis which followed her into the Haven a month later with far more pomp and ceremony.

But although she wasn't much to look at, with her two masts set aft and her wide open fore-deck, HMS Erebus was one of the strongest ships afloat. She was also shallow draughted, being designed to manoeuvre close inshore so that the gunnery crew could bombard coastal targets using the heavy mortar on the foredeck.

Rather by accident, these design factors made HMS Erebus and her sister ship HMS Terror ideal for purposes far

removed from warfare but equally important to the empire-building British government of the day – polar exploration.

After a decade of naval service as a bomb ship, Erebus was chosen to accompany Terror on the first official British expedition to the Antarctic. In the 1830's the Antarctic was almost completely uncharted – Captain Cook sixty years earlier had decided that the continent did not exist, and if it did exist, it was too cold and horrible to bother visiting anyway.

However whalers and sealers had begun returning to Europe with vague tales of a vast and unexplored southern continent, and various governments decided they wanted a piece of the action.

France and America were among the first to send official expeditions to the Antarctic, although these were relatively ill prepared and achieved little – however the French did discover a new breed of penguin!

The British expedition, which left in 1839, was far better prepared than any of its rivals. The Terror had already been converted for polar exploration, having taken part in an expedition to northern Canada, and now it was the turn of Erebus to be strengthened for the battle with the ice. Her decks were doubled in thickness and her hull was reinforced and double planked. She was given a foremast (which improved her looks slightly) and her keel was sheathed in extra layers of copper. Each ship had a crew of 64, and it is recorded that the stores for the expedition included 2,398lb of pickled cabbage, 10,782lb of carrots and a small flock of sheep.

Led by seasoned Arctic explorer James Ross, the expedition reached Hobart without too much mishap. The real business then began, as the two ships pressed southwards into the uncharted and hostile southern ocean.

A barrier of ice arose to block their way, but using the reinforced prow of Erebus to batter a way through, the two ships sailed into the clearer water beyond, dodging the ice floes until the frozen land mass of Antarctica was in sight.

Ross and his crews penetrated further south than any men before them,

claiming and naming islands, and chunks of guano-covered rock for Queen and Country. As they sailed along the frozen coast, charting it and observing the effects of the South Magnetic Pole, they came across an astonishing sight – a live volcano belching out smoke and flames in the heart of an icy wilderness.

It was a hellish sight, and Ross – well versed in the Classics – duly named the volcano Mount Erebus, just as his ship had been named in Pembroke Dock 14 years earlier. The expedition spent some three years in the southern ocean, overwintering in Van Dieman's Land or the Falkland Islands, then heading southwards when the pack ice melted in the brief Antarctic summer. Conditions were often unbelievably bad; hurricane winds would whip up enormous seas and there was the constant threat of icebergs. In one storm the two ships collided, dismasting Erebus, but the vessels survived to return to Britain where they were paid off at Woolwich in September 1843.

But this wasn't the end of the story for Erebus and Terror. Having been kitted out for surveying the frozen oceans, the two ships were ideal for attempting to discover the Holy Grail of polar exploration – the North-West Passage. If it existed, this route around the top of Canada would shorten by far the journey to the rich trading lands of the Orient, and whoever discovered it would be guaranteed fame and fortune.

In 1845 the two ships again left the Thames on an official British polar expedition, but this time they headed for the north Atlantic. In charge of the expedition was Sir John Franklin, a man with considerable experience in the Arctic but who, at the age of 60, was thought by many to be too old for the rigors of the journey.

The ships themselves had been much altered since the Ross expedition returned, in particular by being provided with steam power to complement the spread of canvas.

Erebus was given an engine purchased from the Greenwich Railway Company and was fitted with screw propellers. This had obvious advantages, but there were also disadvantages; the engines and the cargo of coal took up a great deal of space and also increased the draught of

Erebus considerably – a crucial factor in exploring coastal waters.

Having left the Thames the two ships made a good passage to Greenland. They carried provisions for three years and Franklin and his crews had every hope of finally unlocking the secrets of the North-West Passage and sailing into the Pacific Ocean.

On July 1845, the expedition was spotted by two whaling vessels off Lancaster Sound. It was the last that anyone was to see or hear of the Franklin expedition.

As the years passed without word from the ships, so the outcry grew for rescue parties to be sent to bring home the 133 crewmen and officers. It was thought that the ships had become trapped in the ice, but that the men would be able to survive for many months on the stores they carried. Various rescue missions set out to comb the vast frozen wasteland in search of Franklin and his men, without any success. They had simply disappeared.

It wasn't until the 1850's that information and evidence began to emerge about the fate of Erebus and Terror and their crews, mainly from Eskimo hunters who passed on scraps of knowledge to agents of the Hudson Bay Company. Acting on this information, fresh expeditions were mounted which discovered the campsites and bodies of Franklin's men. Papers revealed that they had abandoned their ships in April 1848 when it had become obvious that they were frozen solid in the unforgiving ice. On foot and on makeshift sledges the men struggled south-wards, dying of cold and hunger, and in some cases reduced to cannibalism. None made it to safety.

Of the Erebus and Terror no trace was ever found – apart, perhaps, from that strange apparition of the two ships frozen to a floating iceberg.

Grateful thanks to Mr Keith Johnson, and Pembrokeshire Life for permission to print this article.

In September 2007, pictures from space showed that the ice cap had thawed dramatically and ships would now be able to travel from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean.
Editor

Joint Service Hosanna House Group, (JSHHG) was founded in 1995 its annual purpose and aim, is to offer Special Needs ex-service personnel, or any of their dependants the opportunity of a Respite Care Pilgrimage at Hosanna House near Lourdes in the Pyrenees France.

JSHHG is affiliated to the HCPT – The Pilgrimage Trust, who own and maintain this specially adopted care home. The group leader had the experience and ability (assisted by a team of helpers) to put together an itinerary which adopts the ethos of creating not just a service group, but a family unit. This is achieved by having a minimum care level of 1-1 guest to helper ratio. In addition to this, qualified medical personnel and a chaplain are integrated into the group.

We looked down the valley towards Lourdes as we loaded wheelchairs and their occupants into our specially converted HCPT coach to make the three mile journey from Hosanna House down the Avenue du Paradis in the small French town. Lunch had been taken early to ensure our group was in good time to meet the British Contingent of the International Military Parade (IMP) which we had been invited to join, by the Right Rev Tom Burns the Roman Catholic Bishop to the Armed Forces. This to be followed by a guaranteed place near the front of the colourful gathering of national flags from all over the world., uniforms and music of many military bands assembled for 'The Blessed Sacrament Procession' taking place on the Rosary square in front of the Basilica later in the afternoon.

Our party from 507 Group, made up of ex-service men, women and their dependants, accompanied by serving and ex-serving members of the armed forces, very worthy, volunteer helpers, had previously assembled at Stansted Airport for the flight to Tarbes the nearest airport to Lourdes. It was in nearby Hosanna House where we would be accommodated for the next seven days. Hosanna House is well equipped for those with special needs. It was set up in response to

requests from young people with disabilities for an opportunity to experience a Pilgrimage holiday. The residential centre is set in rural surroundings overlooking the snow-capped mountains of the Pyrenees to the south. It is here where true and lasting friendships are forged.

On arrival at the Avenue du Paradis we were met by a small contingent of sailors from HMS Raleigh who would head the parade, proudly carrying the White Ensign. The wheelchairs and their helpers, headed by ex- Royal Marine, Nigel Williams, carrying our United Kingdom, Joint Services' banner, would follow. To the rear the Sandhurst Cadets in the parade would form a guard of honour around the Union Flag, whilst the band of the Light Cavalry would ensure we all kept in step, as we proudly marched through the town to the applause from onlookers.

Following the parade, we gave an invitation to the British contingent to join us at our BBQ in the evening. We wasted no time in getting everyone loaded onto the coach back 'home' then changed into more relaxed dress.

Our BBQ 'guests' were on time, as expected, having been collected by the HCPT coach from their Lourdes accommodation. Many of our guests expressed surprise that there was this beautiful house in existence, where ex-service special needs personnel can enjoy a pleasant get-together, swap tales and partake in service humour. At the same time those who have a spiritual need are given ample opportunity to take in the Holy pleasures of a trip to Lourdes and to live the story of St Bernadette Soubirous and her family to the full.

Following the food and beverages, we had a grand sing song accompanied by members of the Light Cavalry band who had kindly brought along their 'civilian' instruments to play for us.

So ended another day to remember forever, on this year's pilgrimage to Lourdes with group 507. Next year will not only be the 150th anniversary of the first apparition of Our Lady to St Bernadette, but also the 50th anniversary of the IMP.

For more information on the Annual Pilgrimage 23rd – 30th May 2008; Contact Richard Tipping Group Leader 507. Tel; 01752 787697

AREA REUNION PHOTO GALLERY

Skipton's oldest swinger in town



"Where did that pea go?"



Crosby Sods Opera



Sing along!



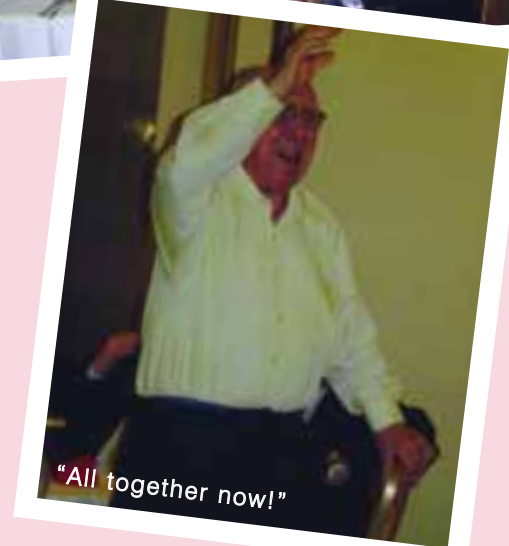
Atherton & Leyland Branches



"Is there enough for another round?"



"All together now!"



BONE FIDE TRAVEL

The United States Navy used to require officers to foot their own expenses when taking up new appointments and file for reimbursement at their new ship or establishment. It could then take several months before these expenses were paid to the individual.

In August 1870 Lt. Cdr JP Fyffe received orders to assume command of a frigate based in San Francisco; his current appointment was in East London, Connecticut. He did not think it right that his moving expenses should come out of his own pocket. Lt. Cdr Fyffe therefore sent a letter to the Secretary of the Navy requesting that the Navy either advance him the money or supply him with railroad tickets or provide passage to San Francisco via a navy vessel. The reply from the Chief of Bureau of Navigation informed Fyffe "Your request is contrary to Navy regulations. Carry out your orders" The orders also stated: "Whilst carrying out these orders, you will keep the Bureau informed of your whereabouts". There was nothing in his orders that stated when he was to arrive in San Francisco or by what means.

At sunrise on the morning of August 25th 1870, Lt. Cdr Fyffe donned his best uniform and strapped his sword to his travel kit. He walked out of the base at East London and headed west for San Francisco. By sundown he reached East Haddem where he sent the following telegram to the Bureau Chief: 25 August – "Compliance orders number 1998 "en route New London to San Francisco on foot. "This telegram to keep you informed of my whereabouts. "Made good 22 miles to date; spending night in hayloft in Mount Parnassus. Every evening for the next few days he sent a similar telegram.

On the 29th of August he sent the following telegram; "Continuing en route on foot. Made 28 miles this day: despite badly worn boots. People in these parts are not familiar with Navy uniform a great crowd walked part of the way with me. I sang them some sea shanties. The populace thinks it is a great sign of democracy for a commanding officer of a ship to walk the 3000 miles to take up his new appointment. The local police chief has given me the best cell in his jail for the night.

On the 30th of August he sent a further message. "En route: on foot. Have arrived Albany; requesting local Recruiting Officer, to be authorised to issue me with new shoes. Boots fell apart at noon today". "I entered Albany barefooted; will remain at the Seward Hotel two days awaiting answer. Earning my keep as a bartender. Local rum far superior to that served in the Navy"

On the 31st of August Lt Cmdr Fyffe received the following message: "I strike my colours. The Secretary of the Navy has authorised Recruiting Officer in Albany to issue you with boots and to provide also, the quickest transportation from Albany to San Francisco, Even the Chief of Bureau Navigation can laugh when outsmarted".

Taken from the USS Chicago Reunion (US Cruiser Magazine)

LISTEN TO THE BAND

No sooner has the furore of the debacle of the captured sailors from HMS Cornwall in Iran died down, along with the publicity that brought: The media must have thought all their birthdays had come at once; what with the revelation that crew members went on operations with their i-pods; then to cap it all having sold their stories to the news-hounds, one of their party could not return to his ship, having mislaid his passport.

The MOD is now faced with the problem of the unhappy musicians of the Army bands. It appears the Army, with its many commitments in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere is desperately short of manpower to fulfil all its engagements. The MOD's solution to the problem is to utilise the bandsmen from several bands to relieve soldiers of the Royal Welsh battalion currently serving in Cyprus guarding the British and UN bases. This would free up these soldiers to deploy elsewhere should a further emergency arise.

The bandsmen are not happy about this. Several have threatened to resign saying they are professional musicians, not soldiers, they joined up to be musicians and have not seen a rifle since their basic training. It's a far cry from touring the UK giving concerts in the town halls and

seaside venues, along with the hospitality that goes with it, than stomping round the perimeter fence of some remote base during the middle watches.

Don't you feel any pity for these poor squadies, having to trade in their trombones for a rifle? Perhaps they could take their i-pods along to keep them company on their lonely patrols.

SPOT THE ERROR!

On page 12 of the spring 2007 edition of the magazine, the accompanying photograph wrongly shows the Frigate HMS Plymouth taking a hit from an Exocet missile. It was of course, the Destroyer, HMS Sheffield. We apologise to our readers for this oversight on our part.

PULLING RANK

It appears to be a dangerous game to challenge the ruling body at national conference, especially if a favoured motion or amendment of their making is voted down by the delegates. So it was when a straight forward motion from the Southern Ontario branch calling for a National Council Member to represent the overseas branches ran into difficulty with the Top Table. For reasons best known to them; they wished to delay this appointment via amendment. Several amendments to the amendment later, with the delegates growing more and more restless with these manoeuvres The NCM for No.12 Area attempted to give his 'Right to reply' to one of the amendments. The President clearly irritated by the hierarchy's failure to divert the delegates, promptly told the NCM to "sit down".

So we now have descended to an unelected person telling an elected member of Council not to express his views to conference.


TIDES OF HISTORY

In 1937, 70 years ago, the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich was opened by King George VI, with patriotic pageantry and a traditional afternoon tea. The collections, housed in what had served as a school for children of sailors, testified to the centrality of maritime affairs in the nation's past. Yet the occasion, held in the shadow of new war clouds gathering over Europe, pointed to their significance in the present. It was not long before Britain's sea strength proved its worth once more.

Today, the museum – which also comprises the Queen's House and the Royal Observatory – is the largest of its kind in the world. Its 70th anniversary coincides with the 10th anniversary of Maritime Greenwich's recognition as a UNESCO World Heritage site, ranking its historical value alongside that of Venice and the Taj Mahal. Yet the museum's enduring relevance in 2007 is also clear, with the completion of the Time and Space Project reinvigorating the Royal Observatory by creating three modern astronomy galleries, four new time galleries, research and learning facilities and a state-of-the-art planetarium.

The National Maritime Museum preserves the past so that visitors may learn from it and better understand the future. The influence of the sea today is as fluid, expansive and varied as the oceans themselves.

by Emily Mann



Nelson fought and died for his nation
... what will your legacy be?

You can give a donation or leave a legacy to the National Maritime Museum.

For further details please contact
Development Office,
National Maritime Museum,
Park Row, London SE10 9NF
T: 020 8312 6509
E: development@nmm.ac.uk

Inland Revenue Tax Exempt Charity No X 92486

M NATIONAL MARITIME MUSEUM

nmm .ac.uk

MANCHESTER TATTOO 2007



Manchester Military Tattoo

This year's Manchester Tattoo followed the theme to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the Falklands conflict. Veterans from the various services that took part in the operation to liberate the islands were well represented at the MEN arena on Saturday July 14th. A moving contribution to the commemoration was the involvement of 258 members of the various cadet forces, who each carried a card with the name of every serviceman who gave their lives in that war.

Despite last minute disappointments involving cancelled events, and again, a poor attendance the show was well worth the price of the ticket. Stars of the show were once more the Red Imps who were making their second visit to Manchester prior to their appearance at the Edinburgh Tattoo in August. These motor cycle riders; whose ages range from 5 to 18 thrilled the audience with their displays of motor cycle stunts which they performed to perfection. The Manchester Association of the Scottish Regiment Pipe Bands once more gave a flawless display of music and marching, the skirl of the pipes and the beating of the drums had most of us joining in with the music. They were of course, ably supported by the Greater Manchester Police band that has been the anchor of this event since its inception in 2002.

The future of the Tattoo is in the melting pot. If next years show is to succeed there must be some drastic changes. New attractions must be forthcoming. The marked absence of input from the three armed services has been evident this year. If the Tattoo is to continue there must also be a significant improvement in audience numbers: an arena with a capacity of over 19,000 needs to be

better filled than it has been over the past two year's of this event. There are countless ex service regimental, ship and other associations here in the Northwest. A fraction of their members attending would turn the event around attendance wise. A good example of the apathy shown in the lack of support for the Tattoo was evident in the parade of Standards. The Royal Naval Association with over 50 branches in this part of the world could only muster 3: and one of these Standards had to be carried by a member of a SCC unit. The Royal British Legion fared little better: what an example to give the many young cadets and their units who did support the show.



Manchester Military Tattoo

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE – NEW AUTOMATED TELEPHONE SERVICE

Thank you for calling the British Army. I'm sorry, but all our operatives and units are busy at this time.

At the tone; please leave your message along with the name of your Country, the region of your Country, the specific crisis and the name and number of your organisation. If you are a politician; please state if you are legally elected, overthrown, or a rebel government.

As soon as the Army has resolved the problems in Kosovo, Bosnia, Macedonia, Serbia, Iraq, Sierra Leone and Afghanistan, and also reduced the number of men marching up and down the tarmac in London, and completed the

compulsory health and safety training requirements for your particular crisis, we will call you back.

If you require further options, please listen to the following message;
If your crisis is small and close to the sea; **Press 1 for the Royal Marines.**
If you want a particularly aggravating rebel leader disposed of; **Press 2 for the S.A.S.**
If your problems are in a distant land with a tropical climate, good hotels, and can be cleared up by one or two low flying bombing runs; **Press 3 for the Royal Air Force.**
(Please note: This service is not available after 1630 or at weekends.)

If your enquiry concerns a situation that can be solved by a warship, lots of bunting, a damn good cocktail party and a first class marching band, please write well in advance to the **First Sea Lord, Whitehall, London.**

Written requests only will be considered. This service comes with 300 plus sailors who will increase your Country's Gross Domestic Product and population overnight.

This represents the best value for money service currently on offer.

Thanks to Crosby Sods Opera Company.

WARSHIPS IN COLLISION.....

A TRUE STORY

On the 6th of February 1964, two of the finest ships of the R.A.N. left Sydney for Jervis Bay, some 100 miles to the southward. Six days later only the aircraft carrier HMAS Melbourne returned. Her attendant destroyer HMAS Voyager lay in two pieces on the ocean bed with 82 Australian men. Both ships were almost commissioned and were embarking on a series of exercises, a progressive working up programme, on completion of which, they and their companies would be fully trained and ready to take their proper place in the fleet. For some 25% of the men, many under 20, it was the first time they had been to sea.

HMAS Melbourne of 20,000 tons, though a little elderly, was Australia's finest ship and most important sea-going command. Selected to command her was a senior captain, an outstanding officer with ability and promise John Robertson DSC.

"Voyager" was more modern, a "Daring" class destroyer of 3500 tons, her captain, Duncan Stevens, though junior, was an experienced destroyer officer.

The two ships left Jervis Bay early on the morning of the 10th February 1964 and



HMAS Voyager final departure

had been working together all day. As darkness fell, Voyager closed Melbourne, for the final exercise a "touch and go" practice for aircraft. This simple exercise consists of aircraft touching down and immediately taking off again, a sort of dummy run for squadrons to accustom them to deck landing before finally being embarked. The wind was light and flukey. Having searched all round the compass, Captain Robertson, in tactical command, turned the two ships together. First to 060 degrees (ENE) and finally to 020 degrees (NNE)

In the light, or rather darkness, of subsequent events it is emphasized that in the first place Voyager was in a fine position on Melbourne's port bow and finally on her starboard bow about a half to three quarters of a mile distant. The night was dark and without a moon, but clear. The sea was calm with a slight swell. Both ships were partially darkened and were showing dimmed side lights as well as obstruction lights (two red all around lights high up on the mast.) In the events that followed, "zero" is the time of the collision, namely 2056 local time. Satisfied that there was sufficient wind on the course of 020 Captain Robertson at zero minus three minutes decided to commence flying operations and indicated his intentions by signaling to Voyager "Flying course 020, 22 knots" A signal that was correctly received and understood. It was also the executive order for Voyager to take up her plane guard (or rescue) station. That meant she had to move smartly from half right ahead of Melbourne, to half left astern of her, distance 1000 to 1500 yards.

A plane guard's sole duty is to pick up airmen, who failing to make the flight deck, land in the sea. At all times and under all conditions she must keep clear of the carrier which must have complete freedom of movement in order to keep her bow in the eye of the wind. As alterations of course are made without signal, the bridge team on the destroyer has to be vigilant, especially at night.

"It looks like she is turning to starboard pilot" Captain Robertson and his navigator, Car Kelly standing by the compass could see Voyagers starboard light plainly as she turned away from Melbourne. She was, as expected, making a full circle to turn to starboard, so as to pass under Melbourne's stern and take up her station on the port quarter. No maneuver could be more routine, Captain Stevens had done that scores of times. Captain Robertson moved out to the wing of the bridge, and at zero minus two minutes was surprised to see Voyager turning back to port towards him. "She must be doing a fishtail" he reflected, not the best practice from that position, but he had every confidence in Stevens. A fishtail consists of a zigzag which results in a ship's losing bearing (dropping behind another which, as Melbourne was doing, maintains her course and speed.

On the bridge of Voyager, the officer of the watch and navigator, both young lieutenants, stood by the compass, together with the 1st lieutenant, a spectator. From this centre line position, Melbourne, when astern would be in the blind arc, screened by superstructure, mast and funnel. Only from the lookout position on the wings of the bridge was a clear view astern obtainable. While his ship was swinging to port, Captain Stevens got out of his chair on the starboard side of the bridge and putting his head into the lighted chart table, called his chief yeoman of signals into conference, evidently unaware that his ship was standing into danger. Only one man was looking aft, the port lookout, an ordinary seaman of eighteen, and at sea for the very first time.

"I watched Melbourne come around our quarterdeck, then our stern, then up the port side" In his inexperience he did not appreciate that actually it was his own ship turning to port towards Melbourne. "Bridge" he called as the carrier came on the port beam faster and faster. There was no reply! A few seconds later, maybe less than zero minus one minute, he turned around to see the officer of the watch looking at Melbourne through his binoculars

At this moment Captain Robertson exclaimed, "What the devil is Voyager up to" and ran from the wing into the enclosed compass platform. Simultaneously, Kelly looking up from his anemometer said "Christ!! What the hell is Voyager doing" He took a quick radar range, six hundred yards. Although his Captain was on the bridge, he was taking no chances. "Stop both engines, halt hard astern both engines" An order which the Captain supplemented with "Full speed astern"

On Voyager's Bridge the OOW dropped his glasses and ordered "Full ahead together" presumably he thought there was just time to slip across Melbourne's bow. Captain Stevens partially light blinded, leapt onto the compass platform. "Full ahead both engines, hard Starboard, Quartermaster; this is an emergency, pipe collision stations"

But it was too late. The point of no return was passed. Because those orders were not given 20 seconds earlier, those officers on the bridge of Voyager had only 20 seconds to live.

Captain Robertson stood helplessly on his bridge as the destroyer bore down relentlessly, intent on self destruction. He had dismissed the idea of putting the wheel over; the rudder could have no possible effect it was like one of those nightmares when one is powerless to act. Now he could see the faces on Voyagers Bridge, as she came headlong on - a port light a mocking danger signal. As Voyager leapt across the carrier's path there was the grinding screeching ripping of steel biting into steel as the heavy bows of the carrier cut into the light side structure of the destroyer, exactly abreast the bridge.

Voyager was broken in two pieces; the bow section drifted down Melbourne's port side, the after two thirds scraped down her starboard side, fortunately there were no explosions.

The work of rescue, hampered by darkness and a heavy swell scummed with fuel oil went on until midnight, when out of a complement of 314 in Voyager, 232 had been picked up. 14 officers and 68 men were missing.

The official report of the royal commission lavished praise on those members of the RAN, who faced with a sudden incredible emergency, undertook their various tasks promptly and efficiently and with perseverance and courage to the very limit of their resources.

In the early hours of February 11th, Melbourne, seaworthy despite her battered bows, set course for Sydney at six knots. The Prime Minister Sir Robert Menzies, ordered a Royal commission to enquire into the collision, most unfortunately, as it turned out.

The tribunal was presided over by Judge Spicer, with no less than 5 QC.'s and their juniors representing various interests.

There was however, no proper naval assessor to guide the judge or keep the enquiry within bounds. Their abysmal ignorance of seafaring matters, especially naval manoeuvres and procedure, has been recorded in 5.5 million words of transcript. After four months, sitting for 55 days and costing Australia 55,000 (A) pounds, these legal gentlemen were unable to say who was responsible for the collision, which to them was inexplicable and incomprehensible.

Although no blame was attributed to anyone in Melbourne, Captain Robertson was relieved of his command and virtually forced to resign his commission. After 34 years naval service he was allowed to retire, but without a penny in pension.



It remains, for a retired officer of the Royal Navy to sort out the facts. In his book "One Minute of Time" Vice Admiral Harold Hickling tells a factual and objective story of this inexplicable disaster; the worst in peacetime history of the Royal Australian Navy.

He pins the blame, as would any naval court martial directly on the shoulders of the Captain and officers of Voyager, who failed to keep a proper lookout, and who only took avoiding action 20 seconds before the collision. The cause of the collision he ascribes to Captain Steven's losing the tactical picture, in that he thought Voyager was well ahead and clear of Melbourne, and in that fatal turn to port he thought he was turning away from, and not towards the carrier. There is no other explanation for a Captain to leave his ship in the hands of junior officers while he puts his head into the lighted chart table.

Three years after this disaster, the Prime Minister of Australia ordered a further Royal commission to enquire into allegations made by Lt Cdr P.T. Cabban RAN that Captain D.H. Stevens the Captain of Voyager when she sank was frequently drunk.

Submitted by S/m Terry Heaps Vancouver Branch

BRANCH NEWS

ATHERTON

In June, members of the branch visited *HMS Albion* when she berthed in Liverpool. They were joined by members of the LST and Landing Craft Association to which *HMS Albion* is affiliated.



Atherton Branch visit to *HMS Albion* and Commanding Officer

On arrival, we were greeted by the Commanding Officer Capt. T.M. Lowe RN, after a short chat, he introduced us to our guide Capt. Formes RM. who commenced the tour by showing us the vehicle deck which stretched the full length of the ship at dock side height, to allow heavy armament (tanks, transport vehicles etc) to be embarked. At the rear of the deck were 4 huge landing craft, 2 on each side and in line behind each other, sunk into the deck so that by lowering their front and rear ends their decks become level with the ships deck thereby facilitating the loading of vehicles. To launch these landing craft the rear of the deck is flooded to a depth of 1.2 metres, the rear door is then lowered and the craft sail out to sea. A visit to the bridge: then on to the upper deck, where we saw the personnel landing craft on hydraulic davits. Finally back to the vehicle deck, we were allowed access to the landing craft and view the armaments on that deck, before saying our farewells and disembarking from a very enjoyable tour.

S/m Bernard Leaver President. Atherton Branch.

CAPENHURST

During the recent 25th Anniversary Commemoration of the Falklands conflict, three long standing members of this branch, Harry Williams (ex RN), his wife Barbara, an Associate member and their daughter Yvonne (ex QARNS) have been very much involved.

Ian, Harry and Barbara's son was lost when *HMS Coventry* was attacked and sank off the Falklands. Harry and Barbara had arranged to attend the Pangbourne Memorial chapel service and to meet the Queen in June, unknown to them, daughter Yvonne had entered their names and they were chosen to fly out to the Falkland Islands Liberation celebrations. Yvonne, her husband and daughter then attended the Pangbourne Service and the Horse guards parade in their place, while Harry and Barbara completed a very hectic seven days of events in the South Atlantic.

On their return more activity awaited them; for many years Barbara has been Chairperson of the Friends of the Historic Warship committee that is *HMS Plymouth* and *Onyx* berthed in Birkenhead. Redevelopment of the berth has meant the ships would be moved elsewhere, which left a need for a suitable alternative home for the memorabilia from the Falklands memorial chapel on *HMS Plymouth*.

On Sunday, June 24th 2007, a special service was held and the artefacts were installed at St Mary and St Helen parish church at Neston, where Ian William had been an Altar Service prior to joining the RN. The service was lead by the Right Rev Alan Chesters, a former Bishop of Blackburn, who dedicated the artefacts in their new home at the St Nicholas memorial chapel in the church. This chapel can be visited at most times when the church is open, but valuable artefacts can be viewed by appointment.

S/m Ron Taylor. President.

HAZELGROVE

Hundreds of spectators watched the annual Hazel Grove parade, held in February, to commemorate the sinking of *SS Stockport*, which was lost during the Second World War. The ship went down in the North Atlantic in February 1943, with the loss of the 64 man crew, and an unknown number of survivors from other ships, which had been rescued by *SS Stockport*.

The Mayor and Mayoress of Stockport attended the parade, and along with Commander H. Harley (Area President) took part in the church service. Commander Harley and the Mayoral party took the salute.

John Kelly (Secretary)

MILLOM

Millom made the front page of the North-west Evening News, when they organised a parade to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the Falklands War. A roll of honour was read which included the names of those who died in the conflict and a wreath was laid in their memory. A further two wreaths were laid, one for the Argentinean fallen and one for those who have taken their lives since. Veterans also attended a dinner attended by various civic dignitaries, and raised the magnificent sum of £1,000 for the Falklands Veterans Foundations and the South Atlantic Medal Association.

SKIPTON

Once again the branch supported the *HMS Vesper* reunion in Skipton. We took part in the annual RAF Association Wings Week parade and service on the 2nd Sunday in September. We were also present at the local Remembrance Service in the town. Members manned a Trafalgar Day advertising stall at the local Tesco store. April was a busy month for us, we held a spring Tombola in Skipton Town Hall, and later that month attended the Spring Conference & Reunion at Didsbury. This was followed, in June by the national conference at Torquay. The annual Duck Race held on the River Wharfe (by kind permission of the Duke of Devonshire) had to be cancelled due to rising river levels, thus depriving the Sea Cadets of a fun day out and much needed revenue.

V.J. Day is commemorated at the War Memorial, where a former POW of the Japanese speaks the Kohima prayer. This happens at 1100 every August 15th.

Everyone is welcome to attend.

S/m Shirley Haigh Secretary

TRAFFORD

On April 23rd 1986, Trafford Branch was commissioned by the late S/m Tom Gallagher NCM. On April 23rd 2007 we celebrated our coming of age, with a visit to the Bridgewater theatre, where the Royal Marine Band was performing. Those members who attended enjoyed the event and are looking forward to further theatre visits.



Trafford Branch visit to the Bridgewater Hall Manchester

We attended the MOD Inspection at both the Stretford and Altrincham Sea Cadet Unit HQ's, and were once again impressed by the hard work put in by the cadets and officers. The Trafford RNA cup for the best cadet was awarded to Cara Phillips (Stretford)

A number of members attended the annual reunion & Spring Conference at Didsbury, and again had a wonderful weekend; quite a few members suffering from jet lag on the Monday (couldn't have had anything to do with the free bars/rum tub

could it?). In June we travelled to Babbacombe, some of us with great difficulty, due to adverse weather conditions, and joined up with the Area 10 party, which was staying at the Trecarn Hotel for the annual conference. Those who attended the conference were impressed by the arrangements made by the Torbay Branch.

WHITEHAVEN

Whitehaven Branch still keeps going. We were among the Guests of Honour at our local Sea Cadet Unit annual parade and entertained later on board TS. John Jerwood. We attended the naming and Roll Out service of *HMS Astute* at Barrow. The branch also attended the 25th Falklands Anniversary service at Millom and also the Falklands and Veterans service at Whitehaven's Maritime Festival. Some shipmates spent a weekend at Fasland as guests of the Senior Rates Mess, going on board the Torbay and a MOD police launch for a trip around the Loch.

We send their warmest wishes to all shipmates in Area 10.

S/m Lily Robbs. Secretary.

BRITANNIA NORTH WEST

The Britannia Hotel Wigan



Set in the quaint village of Standish & ideally located off the M6 JCT 27

The hotel hosts 124 ensuite bedrooms and to complement this we have an elegant restaurant with lounge bar, a fully equipped gym, swimming pool, whirlpool and sauna.

We can cater for numbers up to 300 in our purpose built function suite.

For further information
Tel: 01257 499988

The Britannia Hotel Bolton



Situated off the M61, the hotel has 98 modern well-equipped bedrooms.

With a welcoming restaurant serving fine cuisine and a comfortable lounge bar.

We can cater for numbers up to 120

For further information
Tel: 01204 855500

Both hotels can offer packages to suit your requirements.

BOTH HOTELS ARE PERFECT FOR REUNIONS, CHARITY EVENTS AND DINNER DANCES

BOTH VENUES CLOSE TO MAJOR ATTRACTIONS
CAMELOT, WIGAN PIER, TRAFFORD CENTRE, SOUTHPORT, MARTIN MERE, THE GRANDE ARCADE & MANY MORE

PICTURE GALLERY

National Conference Delegates 'signing on' again?



Mrs Noeline Lee 'Detached duty' Torquay



National Conference Crosby branch Delegate and Observers



S/m Tony Gaskell, Rochdale branch delegate



National Conference, getting ready for the parade



'This way Sir" GS with FOST Rear Admiral Ibbotson DSC



S/m Fred Martin (Leyland) receives Dutch Plate





S/m Trevor Howard 'He counted them all out, and he counted them all in'



The Pickerings with General Secretary



National Conference, Area Treasurer Rum mishap



S/m Caulfield l/c 'slops'



Mayor of Bolton receives bouquet



Presentation to Bolton SCC unit



Sodexo Defence have a strong history of supporting the British Armed Forces and the wider Defence Community, both in the UK and overseas, and are proud to support the Royal Naval Association. As trusted suppliers of support services to the Armed Forces, Sodexo has a sound understanding of the demands and constraints of military life and its possible implications upon the families of Servicemen and Servicewomen.

We can offer enthusiastic people who share our values a wide variety of roles throughout the UK, Cyprus and the Falkland Islands and offer both flexibility and mobility to our employees, encouraging applications from all ages and offering hours to suit all lifestyles. Sodexo Defence are committed to the well-being of all those within the Defence Community and to their families. Past, present and in the future.



Making every day
a better day

