CNOA
Chatham Naval Officers' Association

The CNOA Newsletter for November 2020

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Contents

HMS Argyll © Crown Copyright MoD Navy 2020

HMS ARGYLL HOMECOMING

Homeward bound after five and a half months on constant operations in the punishing Gulf heat, HMS Argyll arrives home.

Nearly six million tonnes of shipping – 68 merchant vessels carrying goods, oil and natural gas – has been safely monitored through key sea lanes in the Middle East since the Plymouth-based ship arrived in the region in April.

HMS Argyll – Britain's longest-serving Type 23 frigate with 29 years in the Fleet – has been working side-by-side with her sister ship HMS Montrose, forward based long-term in Bahrain, and the UK's allies and partners in the region, to reassure merchant shipping in potentially dangerous waters.

Chairman's Flag Hoist:

Dear Fellow members,

We are now into a routine of virtual meetings via Zoom on the second Friday of each month. We are enjoying lectures on a suitably varied range of subjects.

The committee has recently made the first presentations of the CNOA Certificate for Meritorious Service, presented to Commander Derek Stoyles, Captain Geoffrey Marshall, Lieutenant Commander Roy Standen and Flight Lieutenant Graham Storey for their tireless and enthusiastic work for our Association over many years.

I recently had the pleasure of joining our President, along with Tracy Bryant and our Hon. Secretary, for coffee with Derek Stoyles and Barbara Borland. We presented a decanter as a small gift from the Association to mark Derek and Barbara's wedding later this month.

Our Membership Secretary, Andy Nailor, is spending lots of time chasing membership fees; to make his job easier, may I please ask that you check that your membership is up to date and, ideally, paid by bank transfer. The current fee is £20 per year.

We are concerned that some members have not been receiving the newsletter by email; if you are able to check whether member friends have received it, this would be most helpful.

I hope most of you can join us for the virtual Trafalgar Dinner; it is not ideal that we cannot meet but it is better to do something than nothing. Derek Ireland has sent out details so please ensure you register your interest in order for us to prepare for this historic event. Our guest of honour, Admiral Sir James Perowne, is making considerable effort in supporting us.

Our Welfare Officer, Peter Luxton, has been busy phoning around; again, please let us know if we can help anyone as we go into winter. Meanwhile the AGM is fast approaching and will be a virtual meeting. Please let us know if there are any points you wish to add to the agenda.

Yours Aye,

Jon

Jon Vanns
Lt Cdr (SCC) RNR
CNOA Chairman

2020-2021 Future Speakers & Events: Subject to revision

9 October:	Vanessa Nicholls – Dementia Friends – Virtual Lecture
23 October:	Trafalgar Night Dinner – Virtual Social
13 November:	John Johnson-Allen – The loss of the Truculent – Virtual Lecture
11 December:	Cdre Bryant – President's Address and Virtual Social – all are welcome; have drinks and nibbles to hand
8 January:	Tracy Bryant – The Association of ex-Service Drop-In Centres (ASDIC) – Virtual Lecture
12 February:	AGM
12 March:	Derek Goodwin – Reflections of a marine engineer sales manager – Virtual Lecture
9 April:	Glen Jones – Third Afghan War
14 May:	Jane Allen – TBC
11 June:	Committee – mid-term update on progress of CNOA
9 July:	Peter Goodwin – Nelson's Arctic Voyage
13 August:	No meeting – summer leave
10 September:	Tony Holding – CCF officer
8 October:	David Brown – Wrecks of the Kent coast – TBC

Additional events will be included as details become available.

As always, we are most grateful to those who send items for this Newsletter. **All such contributions by the 5th of each month please.** Please email contact@cnoa.org.uk with articles, news items and photographs.

Derek Ireland (Hon. Secretary) and Suzanne Wood (Newsletter Editor)

Could other CNOA members also provide short presentations based on their own service-related experiences for the CNOA meetings? **Yes, of course they could!** Please let Jon Vanns know or email contact@cnoa.org.uk

Future Speakers

John Johnson-Allen

The loss of HMS Truculent in the Thames Estuary in January 1950 was a major disaster, resulting in deaths of over 60 of her crew.

The talk describes the events of that night, including the description of events from the last survivor of the sinking, Fred Henley, who was born in Chatham and who was a leading seaman at the time.

I have been through all the official records to discover what did happen, and found the answer to the question that was posed at the time of the "missing hour and half" before the alarm was raised.

The reason for the collison is very clear – as you will discover.

Tracy Bryant

The Association of ex-Service Drop-In Centres (ASDIC) represents and advises Drop-In centres that support veterans across the country.

The rising membership is currently about 70 from a total of over 160 known centres throughout UK. Here, veterans and other members of the Armed Forces community (including Merchant Navy and Fishing Fleet, and sometimes blue-light services) may go for help and advice, or simply for companionship.

Drop-Ins vary hugely in their modus operandi but all serve the same broad purpose: to provide social and welfare support to veterans and their families.

Fundraising auction – HMS Victory Medalet
From Lt Cdr Derek Ireland

Unfortunately, due to the many restrictions placed upon us. it is not possible to fundraise for our Charities as previously; therefore, we must look at alternative ways of raising money.

Your Chairman has kindly donated an “HMS Victory Medalet” for an online auction. (See below for information on the medalet.)

Every bid will be accepted as a donation; however, the highest bid will win the “Victory Medallion”. Bids to be returned by noon on 23 October by email to jonvanns@aol.com and the winner will be announced at the Virtual Dinner.

The HMS Victory Medalet shown in comparison to a pound coin

Please make your donations as per the dinner instructions by post or BACS transfer.

Knowing how generous members have been in the past, we look forward to raising a substantial amount, especially as the New Year Luncheon has yet to be confirmed.

HMS Victory medalet, 1905. This small "Victory" medallion was given to everyone subscribing one shilling. The obverse shows the starboard broadside view of HMS Victory with lower sails reefed to show the rigging shrouds. In the exergue below is 'VICTORY 1905'. On the reverse is written FROM B.F.S.S. NELSON CENTENARY CONTAINING VICTORY COPPER, E.R. VII. Diameter 17mm. Some seem to have been gilded originally. Others now show an oxide patina.

HMS Foudroyant Copper

In 1905 the B.F.S.S. (British & Foreign Sailor's Society) was instrumental in the program of events for the Nelson Centennial. A fund was set up known as 'The Nelson Centenary Memorial Fund' and the King, who took a great interest in the Society, allowed his initials, E.R. VII, to be stamped on the souvenirs. The subscribers to the fund were able to acquire medals and badges, amongst other items, for the donations and collections. The larger medals/badges were given for 5 shillings and upwards, the small Victory charm (16.5mm) to everyone sending 1 shilling (=5p) and upwards. Provision was also made for a Victory Shield (for £5. 5s., five guineas, now £5.25) for schools to award annually to a boy or girl for success. Copper was also used to make Nelson busts which were available for donations of £50. The remaining copper from H.M.S. FOUDROYANT was also acquired and used to provide HMS Victory souvenirs for the boys and girls of the Empire. *(Nelson Commemorative Medals 1797-1905, Thomas A. Hardy, p. 36.)*

UK Carrier Strike Group assembles for the first time
From MOD Navy

The Royal Navy's new Carrier Strike Group has assembled for the first time, marking the beginning of a new era of operations.

HMS Queen Elizabeth is at the centre of the group, which marks the start of joint carrier operations between the Royal Navy and its NATO allies.

Nine ships, 15 fighter jets, 11 helicopters and 3,000 personnel from the UK, US and the Netherlands have carried out exercises in the North Sea.

The full UK Carrier Strike Group assembled for the first time © Crown Copyright MoD Navy 2020

The Carrier Strike Group is the largest and most powerful European-led maritime force in almost twenty years.

Commodore Steve Moorhouse, Commander UK Carrier Strike Group, said: "The new UK Carrier Strike Group is the embodiment of British maritime power and sits at the heart of a modernised and emboldened Royal Navy.

"Protected by a ring of advanced destroyers, frigates, helicopters and submarines, and equipped with fifth generation fighters, HMS Queen Elizabeth is able to strike from the sea at a time and place of our choosing; and with our NATO allies at our side, we will be ready to fight and win in the most demanding circumstances.

"Carrier Strike offers Britain choice and flexibility on the global stage, it reassures our friends and allies and presents a powerful deterrent to would-be adversaries."

The Carrier Strike Group includes NATO's most sophisticated destroyers – the Royal Navy's Type 45s HMS Diamond and HMS Defender and US Navy Arleigh Burke-class USS The Sullivans – as well as frigates HMS Northumberland and HMS Kent from the UK and the Dutch Navy's HNLMS Evertsen.

They will not only protect the Queen Elizabeth-class carriers from enemy ships, submarines, aircraft and missiles, but are also capable of conducting a range of supporting missions, from maritime security to disaster relief.

Meanwhile, two Royal Fleet Auxiliary ships, RFA Tideforce and RFA Fort Victoria, will supply fuel, food, spares and ammunition to enable sustained operations from the sea without host nation support.

Commander Vince Owen, Commanding Officer of HMS Defender, said: "Providing air and missile defence to a Carrier Strike Group is exactly the task HMS Defender and the Type 45 has been designed to do.

"Having previously supported the French aircraft carrier FGS Charles de Gaulle in the fight against ISIL in 2015 and more recently been part of the USS Abraham Lincoln task group as she transited through the Strait of Hormuz last year, it is exciting to be integrating HMS Defender into the UK-led Carrier Strike Group for the first time.

"Having just successfully completed a period of Basic Operational Sea Training over the summer, the men and women that make up my ship's company are motivated and ready to take part in the next stage of our training in preparation for deploying with the Carrier Strike Group next year."

HMS Queen Elizabeth and her Strike Group have recently exercised alongside allied nations in the North Sea as part of NATO's largest annual exercise, Joint Warrior.

Cdr Rick Ongering, Commanding Officer of HNLMS Evertsen, said: "The Royal Netherlands Navy and the Royal Navy have been very close maritime partners for decades."

He added: "Our marines have been working together through the UK-Netherlands Amphibious Force for almost fifty years and our ships regularly undertake Fleet Operational Sea Training in the UK.

"However, the opportunity to accompany HMS Queen Elizabeth is a new experience and HNLMS Evertsen is excited to be working with the UK Carrier Strike Group during Exercise Joint Warrior this October."

New report shines a light on financial struggles of coastal fishers; offers roadmap to resilience

From Seafarers UK

Seafarers UK has released landmark research into the plight of fishing communities' financial health – highlighting the lack of a 'safety net' for those working as share fishers and exploring the impacts of a lack of financial planning on fishing families' financial security and wellbeing.

New research conducted by the charity Seafarers UK, in partnership with Liverpool John Moores University, explores the real financial difficulties inherent for many in earning a living from small-scale fishing. 'Fishing without a Safety Net: The Financial Resilience of Small-Scale Coastal Fishers, their Families and Communities' puts forward a bold set of recommendations for Government, charity and industry to improve the financial resilience of fishing families around the UK. Key proposed actions include boosting financial literacy in fishing communities to improve financial planning; improved Government welfare support, plugging crucial gaps in the current system that disadvantages fishers; access to savings and affordable credit from a credit union, support to budget for tax and plan for insurances and a retirement pension.

Uncovering an array of different stressors on coastal fishers, the report notes that financial troubles were often the root cause of mental health problems and relationship difficulties for fishers living without a financial 'safety net'. This challenging reality has been thrown into stark relief by the events of 2020, a year in which the usual uncertainty of earning a living from inshore fishing was struck by the economically devastating Covid-19 pandemic and the closure of hospitality and export markets to sell fresh fish.

In the report's foreword, Fisheries Minister, Victoria Prentis MP commented: "Inshore fishermen can, and do, make reasonable profits, but as we have seen from Covid-19, they are amongst the most vulnerable in the sector as they do not have the reserves or flexibilities that are available to others."

The report's findings are based on the real financial problems experienced by 431 fishers and their families who reached out for help from maritime welfare charities, such as SAIL (Seafarers' Advice & Information Line), the Shipwrecked Mariners' Society, and Seafarers' Hospital Society, and was augmented by interviews with fishers from around the UK. The data revealed that amongst 140 working fishers contributing to the study, 63% sought help about debt problems.

A boat owner interviewed for the report explained one of the issues with some fishers' financial capability and money management: "The problem is not always low wages; fishermen can earn quite good wages. It is the way people manage their money that is the problem. They don't seem to be able to plan or save or look after their money. Then they have nothing to fall back on."

So, where do the key vulnerabilities lie that lead to these problems with indebtedness? One central aspect of financial vulnerability explored by the report is the share fishing model, a part of fishing life since medieval times, with fishers receiving a share of the value of the total catch, rather than a predictable and stable income. This system is highly prized by many fishers and rewards skill and effort with well-earned payouts when the fishing is good. Yet, as crucial factors such as the weather, ability to go to sea, and the actual catch can't be predicted, share fishing leaves fishers with little regularity in what they will earn from one week to the next. This presents challenges to pension planning, affording time away from work when ill, and accessing welfare benefits when needed.

As a result of this newly granular analysis of the impacts of the share fishing model favoured by many small-scale fishers, Seafarers UK is now proposing a new 'share fisher plus' co-operative approach, which could support fishers to access to a range of suitable and competitively priced financial products.

Seafarers UK CEO, Catherine Spencer, remarks: "Seafarers UK is now actively exploring how to take forward the development of a co-operative owned by fishers that can facilitate group-purchasing of financial products, as well as potentially providing access to accountancy, taxation and HR support."

Such innovations to support financial planning are proposed within the report to help provide a buffer against examples of serious financial strife that fishing families often face. Examples of these include problems with debt and bailiffs, homelessness, an inability to retire because of lacking a pension and more, all of which are highlighted in the report's case studies.

With examples like these common amongst those contacting maritime welfare charities, Seafarers UK challenges Government with six specific recommendations to render making a living as an inshore fisher more stable and better protected against financial insecurity. This includes a recommendation for HMRC to support fishers in making Income Tax and National Insurance payments, aiming to ensure that fishers aren't caught out by the financial shock of a large one-off bill – but are instead supported to budget, in a similar way to PAYE employees.

"At Seafarers UK we are committed to funding interventions that will strengthen the financial resilience of fishing families and help to ensure that there is a safety net to protect them from their current volatile existence," explains Catherine Spencer.

Other recommendations to Government include a national action plan to specifically support the small-scale fleet, dedicated support for new entrants, and support for direct to consumer marketing initiatives to ensure a fair price for fish.

Seafarers UK launched this report on 8 October 2020. In addition to an address from the Fisheries Minister, Victoria Prentis MP, Seafarers UK outlined how they will be taking forward the report's recommendations and participants had the opportunity to ask questions to an experienced panel of guests.

Download the 'Fishing without a Safety Net: The Financial Resilience of Small-Scale Coastal Fishers, their Families and Communities' report.

75 years ago: the last Nazi U-Boat surrenders

By The Maritime Executive

Described as a "lanky, hawk-faced man," Charles Eliot Winslow was born in 1909 and grew up in the Boston area. He preferred using his middle name and, by 1940, he was a successful paint salesman and engaged to be married. Winslow had second thoughts about his fiancée, but instead of calling off the wedding, he chose to join the US Navy. So, in 1941, at the ripe age of 31, he found himself called to active duty with the enlisted rating of seaman 2nd class.

In his first assignment, Winslow served out of Boston on board USS *Puffin*, a Maine fishing boat converted into a minesweeper. In November 1941, just before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, he decided to apply for an officer's commission in the United States Coast Guard Reserve. Winslow passed the competitive examination and, by December, he accepted a commission in the Coast Guard.

Winslow rose through the ranks quickly. During 1942, he served as executive officer on board the Coast Guard weather ship *Menemsha*, and then received an appointment to the anti-submarine warfare school in Miami, Florida. Following graduation, the Coast Guard promoted him to lieutenant junior grade and assigned him to the *Argo*, a 165-foot Coast Guard cutter originally built for offshore Prohibition enforcement. By February 1943, Winslow served as senior watch officer and navigation officer on board *Argo*. He rose rapidly through the ship's officer ranks and, in April, he received a promotion to executive officer and gunnery officer.

After only two months as the cutter's executive officer, the Coast Guard promoted him to commanding officer of *Argo*. In June 1944, the senior member of a Navy inspection team reported, "The [*Argo's*] commanding officer is an able and competent officer, forceful, decisive, military in conduct and bearing, maintaining discipline with a firm yet tactful hand." Even though he enlisted to escape his fiancée, Winslow proved a solid leader and an excellent seaman, and the Service would retain him as *Argo's* commanding officer for the rest of the war.

Johann Heinrich Fehler followed a different path than his American counterpart. A blond, clean-cut man, Fehler was born a year later than Winslow. As a boy growing up near Berlin, he longed to go to sea. After completing high school, Fehler signed-on with a German sailing vessel plying the waters of the Baltic Sea and, after two years, he began serving on a German ocean-going freighter. He next entered the German merchant marine academy and earned a mate's certificate. In 1933, he joined Adolf Hitler's National Socialist Party, which was recruiting new members throughout Germany. In 1936, he joined the German Navy as an officer cadet and he would remain a faithful Nazi Party member for the rest of his military career.

In the later years of the war, Fehler's fate would be tied to the German submarine *U-234.* One of Germany's oversized Type X-B U-boats, this 1,650-ton sub's original mission was to lay mines rather than torpedo enemy shipping. However, after completing its trials and commissioning as a minelayer, the U-boat returned to the shipyard for conversion into a freight-carrying U-boat to transport vital cargoes through Allies-patrolled waters.

Back in the US, the Navy assigned Cutter *Argo* and its sister cutters to patrol and convoy escort duties. The cutter carried a crew of 75 men and supported radar and sonar equipment; an armament of 3-inch and 20 mm guns; and depth charges and other anti-submarine weapons. As escorts, *Argo* and its sister cutters were typically assigned to coastal convoys, tracking underwater contacts and attacking anything that resembled the sonar signature of a submarine.

Using the snorkel mast, shown here next to the conning tower, U-boats could run their diesel engines while submerged by sucking air through an intake at the top of the mast while blowing diesel fumes out of the snorkel's exhaust manifold. (U.S. Navy Photo)

In December 1944, the German high command summoned Johann Fehler to Berlin for meetings. There, he learned that his U-boat would serve as an undersea freighter to ship important cargo to Japan. The Nazis had sent U-boats to Japan before, but three out of four submarine freighters had been lost attempting the passage. However, toward the end of the war there was no alternative for shipping cargoes to Germany's last surviving ally. Fehler's assignment to command a transport U-boat proved deeply disappointing, because he wanted to join the fight and command one of the attack subs. But Fehler stayed with *U-234* since requesting another position meant postponing his deployment or, even worse, serving in a shore assignment.

Shipping space was limited in even the largest U-boats. To maximize *U-234's* capacity, the Germans allocated every conceivable watertight compartment to critical war material. The 300 tons of cargo included many of Germany's latest armaments and military technology, such as new radar; anti-tank and armour weapons; and the latest explosives and ammunition. Military aviation materials included documents, technical drawings and instrumentation for Messerschmitt's latest fighter aircraft. *U-234* also carried raw materials rarely found in Japan, such as lead (74 tons), mercury (26 tons), optical glass (7 tons) and uranium oxide ore (1,200 pounds). By 1945, lines of communication between Germany and Japan had become tenuous, so *U-234* also carried one ton of mail and correspondence for German military, diplomatic and civilian personnel located in Japan.

This image shows Argo moored at Portsmouth Navy Yard on May 19th, 1945, with U-234 crewmembers assembled on the fantail and Coast Guard officers and men looking on. (U.S. Navy Photo)

Not only did Fehler have to transport vital cargo to Japan; his orders required him to ferry critical military personnel. His twelve passengers included two officers of the Imperial Japanese Navy, two civilian employees of the Messerschmitt Aircraft Company, and four German naval officers. *U-234* also carried four German air force officers, including flamboyant Luftwaffe general Ulrich Kessler.

Fully loaded with top-secret cargo and passengers, *U-234* departed Kiel, Germany, on 25th March on course for Kristiansand, Norway. On 15th April, Fehler deployed from Norway dubious of his mission's chances of success. He cruised without surfacing for more than two weeks using the U-boat's advanced snorkel system and, by early May, he reached the open ocean. In the meantime, the Nazi war machine had collapsed, Adolf Hitler had killed himself and other Nazi leaders had fled Berlin. So, the surrender of German military forces fell to Admiral Karl Dönitz, former head of the German submarine fleet.

On 8th May 1945, Dönitz broadcast the order for all deployed U-boats to surrender to Allied naval forces. By the time he received the order, Fehler was halfway across the Atlantic. He decided to surrender to the Americans and began steaming westward. Meantime, his two Japanese passengers chose to commit suicide to avoid capture and Fehler buried their bodies at sea.

On Saturday 19th May, *Argo* rendezvoused with *U-234* and its Navy escort, USS *Sutton*. *Sutton's* whaleboat ferried Fehler, his officers and his passengers over to the cutter. According to Commander Alexander Moffat, the senior Navy representative on board *Argo*, Fehler climbed over the cutter's rail and cheerfully extended his hand in greeting, but Moffat did not return the German's proffer of a handshake. Denied a warm greeting by the American, Fehler proceeded below decks with his men, remarking, "Come now, commander, let's not do this the hard way. Who knows but that one of these days you'll be surrendering to me? In a few years, you will see Germany reborn. In the meantime, I shall have a welcome rest at one of your prisoner of war camps with better food, I am sure, than I have had for months. Then I'll be repatriated ready to work for a new economic empire."

In his personal collection of photos from surrender of U-234, LTJG Eliot Winslow's hand-written captions included: "The Finger: May 19, 1945, Kapitanen Leutnaut [sic] Jahann Heinrich Fehler… said in good English, 'Ach—my men have been treated like gangsters.' With eyes meeting head on, I barked 'that's what you are, GET OFF!' My outstretched arm pointed to the gangway." (Courtesy of the Winslow Family)

Below decks, *Argo's* armed guard ordered the prisoners to sit still with their arms folded, prompting Fehler to complain bitterly to the American interpreter about their treatment. After learning about Fehler's behaviour, Winslow went below and ordered the guards to "shoot any prisoner who as much as scratches his head without permission."

After they moored at the Portsmouth Navy Yard, an armed guard escorted *U-234's* personnel to the brig. Luftwaffe General Kessler saluted Winslow and politely asked permission to depart the ship, to which Winslow silently pointed the way. Fehler left the cutter protesting to Winslow, "Your men treated me like a gangster." Already simmering over Fehler's hubris and loud behaviour, Winslow pointed to the gangway and barked, "That's what you are. Get the hell off my ship!"

Navy officials deemed Fehler, his passengers and officers of significant intelligence value and flew them from Boston to Washington, DC, for further interrogation and processing.

Meanwhile, the Navy disbanded Winslow's surrender group. Later, Winslow expressed his interest in returning to civilian life. In a letter to his command, he wrote, "If the *Argo…* is scheduled to fight the wintry blasts alone all winter, my answer is 'Get me off.' One winter upside down was enough for me. It took me three weeks [on shore] to regain the full use of my feet!"

To determine the contents of *U-234's* cargo, the Navy surrounded the submarine with a shroud to shield the sensitive unloading activities. The Navy Department sent much of U-234's cargo to its research facility at Indian Head, Maryland, distributing the German technology, including the Messerschmitt plans and instruments, to appropriate government offices for research and analysis. The Navy handed over the uranium oxide to the US Army to support the Manhattan Project and development of atomic weapons.

After *U-234's* surrender, the Navy continued to analyze the U-boat's design and construction. The Navy subjected the U-boat to numerous tests to compare the durability and performance of German submarines to the latest American sub technology.

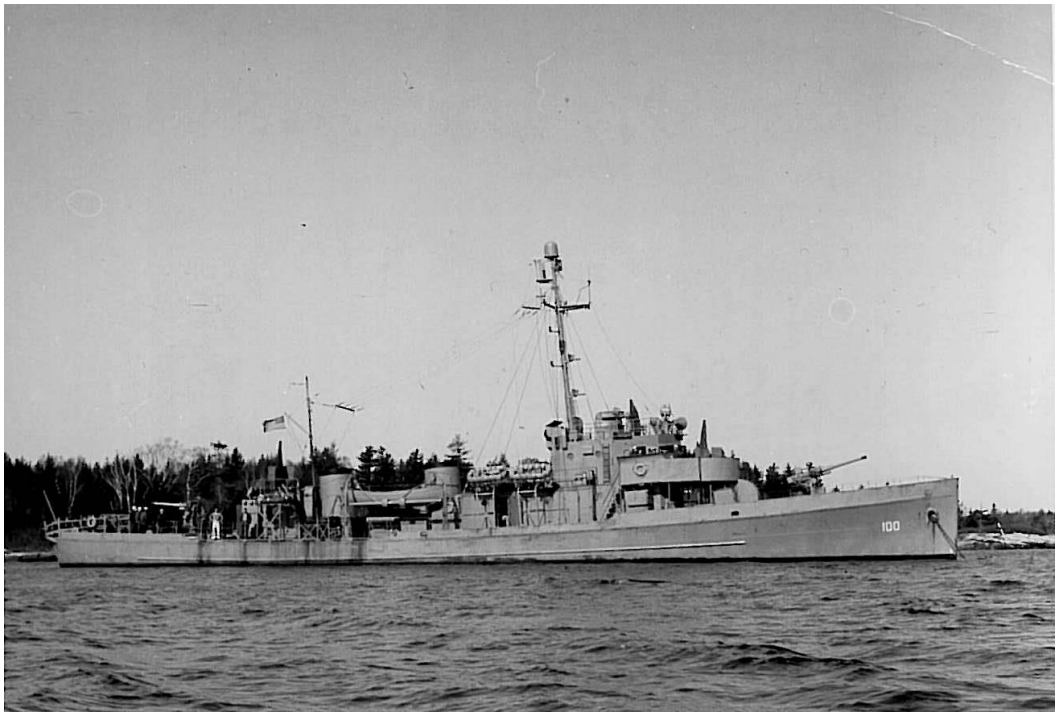
By the spring of 1946, extensive dockside inspections and sea tests were complete and the Navy formally declared the U-boat "out of service." Finally, on 20th November 1947, 40 miles off Cape Cod, the Navy used the U-boat as a torpedo target for the American submarine USS Greenfish.

Navy intelligence officials processed Fehler and the other *U-234* officers through Fort Hunt, located near Mt. Vernon. After that, the Navy sent the officers to internment camps along the East Coast. Fehler went to a facility reserved for fervent Nazi officers and, in 1946, he returned home by sea along with other repatriated Germans.

While Fehler sank no ships as a submarine commander, his association with *U-234* made him the subject of journalists, writers and researchers as one of the better-known U-boat captains. After returning to Germany, he settled in Hamburg and passed away in 1993 at the age of 82.

Ultimately, U-234 was used for target practice by the U.S. Navy. On November 20th, 1947, USS Greenfish shot a torpedo at her as she lay on the surface, approximately 40 miles off Cape Cod. (U.S. Navy Photo)

After retiring from active duty, Eliot Winslow settled in Southport, Maine (near the port city of Bath), where he started a business running tugs and local tour boats. For years, Winslow gave summertime tours of the southern Maine coast on board the sightseeing vessel he named for his old cutter, the *Argo*. Winslow lived to see his nineties at his home in Southport.



After completing the successful transfer of surrendered U-boats to Portsmouth, Captain Winslow navigated Argo up to Southport, Maine, to anchor in front of his parents' home on Love Cove. The cutter barely fit through the rocky narrows and is the only vessel of its size and kind to have visited the sparsely populated area. (Courtesy of the Winslow Family)

William Thiesen is the Coast Guard Atlantic Area historian. This article appears courtesy of Coast Guard Compass.

HMS Dragon forges tie with Ukraine in Odessa

From MOD Navy

HMS Dragon has spent a week in Ukraine's premier port forging closer ties with the country's navy.

The Portsmouth-based destroyer has broken away from the UK's amphibious task group currently operating in the Mediterranean, to patrol the Black Sea, working with Britain's allies and partners in the region to guarantee freedom of movement.

She sailed through the Dardanelles and Bosporus bound for the historic Black Sea port of Odessa, home of the Ukrainian Navy, for a high-profile visit focused on diplomacy and combined training, before paying respects to the city's WW2 dead.

HMS Dragon alongside in Odessa port © Crown Copyright MoD Navy 2020

Ukraine is at the beginning of a 15-year plan to build up its Navy, support facilities, shipbuilding and ports on the Black Sea and Sea of Azov with the goal of becoming a major regional maritime force by 2035.

Dragon's visit to Odessa builds on the solid foundations laid by Operation Orbital, which has already seen more than 18,000 Ukrainian troops train alongside UK armed forces personnel.

The destroyer's Commanding Officer, Commander Giles Palin, joined senior members of the Ukrainian Navy, including its head, Rear Admiral Oleksiy Neizhpapa.

The ship's passageways and compartments turned into a training ground for elite Ukrainian commando forces, 73rd Marine detachment, who practised board and search skills.

Staff from the Ukrainian Navy's damage control school were shown how Royal Navy sailors respond to fire and flood on board, while the team behind the destroyer's Wildcat and their Ukrainian counterparts discussed survival equipment and operating a helicopter safely at sea from the deck of a modern warship.

Lieutenant Dimitrii Rudnev, in charge of the new Ukrainian reconnaissance ship UKRS Lahuna joined HMS Dragon for a day of manoeuvres with three of his nation's patrol ships off the coast of Odessa to learn about the Royal Navy's routines at sea – and how it conducts close, complex manoeuvres with foreign vessels, assisted by standard NATO terminology and procedures.

Ukrainian marines hone board and search drills aboard HMS Dragon in Odessa © Crown Copyright MoD Navy 2020

"It means a lot to be here in HMS Dragon – particularly so soon after President Zelenskyy visited HMS Prince of Wales in England," he said. "Both navies working alongside one another is further affirmation of strong UK-Ukrainian bonds."

In addition, the Wildcat shared Black Sea skies with an Mi-14 from 10 Naval Aviation Brigade, painted in Ukraine's national colours of light blue and yellow.

"We are delighted to be working alongside the Ukrainian Navy while in Odessa – and to be learning valuable insights from one another through joint training," said Commander Giles Palin, HMS Dragon's Commanding Officer.

"We've tested our reactions to emergencies through practising advanced fire-fighting techniques and honed the ability of both nations' specialist teams to conduct interdiction operations through boarding training.

"By capacity building with allies in this way, we bolster their resilience and ability to defend themselves in the face of any aggression – as well as enabling us to learn from their experiences."

Odessa enjoys a Mediterranean-esque climate – it's still in the low 20s Celsius in early October – and feel with tree-line boulevards and grand 18th and 19th Century buildings.

HMS Dragon's sailors pay their respects at the monument to the Unknown Sailor in Odessa. © Crown Copyright MoD Navy 2020

But it was laid waste during a bitter siege in World War II when invaded by German and Romanian troops, while as many as 60,000 men and women sacrificed themselves defending the city.

The sailors and marines who took part in the autumn battles of 1941 are remembered by the impressive red granite Monument to the Unknown Sailor, which rises 21 metres above Shevchenka Park.

HMS Dragon's ship's company paid their respects to Odessa's heroes by laying a wreath at the foot of the memorial.

And on a lighter note, the Band of the Ukrainian Navy performed on the jetty next to the Portsmouth-based destroyer – with the ship's company lining the side in appreciation.

New Veterans Railcard launched
By MoD and Veterans UK

Service personnel often live and work all over the UK, moving regularly from posting to posting, so when they leave the armed forces, they may well find themselves hundreds of miles from family and friends.

The new Veterans Railcard, which is for anyone who has served in the UK armed forces, or Merchant Marines who have seen duty on legally defined military operations, will save veterans 1/3 off most rail fares to help reconnect them to loved ones and connect them to new training and work opportunities.

This new railcard will help an extra 830,000 people benefit from discounted rail travel. It is just one of a number of measures being implemented by the government as part of its commitment to make the UK the best place to be a veteran anywhere in the world. The railcard's design even pays tribute to those who have made sacrifices to protect and serve our country, by utilising the colours featured on the Veterans flag, which represent the three armed forces: army, navy and air force.

The new Veterans Railcard will be available for a special introductory price of just £21 for a 1-year Railcard or £61 for a 3-year Railcard, until 31st March 2021. It will offer the Railcard holder and their companion 1/3 off most rail fares and 60% off for up to four children aged 5-15 years.

Customers will be able to choose from a physical card that they can carry in their wallet or a digital version that they can keep on their phone.

The Veterans Railcard will be available for use on journeys from 5th November. Anyone who travels by train will be able to do so with confidence due to the extra steps the rail industry has taken to make journeys safer, from cleaning trains and stations more frequently and running more services to help with social distancing to improving information with people and technology helping every step of the way.

For more information visit www.veterans-railcard.co.uk

847 NAS makes history guiding F-35 bombing runs

From MOD Navy

For the first time, the wings of the Royal Marines have guided F-35 stealth fighters on a live bombing run.

Garvie Island – a rocky outcrop off Cape Wrath at the north-west tip of Scotland – was hit by two 500lb Paveway bombs, dropped by US Marine Corps pilots operating from HMS Queen Elizabeth.

A 500lb Paveway laser-guided bomb explodes upon hitting Garvie Island © Crown Copyright MoD Navy 2020

Directing the bombing runs was 847 Naval Air Squadron, whose Wildcat helicopters provide wide-ranging battlefield support for commandos on the ground.

In this case, Lieutenant Dom Savage Royal Marines was in a Wildcat acting as the airborne Forward Air Controller, directing the F-35s of Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 211 – operating from the flight deck of the UK's new carrier, alongside Royal Navy and RAF F-35s of 617 Squadron.

Working hand-in-hand with the Wildcat crew was a specialist commando unit, 148 (Meiktila) Battery Royal Artillery, who ‘paint’ the target, which involves pointing a laser beam at the target for the bomb to aim at.

And it played out like this:

Lt Savage: *Avenger 1-1, cleared hot.*

F-35 pilot: *Avenger 1-1, cleared hot.*

F-35 pilot: *Avenger 1-1, one away. Time away: 30 seconds.*

F-35 pilot: *Ten seconds.*

F-35 pilot: *Hulk [call-sign for the 148 Battery Observer], laser on.*

BOOM!

F-35 pilot: *Avenger 1-1, splash*.

Lt Savage: *Observing good effects on target*.

“Working alongside our US Marine Corps brethren as well as the Joint Terminal Attack Controllers of 148 Battery has been extremely rewarding,” said Lieutenant Savage.

“The opportunity to drop live ordnance from F-35Bs hasn’t happened before, so to be a part of the first live control is a privilege.”

It is not the only ordnance the Royal Marine and his comrades from the Yeovilton-based squadron have been observing raining down on the Cape Wrath range.

An 847 NAS Wildcat blends with the rugged terrain on the range at Cape Wrath © Crown Copyright MoD Navy 2020

The fliers have been working with 29 Commando Royal Artillery and NATO nations to enhance and strengthen working relationships as well as tactics, techniques and practices.

Four 847 Wildcat pilots were qualified as ‘Air Observation Posts’ working with 29 Cdo’s L118 Light Guns to bring 77 105mm high-explosive rounds crashing down on the Cape, assisted by the Wildcat’s enhanced targeting suite.

The training in Scotland – part of the latest Joint Warrior exercise hosted by the UK’s armed forces – concluded with the Wildcats directing the guns of participating British and NATO warships against targets on the Cape Wrath range, known as Naval Gunfire Support.

847 is the only helicopter squadron in the UK military’s inventory capable of acting as spotters for ground-based and naval gunfire and calling in air strikes.

All personnel in 847 are trained in specialised fieldcraft and survival techniques that allow them to operate in extreme environments, from icy tundra to desert conditions. It is one of the smallest squadrons in the Royal Navy, with fewer than 100 personnel.

As the only squadron in the Commando Helicopter Force to use the Wildcat AH Mk1 combat helicopter, 847 more than lives up to its motto: *Ex Alto Concutimus*, which translates as ‘We Strike From On High’.

RAF P-8A Poseidon arrives at RAF Lossiemouth for the first time

From MOD RAF

Tuesday 13th October marked the first landing of a Royal Air Force Poseidon MRA1 at RAF Lossiemouth, the new home of UK maritime patrol operations based in the heart of Moray, Scotland.

Touching down on the newly resurfaced runway, ZP802 named the ‘City of Elgin’ parked outside the brand new £132m facility which houses the pilots, engineers and personnel who will operate the high-tech submarine hunters.

The first RAF P-8A touching down at the new home of UK Maritime Patrol - RAF Lossiemouth © Crown Copyright MoD RAF 2020

Nine P-8A Poseidon MRA1 aircraft have been ordered, the first of which landed on British soil for the first time in February 2020. Since then, crews from CXX Squadron have been securing the seas over and around the United Kingdom on operational missions.

54 Squadron has also been training new pilots and weapons systems operators on the platform, as 400 additional military personnel will be joining Team Lossie in Moray to fly and operate the nine aircraft.

Poseidon is a hugely capable submarine hunter, able to locate, identify and track potentially hostile submarines as they operate close to our waters. Its powerful radar is also able to detect and track surface vessels above the waves. It boasts a comprehensive communications suite, which means the intelligence it gathers can be passed to commanders whether they are in the air, on a ship, on the ground or back at RAF Lossiemouth.

Station Commander of RAF Lossiemouth, Group Captain Chris Layden, said: “Today is a proud moment for Team Lossie, ushering in a new era for the station, delivering combat air power and maritime patrol operations over and around the United Kingdom.

“Yesterday I had the privilege of landing the first Typhoon on our newly resurfaced runways, and today I had the pleasure of welcoming in the first Poseidon to its permanent home in Moray. This is just the beginning of our expansion and modernisation as one of the RAF’s most strategically important stations in the United Kingdom.”

The £75m programme to resurface RAF Lossiemouth’s runways and operating surfaces began in January 2020, with the work being carried out by VolkerFitzpatrick. The work has involved stripping, strengthening, and resurfacing all of the runways, taxiways and dispersals. From July 2020 both runways were out of use while the intersection was resurfaced, which meant no fixed wing flying could take place. Quick Reaction Alert temporarily moved to Leuchars Station in Fife, with Typhoon training continuing at Kinloss Barracks.

Typhoons have also returned to RAF Lossiemouth. © Crown Copyright MoD RAF 2020

By 16 October, all Typhoon and Poseidon operations including Quick Reaction Alert were back at their permanent home in Moray. Over £400m is being invested in RAF Lossiemouth to future-proof the Station for years to come, which includes the scoping for the world’s first digital air traffic control tower on a military airfield.

Team Lossie is comprised of over 3,000 people, which includes regular and reserve personnel, civil servants, and contractors. The Moray base is responsible for defending the United Kingdom’s skies and seas with four front-line Typhoon squadrons, as well as CXX Squadron operating the Poseidon Maritime Patrol Aircraft, and 201 Squadron, which will re-form in 2021.

An account of my first career: ten years as an officer in the Merchant Navy – Part 1 of 3

By Lt Cdr John Strachan

I was born in Hull two years before the outbreak of WW2 and, after the war, as my father joined the Civil Service on a permanent basis, my family moved every few years as he was employed in Leeds, Newcastle upon Tyne and Edinburgh. After schools in Hull and Ilkley, I joined the Royal Grammar School in Newcastle and George Heriots School, Edinburgh.

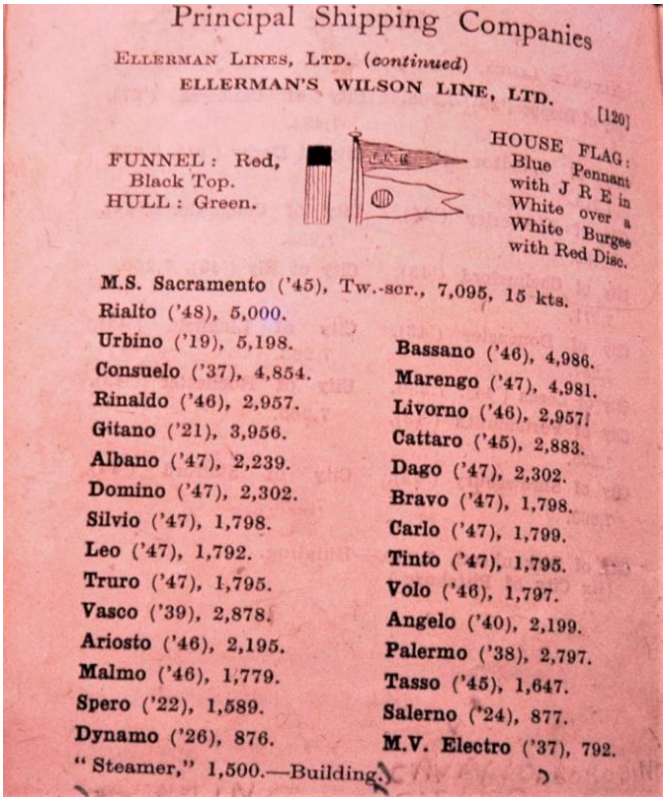
At George Heriot's the syllabus was quite different to that at the Newcastle Royal Grammar School (RGS) with a broader range of subjects. The school is impressive as it stands on a slight hill set back from the main road and is situated in its own grounds with a large driveway. The main building has classrooms on a number of floors and is built around an open quadrangle. There are a number of outbuildings including a music block, a swimming pool and a Territorial Army Centre (for training pupils in the Combined Cadet Force (CCF) – Army, Navy and Air Force. Lt Cdr Ross Gall was the head of the Naval Section and a master at the school. I joined the CCF and after two years in the Basic section I transferred to the Naval Section for a further two years. I learned basic seamanship and drill and enjoyed a trip to Lossiemouth in a De Haviland Rapide aircraft, a visit to HMS Vanguard in the Firth of Forth and spent two weeks training aboard HMS Redpole, a Navigational Training vessel, sailing around the West Coast of Scotland, and various other activities. I was also a Patrol Leader in the local Sea Scouts with a base on an old Coastal Schooner in Granton Harbour on the Firth of Forth. Once again, this was a great opportunity to learn seamanship skills.

Marching in Naval Section of CCF George Heriots School

At the age of sixteen, when visiting my Grandparents in Hull during the Easter holidays, and on the recommendation of a family friend in Edinburgh, whose father was the Engineering Superintendent of the Ellerman Wilson Line of Hull, I called in to the office and spoke to her father who introduced me to Captain Stott, the Marine Superintendent of the shipping company. Captain Stott, after establishing my background and experience in the Sea Cadets and Sea Scouts, as well as at school, offered me a job as a Cadet Navigating/Deck officer with the Ellerman's Wilson Line to commence in September of that year, 1954. This would be a four-year Cadetship, instead of three and a half years had I attended a Naval training college for a year on leaving school. My parents were not particularly happy but agreed that I could 'give it a go' and if I was not happy, I would need to return to school.

So, on leaving George Heriots at the age of sixteen, I joined the Ellerman's Wilson Line as a Cadet Navigating Officer, on 15 September 1954, at a little over of sixteen and a half years old. And this was the start of my ten years in the Merchant Navy. The company owned over thirty ships operating on 'liner routes' such as those from Hull and other ports in the North of England, to New York and other ports along the Eastern seaboard of the USA and Canada. The ships also sailed from the UK to India and Pakistan and to many ports in the Mediterranean and Scandinavia.

I recall joining my first ship, the SS Albano', an oil-fired steamship with a three-cylinder steam reciprocating engine and a low-pressure turbine, built in 1947 of 2239 gross tons, carrying around 2000 tons of cargo and with a speed of 13.5 knots – a good speed in those days – and accommodation for up to twelve first class passengers. The hull was painted grey as she was able to carry refrigerated cargo in most of the holds. The vessel was berthed in the Albert Dock in Hull, and I was taken there by my grandfather who left me at the gate. I well remember that all the crew were at home before joining the ship the next day prior to sailing. The only person aboard was a watchman who showed me to my cabin! We sailed to various ports in southern Norway and Sweden, including Bergen, Oslo, Moss, Malmo and Gothenburg before returning to Hull.



Principal Shipping Companies

ELLERMAN LINES, LTD. (*continued*)

ELLERMAN'S WILSON LINE, LTD.

[120]

FUNNEL: Red, Black Top.
HULL: Green.

HOUSE FLAG: Blue Pennant with J R E in White over a White Burgee with Red Disc.

M.S. Sacramento ('45), Tw.-scr., 7,095, 15 kts.
Rialto ('48), 5,000.
Urbino ('19), 5,198.
Consuelo ('37), 4,854.
Rinaldo ('46), 2,957.
Gitano ('21), 3,956.
Albano ('47), 2,239.
Domino ('47), 2,302.
Silvio ('47), 1,798.
Leo ('47), 1,792.
Truro ('47), 1,795.
Vasco ('39), 2,878.
Ariosto ('46), 2,195.
Malmo ('46), 1,779.
Spero ('22), 1,589.
Dynamo ('26), 876.
"Steamer," 1,500.—Building.

Bassano ('46), 4,986.
Marengo ('47), 4,981.
Livorno ('46), 2,957.
Cattaro ('45), 2,883.
Dago ('47), 2,302.
Bravo ('47), 1,798.
Carlo ('47), 1,799.
Tinto ('47), 1,795.
Volo ('46), 1,797.
Angelo ('40), 2,199.
Palermo ('38), 2,797.
Tasso ('45), 1,647.
Salerno ('24), 877.
M.V. Electro ('37), 792.

Vessels of the Ellerman's Wilson Line.

The outward cargo included cars, tractors, canned food and reels of heavy electrical cables. The return cargo included chilled meat and forest products. I remained on this vessel until 10th February 1955. At first as a Cadet Navigating Officer, I used to keep day work from 0800 to 1700 with an hour off at lunchtime. The jobs included keeping the brass work on the bridge of the ship polished, learning to steer the ship, keeping a lookout for the officers etc. Later on, I would take watches with the crew for eight hours from 0800 to 1200 and 2000 to 2400, or from midnight until 0400 and midday until 1600 or from 0400 until 0800 and 1600 to 2000. The work included steering the ship, keeping a lookout, painting the ship, splicing ropes and wires, and in port cleaning the holds ready for the next cargo. During my four years as a Cadet, I sometimes shared a cabin with another Cadet – normally with two bunks, one above the other – or more frequently I had the cabin to myself. On the 'Consuelo', upon which I was to sail later, there were often up to four Cadets in two cabins. We Cadets always changed from our 'working gear', a boiler suit or dungarees, into uniform for breakfast, lunch and dinner, which was eaten in the Saloon with the officers and passengers. In fact, during the last two years of my four years as a Cadet I spent most of the time in uniform, either keeping watches with the officers at sea, learning navigation skills, and in port helping them with other work for which the officers were responsible such as the safe loading of the cargo to ensure that the stability of the ship was acceptable at all times and in all weathers. Other work included checking the ship's lifeboats to make sure that they were fully equipped in case we had to abandon ship.

On one of my first voyages across the North Sea, I vividly remember seeing a smallish tanker which must have experienced an explosion and immediately burst into flames. The ship was silhouetted against a sea of burning oil, petrol I assume, which completely surrounded the vessel. There was nothing we could do to help. The eleven or so crew must have died instantly. In those days, a number of tankers, both large and small, blew up during the cleaning of their cargo tanks. If the tanks contained a residue from the previous cargo, such as petrol or other fuel, they could be full of gas which was highly flammable. When cleaning the tanks great care had to be taken. Occasionally, if a nut or bolt, for example, dropped into the hold it could cause a spark, resulting in a violent explosion that could tear the ship apart with considerable loss of life. I have heard many stories of this happening.

S.S. ‘Domino’ sailing from Hull and London to the Mediterranean

The day after leaving the ‘Albano’, I joined the ‘Domino’, another steamship similar to the ‘Albano’, (built in 1947 of 2302 gross tons, 13.5 knots and carrying up to twelve first class passengers) but the hull was painted green as she had no space for refrigerated cargo. Each of the funnels of the Ellerman’s Wilson Line ships were painted red with a black top. We sailed from Hull to London and then to the west coast of Italy and Sicily. Our first port was Genoa but as we approached the Gulf of Lions the wind sprung up to a severe gale, in fact a ‘mistral’, and we spent three days ‘hove to’ steering very slowly into the wind and sea; it was really rough. We were carrying around 2000 tons of general cargo including a number of huge coils of electrical cable, some more than eight feet in diameter. Some of these coils started to break loose and commenced crashing into the ship's side. We Cadets, two of us, joined crew members in the holds to secure them with ropes, quite a tricky operation. When we arrived at Genoa, I always remember that the harbour wall had been breached in two places and at least two ships had broken from their moorings and had been badly damaged on the rocks ashore. We later sailed to discharge more cargo at Livorno and Naples. Salerno was the first port of loading, where we shipped a consignment of canned, peeled, tomatoes before sailing to Sicily to load fresh fruit for London and Hull. On arriving in the Bay of Biscay, on our homeward voyage, with the side wooden hatch boards of number one hold (that nearest the bow of the ship) tilted open to give ventilation to the fruit, the ship started to ‘pound’ into a heavy sea and spray poured over the ship.

Heavy weather in the Bay of Biscay.

I was sent on deck with the other Cadet, at about midnight, to lower the side hatch boards, about one foot wide and eight feet long, and batten down the hatch with a heavy tarpaulin sheet and several heavy, metal ‘locking’ bars. These metal bars were built like a small version of RSJs (rolled steel joists), which were bolted in position at either side of the hatch with large ‘butterfly’ bolts. The ‘locking’ bars had been painted with silver paint earlier in the day as fine weather was expected! While standing on the slippery tarpaulin sheet, on top of the hatch, I lifted one of these locking bars when the ship suddenly smashed into another huge wave. Water poured over the ship and my feet slipped from under me and I fell down on the hatch still holding the locking bar. I picked myself up and finished the job of securing the hatch and thereby keeping water out of the hold.

When I returned to my cabin and removed my leather gloves, to my surprise, I found I had broken two of the fingers of my left hand and blood was everywhere. To make matters worse, the wounds were impregnated with silver paint. By then it was after midnight and the other Cadet and I woke the Chief Steward to help. He attempted to clean the silver paint out of the wound using 'Lysol' lavatory cleanser. He was not very successful but eventually he bandaged up the fingers and I was unable to work for the rest of the voyage. It did hurt a great deal and I took aspirin to ease the pain. We (on the ship) arrived in the Thames about five days later, after very stormy weather, and on arrival at our berth in the Pool of London, I visited (on a Sunday) the Greenwich Seamen's hospital but was told they could not help me as it required an operation, which they were unable to do. I was told to attend the Albert Dock hospital next day. At Albert Dock hospital, they said that they would like to have straightened the fingers but after six days they were already healing so they decided not to do so but rather to just patch them up and put a bandage around them with a splint. To this day they are still bent! I then signed off the ship and was sent home to Edinburgh for five weeks until the wounds healed.

After these five weeks, our doctor signed me off and I joined the 'Rollo' in Hull (built in 1954 of 2499 gross tons and 13 knots with accommodation for up to twelve first class passengers). We made one voyage to Norway and back from 22nd April to 16th May 1955.

On returning to the shipping office from the 'Rollo' in Hull, I was told to transfer to one of the older ships of the company, the 'Consuelo', Captain Goodman, and I remained there for three voyages (from 17 May to 6 November 1955) sailing from Hull and Middlesbrough to New York and other ports along the Eastern Seaboard of the USA. The ship was built in 1937 by Swan Hunter on the River Tyne and served throughout the Second World War! She carried around 5,000 tons of cargo, and was propelled by a three-cylinder steam reciprocating engine, originally with coal fired boilers but later changed to oil fired, with a low-pressure turbine giving a speed of 13.5 knots, a crew of around 55 and accommodation for six passengers. Few passengers joined us as we could encounter atrocious weather and it was not at all comfortable; none of our ships had stabilisers. It was more comfortable to sail aboard the ocean liners such as 'Queen Mary' or 'Queen Elizabeth', although much cheaper to join us. We always sailed 'north about' around the North of Scotland through the Pentland Firth and then on a 'great circle' sailing route (the shortest distance with alterations of course each day), with general cargo, to New York, Philadelphia, Wilmington, Delaware, Baltimore (all to discharge cargo) and Norfolk, Virginia, where we usually loaded large 'hogsheads' of tobacco and grain (wheat or maize) for discharging at either Aberdeen, Leith, Newcastle or Hull, our final port.

S.S 'Marengo' sister ship of 'Consuelo'. The 'Consuelo' was built in 1937, ten years earlier than 'Marengo' and had open flying bridge. Leaving Hull for New York assisted from the dock by company tugs 'Presto' and 'Forto'

I was by this time on eight-hour watches, (four hours on and eight hours off) assisting the crew during the day and night, at times steering the ship, on lookout at night for the Duty Officer from the bridge, chipping rust, cleaning or painting the ship. However, on most days aboard this particular ship we Cadets were told to work an extra four hours' overtime (field days) without extra pay. In those days, I recall we were paid around £8 a month but we had our bed and food provided! The bosun, who ran the crew and Cadets (in our case with permission of the Chief Officer; certainly not ideal), said he had shares in the company and wanted us to work as many hours as possible.

I recall that on the first of my three voyages aboard ‘Consuelo’ we sailed from Hull to Middlesbrough to top up with steel and other general cargo before leaving for New York. I remember being invited to the Mission to Seafarers where my fellow Cadets and I were encouraged to dance with local girls who had been invited along, many of them, it seems, trainee nurses. It was great fun. Next morning, we set off for the USA and I remember steering the ship through the Pentland Firth, to the North of Scotland, where strong currents and whirlpools caused the ship to swing violently (yaw) from side to side. I was constantly moving the wheel to try to keep the ship on course. The rough conditions are often as a result of a strong tidal current flowing against a severe gale in the opposite direction. We made it through safely and I clearly recall it was an amazing although rather harrowing experience. About half way across the Atlantic Ocean, on this first voyage, at around 0230 and about five days out, I was on look out on the ‘monkey island’, an entirely open deck above the bridge, when I suddenly spotted a dim white light right ahead. I immediately called down the voice pipe to the duty officer, Second Officer, and told him what I had seen and he switched on the radar. Less than half a minute later we sailed into a cloud burst with torrential rain and could see nothing. The radar, in those days, took about five minutes to warm up but very fortunately the Second Officer, realising that the other ship was likely to be on an opposite course to us, from the USA to the UK, altered course to starboard in the hope of avoiding a collision. A minute or so later there was a loud blast on a ship’s whistle from a vessel on our port side. This was a very near miss and thanks to my sharp eyesight, and the action taken by the Officer of the watch, we avoided a collision. It could have been one of the Cunard liners, ‘Queen Mary’ or ‘Queen Elizabeth’. It is possible that the other vessel was watching us on her radar, but radar was used sparingly in those days. A number of ships’ captains did not trust them! These days, ships sail on separation lanes from East to West across the Atlantic, and vice versa.

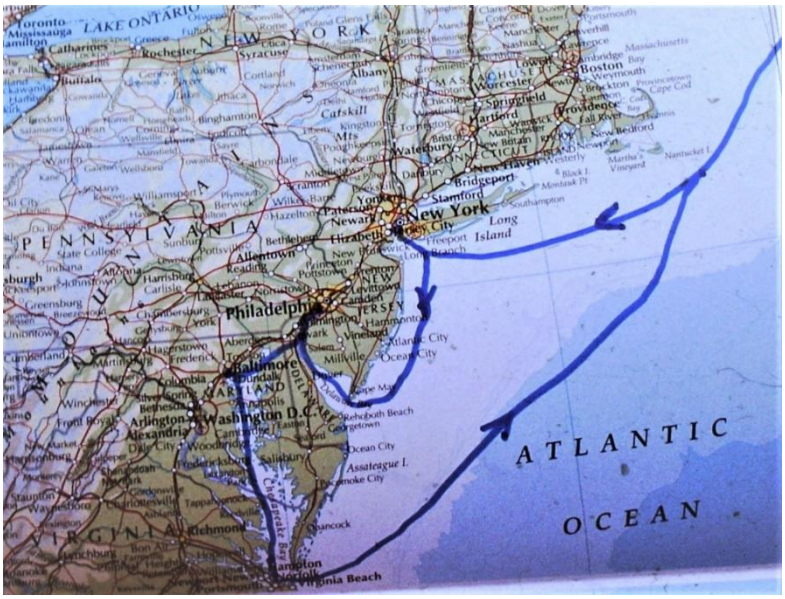
The monkey island was so cold I used to wear a duffel coat, a waterproof overcoat, two pairs of socks, a sou-wester and ‘welly’ boots. I was always so bitterly cold and had to keep pacing up and down for two hours from 0100 until 0300 keeping a sharp look out. During the rest of the four-hour watch, i.e. from midnight until 1.00 am and 3.00 until 4.00 am, I would either steer the ship or be on stand-by to be called to assist as necessary. As we approached the coast near Newfoundland, we entered a dense fog bank, over the Grand Banks, not too far from Cape Cod, famous for its copious amounts of fish but often dense fog. The cold Labrador current from the North meets the warm Gulf Stream and causes this phenomenon. Icebergs are very common in the winter months. Anyway, we always checked the iceberg report and fortunately there were none thought to be in our area at that time. We were actually sailing much farther North than the Titanic when she hit an iceberg and sank in 1912 with the loss of so many lives. In fact, those of our vessels sailing to Montreal on the St Lawrence River, in Canada, would often, when icebergs were reported in the area, heave-to during the hours of darkness to be on the safe side. Radar could not always pick up icebergs.

Me with fellow Cadets aboard ‘Consuelo’. I am second from left

On arriving in New York, and later while we were in the Port of Baltimore, there was a heatwave and it was extremely hot in our cabins at night, at least 106 degrees Fahrenheit, about 43 degrees centigrade, with no air conditioning, and only a small fan to circulate the air. Mosquitoes were flying around in the cabin and you knew if they stopped buzzing, they would be biting you. Not much sleep those nights. I also remember using dispensing machines ashore selling chilled Coke and other drinks (not heard of in England at that time).

We Cadets (navigating/deck trainee officers), I believe four of us on this voyage on the ‘Consuelo’, were invited to the British Apprentices Club in New York. This was set up in 1921 by two American ladies who worked at the YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association) in England during the First World War (the Great War), Ms Newell and Ms Mayo; they were so impressed with the treatment that American servicemen received in England at that time that they decided to open the club at the Chelsea Hotel in New York City. There was a permanent invitation to Cadets, like me, and Apprentices, who signed four-year articles; there was really little difference between us, where we could have a quiet, non-alcoholic, drink and chat to others about our joint experiences. It was a great place and I went several times on my three voyages on the ‘Consuelo’ when in New York. Also, while in New York, I recall visiting the fun fair site at Coney Island. I once went on the ‘big dipper’ which initially went very slowly to the top of a very high structure with wonderful views over New York but suddenly went over the top of the hill and increased to lightning speed, accelerating almost vertically downwards to the bottom. My stomach seemed left behind and I felt awful although not quite sick – never again.

Having discharged some of our mixed (general) cargo, we left New York, and sailed to Philadelphia, Baltimore, Wilmington in Delaware and finally Norfolk, Virginia, where we loaded tobacco, bulk grain and other cargo for Newcastle, and Hull. In sailing from Philadelphia, we travelled through the Delaware/Chesapeake waterway and I recall that, in rounding one of the many bends, two large ships were heading towards each other on another bend not too far behind us. One of these ships had a tug alongside and suddenly it was clear that the ships could collide. The tug’s crew ran in all directions and I never did find out what happened to the ships, the tug and its crew, as we turned another bend and they were lost from sight. It was so hot in Baltimore, but we Cadets, and other crew members, were tasked by the Bosun with chipping rust off the metal engine room skylights in the blazing sunshine, on the uppermost deck of the ship, when one of crew, an EDH, Efficient Deck Hand, and a former fisherman, asked the Bosun if he could go and get some aspirins for his severe headache. The Bosun, who was a real bully, said no, get back to your work. At that, the crew member hit the Bosun in the face and they started a fight which continued for some time. We Cadets were not prepared to break up the fight as the Bosun was being taught a lesson. Eventually the Chief Officer was called and he and other officers broke up the fight. Both the Bosun and EDH were taken to hospital for treatment but they returned to the ship before we sailed. Needless to say, one had a very swollen face – you could hardly see his eyes – and the other had extremely swollen fists!

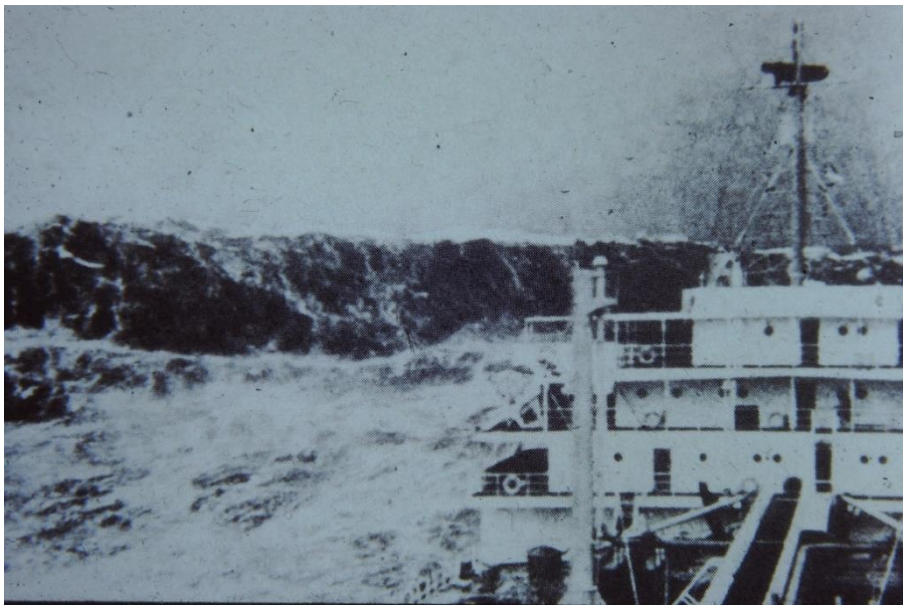


Ports visited on Eastern Seaboard of USA.

One of my friends, who later joined the Port Health Service with me, became a Cadet on the ‘Consuelo’ sometime after I had left. He was a very Senior Cadet and he complained to his father about the hours the Cadets were asked to work. His father sought legal advice and the Shipping Company, the Ellerman’s Wilson Line, was told that it was illegal to work the Cadets more than eight hours a day unless it was for the safety of the ship. The company was informed and the Captains in the fleet were told that Cadets must not work overtime unless it was essential for the running the ship. Life became much easier for Cadets from then on, especially aboard the ‘Consuelo’ where we generally worked an extra four hours a day, i.e. twelve hours.

I recall that, towards the end of the second of the three voyages while sailing on our return to the UK with grain from Norfolk, Virginia, the Bosun had a heart attack and collapsed and died as we were proceeding up the River Tyne to berth at a grain silo in Newcastle. This was very sad although he was not missed by many of the crew. He was replaced by the Carpenter (from Newfoundland, Canada,) who also had the Cadets working long hours, before the word went around that we must not be used as ‘slave’ labour and could only work eight hours a day unless essential for the safety of the ship.

Meanwhile, while we were in Baltimore, a few of us decided to try to get cool by having a swim in the river. Very quickly we realised that the river was a huge public sewer carrying everything from rotten food to human waste. We climbed out quickly, showered and generally cleaned ourselves up. I do not recall having any after-effects, thank goodness. We had only seawater for washing aboard this ship although it could be heated for a bath. On all other ships, we enjoyed freshwater showers, or a bath, and a wash basin with running water in the cabin. In Norfolk, Virginia, before loading grain, as well as the necessity to thoroughly clean the ships holds, wooden shifting boards were rigged in the tween decks by shore gangs. As grain (wheat or maize) was loaded in the lower holds it was shovelled into the corners by Stevedores to fill the empty spaces and help prevent the ship capsizing, as we rolled heavily in the Atlantic as we journeyed home. The open space in the hatches in the tween deck were rigged with ‘shifting boards’ which were filled with grain so that as the ship rolled from side to side the empty spaces which appeared in the lower holds would be filled by gravity with grain from within the shifting boards. Even so, there have been many cases where ships have capsized and sunk due to grain shifting in really heavy weather – possibly as the shifting boards were not properly secured and thereby collapsed, or because the lower holds were not fully filled with grain before sailing and the grain within the shifting boards was insufficient to fill the gaps. The grain would move to one side of the lower holds and cause a heavy list making the ship unstable and possibly capsize. We Cadets, with the deck crew, (Able Seamen, Efficient Deck Hands and Deck Boys), had to not only clean the holds before loading grain, but also help prepare the ship for the return voyage across the Atlantic. This involved lowering all the derricks and lashing them in place. We also had to ‘stow’ the mooring ropes and wires below deck in case they were washed overboard and caught up around the ship's propeller – what a disaster that would be! In fact, in Norfolk, I seem to recall we were once up nearly twenty-four hours without sleep preparing the ship to sail. Fortunately, we had an uneventful return to the UK.



A large wave in the North Atlantic taken from a Tanker. I had no camera the first year.

On the second voyage outward bound on the ‘Consuelo’ we were hit by the tail end of a hurricane. The ship was virtually under water at times as the seas kept breaking over us and I can clearly recall that the Captain spent three days and nights on the bridge ‘nursing’ the ship through the storm as we sailed ‘hove to’ steering very slowly into the direction of the wind and seas. You can imagine that I was not alone in wondering if we would survive! Two ships sank within a hundred miles of our position during the storm and there was nothing that we could do to help as we were having difficulty in keeping ourselves afloat and could not possibly launch one of our ship’s lifeboats. We were well over a thousand miles from the

coast of the USA. One ship (British) was lost due to capsizing as the cargo of grain shifted! The other ship was a cargo/passenger ship registered in the USA. The North Atlantic in the winter is well known to have the roughest seas in the world. Sadly, no one could be saved from either vessel. The 'Consuelo', and others vessels of the Ellerman's Wilson Line on the North Atlantic Run (sailing from the North of England to the USA and Canadian East coasts, on a great circle route – the shortest route – ended up not too far from Iceland), were generally well found with protected 'inboard alleyways' in the amidships accommodation. The exception being the 'Sacramento' which was not designed for the North Atlantic trade but spent some years on this route before I joined her. Aboard this latter named ship we had to stack 'hard wood' battens in grooves in front of the outer doors on main deck level to help them from being 'stove-in'. On all of these ships regularly crossing the Atlantic, the deck and engine room ratings, not the officers, lived at the after end of the ship and in rough weather, to assist the crew to carry out their duties midships, e.g. on the bridge or engine room, we always rigged safety ropes on either side of the afterdeck to hold on to. However, when it was too rough to move along the deck, it became very dangerous. Occasionally, the crew had to virtually crawl their way through the engine room tunnel where the propeller shaft, from the engine room to the propeller, turned around at some speed, and then climb vertical ladders through the engine room to attend their duties or obtain food from galley. Again, most hazardous. In rough weather elsewhere in the world a similar practice was applied. Over the years, most of the Ellerman Wilson Line ships on the Western Ocean trade, e.g. the Bassano, Marengo, Sacramento, Consuelo and Rialto, had not only lost their lifeboats at one time or another in atrocious storms but they had also lost quite a number of crew members overboard!

Editor's note: thank you, John, for this very detailed account. Due to the length of the work, I have split it into three parts – next instalment in next month's newsletter.

Royal Marine sharpshooters on target in the Mediterranean

From MOD Navy

Elite Royal Marine snipers honed their marksmanship in the Mediterranean, shooting small targets from the back of a helicopter.

A team of sharpshooters from 42 Commando has accompanied the Royal Navy's main autumn deployment, the Littoral Response Group (Experimentation), using a Wildcat helicopter from 847 Naval Air Squadron as their ride into battle.

The snipers are intended to provide 'top cover' for commandos below – keeping a sharp eye on the battlefield for anything that may threaten their comrades: jet skis and fast attack craft at sea, enemy snipers, troops and vehicles on land.

They are most likely to hit the headlines for their skill in shooting out the engines of go-fast boats racing across the Caribbean carrying illegal narcotics.

On numerous occasions, a superbly aimed bullet fired by a commando sniper has brought the speedboat to a halt by wrecking the engine.

In the Mediterranean, the teams rolled out the large 'killer tomato' – a big, red inflatable that rolls on the surface.

It's big and unmissable – up close. But pull away at a distance – and at altitude as much as 400 metres (over 1,300ft), with the 'tomato' pitching and rolling and wind, temperature and humidity all affecting the flight of a bullet, in a helicopter which never stops vibrating, it becomes a different prospect.

The snipers are equipped with the 7.62mm Sharpshooter rifle which fires a single shot. Or they can turn to the .5 calibre heavy machine-gun which can lay down some seriously lead but without the pinpoint accuracy and precision of the sniper rifle.

A Wildcat from 847 Naval Air Squadron lifts off from RFA Lyme Bay with its sniper team at the ready. © Crown Copyright MoD Navy 2020

“As we are held on very high readiness, it has been great to practise our marksmanship and aerial firing skills out here on deployment,” said sniper Marine ‘Smudge’ Smith. “The Wildcat helicopter is a very stable platform to deliver accurate and effective rounds on target.”

Using amphibious support ship RFA Lyme Bay as their base, Smudge and his comrades got in a four-hour shoot – including more than 3,000 machine-gun rounds fired – which tested not just the marksman in the rear of the Wildcat, but the pilot and observer, ship and air traffic controller, all in a different environment from the English Channel.

“While we routinely conduct aerial gunnery back home in the UK, operating from a ship in a very warm climate brings with it challenges and realism more difficult to replicate back home,” explained Wildcat pilot Captain Tom Arkell RM.

RFA Lyme Bay and UK flagship HMS Albion, which comprise the core of Britain’s Littoral Strike Group, are now in Cyprus to take part in the international crisis-management Exercise Nemesis.

Captain’s Rounds in SAS President Pretorius
By David Houston

It was the first Captain’s Rounds of a new commission! The captain was Paul Alexander Wijnberg, (we always used his full name) recently returned from a stint as Naval Attaché in Paris and he had a reputation as a Whale Island trained gunnery officer who took no prisoners.

I was the Wardroom Secretary and I was standing alongside the Chief Steward as we awaited the rounds procession. He had nominated a young newly qualified national service steward to report the wardroom to the captain. Eventually we heard the pipe as the procession made its way into the wardroom flat and the captain, PAW, followed by the XO, walked into the wardroom. He stopped in front of the steward, all six foot six of him ramrod straight as a gunnery officer should be, and waited

The steward, who, at barely five foot six, was completely dwarfed by the captain, saluted. The chief steward nodded slightly. The captain returned his salute.

“W, W, Wardroom ready for rounds, sir,” said the young man. At this point it became obvious that he was as camp as a row of tents.

“Thank you,” said PAW and stepped off to inspect the work. The chief nudged the young man and motioned him to walk alongside the captain. After a few moments it looked rather as if we were going to have an extremely uneventful rounds in the wardroom.

They were heading back to the wardroom door and PAW turned to the steward and in the same conversational tone he had been using all through the inspection asked, “So have you cleaned the rigol?” (Pronounced wriggle.)

“The rigol, sir?”

“Yes, the rigol.”

“I, I, I don’t know what that is, sir.”

PAW turned and faced the young steward, “Well, if you open the scuttle and stick your head out and look up, you will see the rigol. Then you can reach up and give it a good clean.”

His young face registered first total confusion then dismay and then something that seemed like anger, and he rocked slightly back as he looked up at the captain who was looking steadily at him. He took a small step back, took his weight on his left foot and pointed his right foot slightly outwards, raised his right hand and pointed his finger at the captain. “No,” he said, quite determinedly, “Oh no… no way… my mother warned me about you guys… no way, no way.” He paused and so did everyone else within earshot, and suddenly he must have realised who he was talking to. “Sir,” he concluded.

Paul Alexander Wijnberg drew himself up to his full height, turned to the chief steward, saluted and said, “Thank you chief steward, carry on,” turned on his heel and marched out of the wardroom, turned aft and stepped through the watertight door, indicating to the rounds party and to me to follow him through. Quaking in my boots, I complied. He motioned to the coxswain to close the door. He seemed unable to speak with what I was convinced was rage.

As soon as the door was closed, he poleaxed with laughter and with streaming eyes he said, “His mother warned him about us… ha ha ha. Are we ever going to top that one, number one?” The rest of us laughed too. Rounds continued as per normal.

New mission, same goal for HMS Montrose: keep the sea lanes open

From MOD Navy

After acting as a guardian for international shipping in the Gulf for most of the past month, HMS Montrose is now on the hunt for criminals.

The Royal Navy frigate, stationed in the Middle East for at least three years to increase the UK's presence in the region, has switched operations to hunt down illegal activity in the Indian Ocean.

HMS Montrose, which is based in Plymouth when in the UK, was relieved by the US Navy on Operation Sentinel to allow her to take her place with another peacekeeping group, Combined Task Force 150.

The former mission focuses on providing protection for shipping entering and leaving the Gulf through the Strait of Hormuz, as well as using other 'choke points' and danger zones in the region, notably the Bab-al-Mandeb strait (aka 'The BAM') at the foot of the Red Sea and an invisible highway through the Gulf of Aden, the International Recognised Transit Corridor (previous known as 'Pirate Alley'), which merchant ships are encouraged to use in order to receive protection and assistance from warships.

The BAM is the gateway to the Suez, the Mediterranean, Europe and ultimately the North Atlantic and UK. It is used by around 50 merchant ships every day… while one sixth of the world's oil and a third of its liquefied natural gas pass through the Strait of Hormuz.

HMS Montrose escorts a container ship in the Gulf. © Crown Copyright MoD Navy 2020

Operation Sentinel, run from Bahrain by the International Maritime Security Construct (Albania, Australia, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Lithuania, UAE, UK and USA) uses ships and aircraft across the region to offer protection and reassurance.

On the water that means deploying a series of smaller warships – Sentries – and larger vessels or Sentinels, like HMS Montrose or destroyer USS Sterett, which relieved her.

“Ensuring the free flow of international commerce is our top priority and we do this through the three tenets of our mission: vigilance, surveillance, and assurance,” explained Royal Navy Commodore Rob Bellfield, who has overseen Operation Sentinel since the end of April.

“I have served more than 30 years – much of it at sea or in supporting operations – which has helped me develop a keen insight into the merchant maritime community particularly in this region that is vital to international trade.”

It is a demanding, relentless task, daily, nightly, requiring HMS Montrose to be at the very top of her game.

Her entire ship’s company is changed every four months, trading places with colleagues from the UK who fly out to Bahrain to take charge of Montrose – a crewing model increasingly being adopted by the Royal Navy to sustain operations around the globe.

HMS Montrose’s Wildcat tests her defensive aids suite with a flare firing. © Crown Copyright MoD Navy 2020

Having been in the Middle East since the spring of 2019, Montrose has the rotation down to a tee. After assessment by the Royal Navy’s expert training team, FOST, the frigate resumed her Middle East patrols with Starboard Crew in charge.

“It feels good to get straight back out to sea after four months back in the UK,” said Leading Engineering Technician Alexander Dawkins. The training has been tough but with such regular support from FOST, we know that we are at the top of our game and ready for anything.”

Commanding Officer, Commander Charles Collins, added: “My ship’s company have worked extremely hard over the past few weeks, training and operating at a high tempo.

“With this sustainable watch rotation in place, the crew get the balance of a rewarding operational deployment combined with the ability to plan their lives back in the UK, meaning they can return to sea, refreshed and ready to respond.”

During her first spell back on patrol, Montrose joined the navies of the USA and Pakistan on a focused operation, Sea Shield, in the Gulf of Oman looking for arms traffickers and drug smugglers.

The frigate also found time to conduct a range of training in between key operational tasks, such as combat readiness drills for surface engagements and ongoing training with her Wildcat helicopter from 815 Naval Air Squadron in Yeovilton, which is vital for providing intelligence and ‘top cover’ and supporting boarding operations.

All of this lays the groundwork nicely for operating with Combined Task Force 150. The task force spreads its wings widely – across more than two and a half million square miles of ocean extending as far south as the Seychelles, principally focused on preventing smuggling that supports terrorist activities.

Rather than clustering the half a dozen warships assigned to it, the group is peppered across a vast area to search the maximum amount of ocean for nefarious activity.

Long-range electric ferry completes first year in operation

By The Maritime Executive

Wider adoption of electric shipping and a drastic cut in carbon emissions may be round the corner with the Danish electric ferry Ellen successfully completing her first year of operations. Launched in August 2019, the electric ferry has been making regular 40 km return-trips between two Danish Baltic Sea islands.

The electric ferry Ellen (Erki Christensen / CC BY 4.0)

Carbon emissions and pollution have been a big challenge for the shipping industry. While there has already been a shift towards using hybrid diesel-electric engines in ships, Ellen is powered by a fully electric drivetrain. If powered by 100 percent renewable electricity, Ellen would reduce carbon emissions by 2,250 tonnes of CO_2 per year.

Although that is a drop in the ocean – maritime transport is currently responsible for 900 million tonnes of CO_2 a year – it is an important milestone.

Reports suggest that Ellen has an energy efficiency rating of 85 percent – almost twice that of diesel-powered craft. Her development was partially funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 research programme, which provides investment for green projects.

Decarbonizing the shipping sector is expected to cost around $1 trillion. Concerted efforts and incentives from national and state governments is necessary to ensure switching to green sources of power so that the environment does not become one of the biggest casualties of Covid-19.

Multiple public-private efforts are now under way to shape the future of a low-carbon maritime industry, and the ferry Ellen is not the only Danish project in this vein. The Climate Partnership for a Blue Denmark, representing Denmark's shipping industry, has developed a plan as part of the nation's overall effort to address climate change and achieve carbon neutrality. Denmark's shipping industry is targeting carbon neutrality by 2050, without the use of climate compensation. Leading Danish shipping firm Maersk is targeting beginning commercial operation for its first ocean-going zero-emission vessel by 2030.

Going to Sea – Part 6
By Dr Martin Watts

Otaio continued the long passage across the Pacific, following a Great Circle course to the island of Pitcairn, where we were destined to exchange mail in a short visit that was unmemorable, except for buying some souvenirs from the Christian Brothers bumboat, much to Sid's delight. Earlier in this voyage, and well before the steering gear was entrusted to our overconfident skills at the helm, we crossed the Equator a little west of the Galapagos. Whilst preparing this memoir I scoured my office for my Crossing the Line Certificate but, sadly, it has been a victim of time and several house-moves. Royal or Merchant, this eternal ceremony has become a rite of passage for all deep-sea sailors, and readers will not need reminding of the various abuses practised on us. My watch was told we would be initiated in the afternoon and the officers and crew played it down, to allay the fears that had been planted into us by the old salts. Appearing on deck, everyone shook hands and I thought that was it – I think this was the last naïve thought I had until I applied for my first mortgage – and the gloves were off. Treated to the traditional ducking, haircut, consumption of ungodly concoctions and covered in grunge, we earned our certificates in a truly traditional manner, under the all-seeing eyes of King Neptune (Ted the Gilbert & Sullivan Mate). It was taken in good heart and seemed to bring another level of bonding to the fore; the fact was that this type of initiation was classless (as was the entertainment) and we all felt part of the saltwater brotherhood thereafter.

Whilst the concoctions and gunge were capable of being expelled or removed from the body, the rough haircut had more serious consequences. We were anticipating going ashore in Auckland in around two and a half weeks and needed to be at our best to charm the Kiwi girls we were all dreaming about. Thus, when the barber turned out to be Paul the Baker, armed with galley implements, we knew that Teasy Weasy's reputation was not in danger. Looking in the mirror in the Starboard bathroom afterwards, we wondered if our barnets would ever recover in time. One cadet, Tom, was confident that he could solve any such problem, as his Mum had given him a hair cutting tool as a going away present. This consisted of a handheld grip with a comb like structure at the end, which could be adjusted to reveal more or less of the razor blade packed within. Tom gave a demonstration by running this tool from the middle of the top of his forehead to the back, and was known as Badger ever afterwards. He showed potential as a Topiarist but was short of ideas as to how to convince young women that Badgers were a symbol of virility. He also received advice to avoid jaywalking when ashore.

The many similar days of Pacific sun, between the most beautiful sunrises and sunsets I have ever seen, accompanied by the long, usually low swell of the ocean, were almost hypnotic. To be truthful, it took some adjustment for a city boy to adapt to this pace and rhythm. I now look back on this and think how lucky we were to see the world from the surface at around twenty miles per hour, taking in the natural world and a universe full of blinking pinpoints of light. Relaxation, however, was not permitted, and compulsory deck sports continued, and the return cricket match with the officers took place on Sunday 21 November. From my journal:

> 'This time we won the toss and put the Officers in hoping that our bowling would be up to scratch. We had made a team change and placed Wes in the side instead of Norman, who had been summoned for overtime (Ed: a deliberate ploy and trumped up charge). This turned out, however, to be advantageous. Danny took the wicket of Peter in the second over, Les, the second engineer, struck a six and out, Kiwi John scored two before falling to Chris. After these successes, in came Mick, the Chief Steward of tripping and swearing fame, whose girth removed the wicket from sight and reminded Schoolie that it was about time we studied eclipses. Mick stood his ground and scored a very useful ten runs. Deano came in for another six and out and then the Staff Captain and Schoolie put on thirteen runs to take the final score to a good 32. This really worried us and put us off our tabnabs (Ed: an outrageous proposition and lie) at half time. We were largely dependent, or so we thought, on our first three batsmen, Sio, Danny and big Dave. Sio was bowled fourth ball by a very good tweaker from Peter, and Danny hit a customary six and out. Dave and Chris only scored three each and, with twenty runs still required, we were all feeling pretty low. Then in came the new choice, Wes. He took his guard a yard away from the stumps, and with a peculiar cross batting style, he middled every ball from the Staff Captain and co. Then, after four overs, he opened his shoulders and hit three fours in rapid succession. He scored the winning runs and continued to bat until he was finally bowled for a magnificent twenty-five runs. His was a magnificent triumph and the officers duly coughed up a couple of cases of beer –and all was right with the world!'

As a postscript to this account, I can recall that Wes was a product of the Trinity House School in Hull (which explained why he knew about departure and d.lat when the rest of us were boxing the compass), and I believe he eventually became a pilot. On a rather sadder note, I recently discovered through the Otaio Facebook group, that dear old Sid died in Auckland in 2007, after a distinguished career as Director of Marine and a Member of Parliament. May he rest in peace. His son is now a member of the group.

During the rotation of deckwork, as mentioned in Part 2, we were given the opportunity to become the mate of the bosun, lamptrimmer or chippy. Unfortunately, I did not enjoy the best of relationships with the Bosun, who constantly referred to me as 'Cockney' to which I responded in similar vein. The chippy, Stan, was a very different character, and it was one of my best decisions to volunteer to be his mate. Stan was a taciturn Geordie of indeterminate middle age, who shared Frank's habit of having the end of a roll up on his lip – but only lit at smoko or in a compartment without flammable material. Stan was wiry and was respected by the mate and old man, as his knowledge of the ship was second to none. We would start before breakfast by dipping all the tanks, hatches and holds, and would take the readings up to the wheelhouse, where the Mate would enter them into the log, and discuss any anomalies or, as Stan called them 'F******* engineers letting water in again'. Stan enjoyed the Mate's call to the Engine Room issuing a polite invitation to 1. Wake Up and 2. Put the pump on, delivered in his best baritone with a hint of threat. It used to make Stan chuckle every morning. Having lost it with the Bosun my daywork was set for the rest of the voyage to New Zealand and back as chippy's mate, and Stan and I repeated the act on my second Otaio voyage the following year. I owe Stan a great deal, his taciturn manner belied an expert knowledge of ship construction and a practical ability to solve any problem.

He combined these qualities with a sound appreciation of human nature, and from him I learned when to keep my mouth shut (to this day I find this difficult) or at least to engage brain before giving advice. In practical terms, being Stan's mate gave me a really good grounding in general ship knowledge: then I knew why, in the Royal Navy, Carpenters and Shipwrights remained permanent, standing members of a ship's company in the days of wooden walls. The loss of such craftsmen and wise heads, due to automation and containerisation, only serves to remind us of the value of the character as well as the skills of these professionals. We learned that it was a poor officer who did not pay attention to these senior petty officers, and reap the benefit of their dedication, humanity and professionalism.

Meanwhile, in the classroom, as we approached the final week before arrival in Auckland, panic was setting in as we were tested on our knowledge of the Collison Regulations. We were required to repeat regulations 1 to 8 from memory to Schoolie, after which we had to respond to questions from the Staff Captain, using ship models, lights and mirrors. This was reminiscent of the eyesight test we had to take in Mercantile Marine Office in Dock Street London, before applying for a Discharge book and Seaman's ID Card (passports were not needed then – I think I was in my mid-twenties before obtaining a passport). Schoolie, although quite rightly a stickler for accuracy, was encouraging in manner, but the Staff Captain had an attitude that was altogether different and hostile. This betrayed the fact that he was not in command, as had been the case in his previous company. The old saying about two captains is true and, in our eyes, he also suffered from being the only deck officer on the ship that had not trained as a NZS cadet. Even his uniform was different to the extent that, in blues, his gold stripes were on the sleeve and not in their rightful place on the shoulder. As the passing of these tests was needed before shore leave could be granted, everyone managed to pass, but there were several slanging matches with Staffie before this was achieved. Heated arguments on the placement of navigation lights on different types of vessels followed but, to be fair, it was easier to use the ship models to display how the rules worked in relation to taking avoiding action or standing on. Staffie was not amused by the NZS tradition of using the black wicker 'not under command balls' (no less than 6 feet in diameter from memory), for crayfish fishing when at anchor. This practice guaranteed a healthy diet and explained why the lamptrimmer was lumbered with a large number of balls.

Our ETA Auckland was the afternoon of 29 November, and the anticipation amongst us first trippers was ruining our darts, deck cricket and table tennis, providing Sid with a last opportunity for adventurous bookmaking – but we did not care.

The South China Sea map that wasn't
By Khung Vu, published by the Lowy Institute

A mistake? Maybe. But a US map of Vietnam including the Paracel and Spratly islands raises big questions.

On 9 September, the US embassy in Hanoi published on Facebook a map of Vietnam on a poster to commemorate the 25th anniversary of US-Vietnam diplomatic relations. At first the map did not attract much attention, given both countries had celebrated the occasion on 11 July, the official date of the anniversary. Yet several days later, a small number of Vietnamese netizens recognised that the map included the disputed Paracel and Spratly islands in the South China Sea as a part of Vietnamese territory.

The inclusion appeared of major significance. The US official position regarding these heavily contested islands has to date been one of neutrality. Instead of taking sides, Washington has declared it will use its influence "to discourage the use of military force or unilateral expansion of claims of sovereignty". Yet including the islands in a map of Vietnam suggested the United States

was not only now taking sides, but also backing Vietnam in a dispute with five other countries, including China, as well as the Philippines – a US treaty ally.

I shared the map on my Twitter account on 13 September and posed the question whether such inclusion signalled an implicit recognition of Vietnamese sovereignty over the two groups of islands. The tweet attracted lots of attention from international scholars. Many of them applauded the US move and considered the map a major change in Washington's official position on the disputes.

Voice of America Vietnamese later picked up the tweet and noted that the map resembled the Vietnamese government's official map of the country. Vietnamese netizens also noticed that the US Embassy in Beijing's map of China does not include the Paracel and Spratly islands, which lent further credibility to the claim that Washington had taken Hanoi's side. Needless to say, the Embassy's Facebook post was showered with praise from Vietnamese Facebook users.

However, two days later on 15 September, the Embassy silently withdrew the map and published a new one without the Paracel and Spratly islands. The new map still displayed Vietnam's other islands not subject to dispute claims, such as Phu Quoc and Con Dao, which led some to argue the change now amounted to a clear attempt to deny Vietnam's sovereignty over the Paracel and Spratly islands.

I put questions to the US Department of State to ask whether the original map was a technical mistake and to clarify the official position on the island disputes after the withdrawal of the map. I did not receive a response.

Since the map was changed, the embassy's Facebook post has received mostly negative comments and nearly 6000 angry reactions. Commentators openly called the US an untrustworthy partner and warned that Hanoi needed to be cautious when cooperating with Washington against Beijing's aggression in the South China Sea. Many added that Vietnam needs to be strong alone to defend its sovereignty, for the US and China are the great powers and also have their own national interests. Responding to questions on the US embassy's map change, Vietnam's Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson reaffirmed the two groups of islands belonged to Vietnam and that the country had historical and legal evidence to back up such claims. The BBC Vietnamese service also carried a story about the controversy.

To be fair, by removing the two groups of islands from the embassy map, the US has signalled a continuing policy of neutrality rather than any change in stance. But from the Vietnamese perspective, and particularly absent an explanation of the change, the US appears to have explicitly denied Vietnam's sovereignty, shattering any hopes of relying on its help to assert Vietnamese claims. In recent years, Vietnam has welcomed the increased US presence in the South China Sea, and the country is now the most pro-US (tied with South Korea) in the region, according to a 2017 Pew Research Centre survey. The map change will without a doubt hurt US credibility with the Vietnamese populace, who pay more attention to symbolic developments in the relationship than to negotiations behind closed doors.

The map change will also reinforce Vietnam's "three-no's" policy (no military alliances, no foreign military bases on Vietnamese territory, and no reliance on any country to combat others). The policy has long been a major impediment to the US attempts to bolster its defence ties with Vietnam. However in the country's latest defence white paper released in November 2019, Hanoi signalled its intention to reinterpret the policy to permit more defence relations with the US, "depending on circumstances and specific conditions", while still maintaining the impression that no country should force Vietnam to pick a side. The perception of the US "abandoning" Vietnamese claims this time underlines the country's wariness of military alliances, for both the US and the Soviet Union failed to come to its defence when China attacked South Vietnam's Paracel islands and Vietnam's Spratly islands in 1974 and 1988 respectively.

In a region rife with historical disputes, a map is often seen to be the same as the territory. Vietnam has reasons to be both gratified and disappointed with the embassy's inclusion and then subsequent exclusion of these disputed islands. Although the map change should not stifle the growing ties between the two countries, the negative reactions this episode has generated will haunt their relations for years to come.

Editor's note: any geo-political views expressed by this or any other contributor are there for your interest and discussion but do not necessarily represent the views of the editor or the position of the Association. I hope you found this article of interest.

New badge for trainee Royal Navy submariners
From MOD Navy

Royal Navy submariner trainees across the country have been recognised from Friday 25 September with the presentation of a set of unique training dolphins.

Traditionally the Gold Dolphin badge has been the mark of a qualified submariner. First presented in the 1950s, the current badge – which depicts two dolphins and an anchor with a crown – was introduced back in 1972.

Up until now, those joining the Submarine Service have had no insignia recognising them as Submarine Service trainees. But from now, the men and women undergoing initial Royal Naval training who have chosen or have been selected to join the submarine service will have the right to wear their own version of the dolphin badge.

The new training dolphins are a similar size and design to the traditional gold dolphins but are black in colour.

Cdre Jim Perks CBE © Crown Copyright MoD Navy 2020

Being presented with the first set of training dolphins at HM Naval Base Clyde were the students of the current SMQ class, who received them from the Head of the Royal Navy Submarine Service, Commodore Jim Perks.

Queen's Birthday Honours update

Commodore Jim Perks is made a CBE for his work as Commander of Faslane Flotilla.

Cdre Perks said: "I am hugely honoured and humbled by this award, but it is the superb commitment and dedication of our submariners, and particularly their families, that truly deserve this honour – my thanks go to them.

"Having joined the Royal Navy, as a junior rating, 36 years ago, to find myself as Head of the Submarine Service; this has been an incredible journey for me and my family – I am very much 'Made in the Royal Navy!'"

CHATHAM NAVAL OFFICERS' ASSOCIATION
STANDING ORDER FORM
FOR ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS

I wish to make my annual subscription payments by standing order to the Chatham Naval Officers' Association.

Please complete this form and return it to the Hon Treasurer:
Sub Lieutenant Jan Dean RNR, 79A Cherry Avenue, Swanley, Kent, BR8 7OU.

Do NOT send this form to the bank.

Your Name: _____

Your Address: _____

_____

_____

_____

Post Code: _____

Name of your Bank: _____

Address of your Bank: _____

_____

_____

Your Bank Sort Code: ____/_____/_____

Your Account Number: _____

To my bank: I request you to pay Barclays Bank, 24 Lowfield Street, Dartford, DA1 1HD, Sort Code 20.25.42, for the credit of The Chatham Naval Officers Association, Account Number 93932702, the regular sum of:

£_____ Annually

Amount in words: _____

Starting on: _____/_____/_____

And continuing until* _____/_____/_____

Or until I give notice in writing*

Signature: _____ Date: _____

A note from the CNOA Hon. Secretary
If you enjoy the CNOA activities, why not extend an invitation to a like-minded serving or retired officer? or ask them to look at cnoa.org.uk

CHATHAM NAVAL OFFICERS' ASSOCIATION

President: Commodore Barry Bryant CVO
Chairman: Lt Cdr Jon Vanns (SCC) RNR

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

SURNAME	FORENAMES	DATE

HOME ADDRESS Tel. No: E Mail Address:	BUSINESS ADDRESS Tel. No: E Mail Address:

RANK	TYPE OF COMMISSION	SPECIALISATION / AWARDS & QUALIFICATIONS

BRIEF CAREER DETAILS

General Data Protection Regulation: I agree that all the above details may be maintained and kept by the CNOA and RSME for the purposes of membership records and security. I agree / do not agree (delete as applicable) to my details being published in a membership booklet.

SIGNED……..…

PRESENT OCCUPATION

PROPOSER'S NAME	PROPOSER'S SIGNATURE	HOW LONG KNOWN

SECONDER'S NAME	SECONDER'S SIGNATURE	HOW LONG KNOWN