



PERISCOPE VIEW

The Newsletter of the Barrow-in Furness Branch
of
The Submariners Association
Patron: Admiral of the Fleet the Lord Boyce KG GCB OBE DL

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Cover Picture: The Barrow Branch Team at the K13 Weekend 2020

*'Nothing in the world, nothing that you may think or dream of,
or anyone may tell you, no arguments however specious, no
appeals however seductive, must lead you to abandon that naval
supremacy on which the life of our country depends.'*

WINSTON SPENCER CHURCHILL

EDITORIAL

Hello Everybody,

February seems to have arrived quicker than I (and other I guess) were expecting. Where does the time go!

If you haven't yet booked your Accommodation for the National Conference & Reunion at Kegworth on W/E 27th/29th March, it's not too late to get your applications in! The Branch Proposal for the Conference has been submitted (the National Secretary has acknowledged receiving it). The Agenda for this year's National Council Conference is not yet out (it should have arrived shortly after New Year) but has been delayed firstly owing to the unexpected resignation of the National Chairman and the need to allow time for applications for the post to be submitted. Also, the plans for Charitable Status for the Submariners Association – which was to be on the Agenda – have been withdrawn following the last letter from RASM. The Conference Agenda should now arrive shortly after the beginning of February. This will reduce the time available for the Branch Committee and the Members to consider how we vote

Some of you may have heard that there are some changes about to be implemented in the Headquarters Organisation/Management of the Navy. One which directly affects the Submarine Service is that the Post of Rear Admiral; Submarines (RASM) is being changed to that of Commodore, Submarines (presumably COSM).

The last RASM, Rear Admiral John Weale, who served as the Senior Submariner for longer than any predecessor as far as I can find out -nearly five years - has already moved on and the first incumbent in the new Post will be Commodore Jim Perks – who – up to now has been Deputy RASM – so not much change there.

One other change, which won't particularly affect the Submarine Service or the Association, is that I hear that a number of Admiral Rank Posts will disappear (up to eight possibly) – who said not before time! No doubt there will be some formal announcements about these changes to come in due course.

Members might recall that, at the 2018 & 2019 Conferences there were proposals by the Norfolk Branch) concerning the National Submarine Memorial. Original suggestions that the Embankment Memorial should be moved to the National Arboretum were a non-starter from the outset as it is a Grade 1 Listed National Memorial but proposals/plans for a new Submariners Memorial at the National Arboretum are being progressed. There will probably be a competition for a suitable design to be announced soon. As a start the Barrow Branch has been asked to be present at an Appeal Launch in BAE on 28th February. Currently I have five names to go plus partners. The new Memorial has tentatively been costed at £300,000 (for design, build

and unveiling) so there is a way to go yet! Perhaps everyone can contribute their BREXIT 50p coins – if you can find one!

No Proposal have yet been put forward by Branch Members for our Branch AGM in April – but there is still time! I'm sure that there are some suggestions out there on how the Branch might be run better! If you have any proposals get them in quickly so the Committee can discuss them before the Branch AGM

Anyway, that's enough about formal Association business so back to the Day to Day stuff. The February Branch Meeting is on Tuesday 4th February and Association Subs for 2020 are now due so, if you still pay by cash or cheque and haven't paid yet, bring your wallets or chequebooks along – Mick Mailey will happily

take your Subs from you in exchange for a 2020 Sticker to go on your Membership Card. Subs remain at £20 for Full Members (£15 for National and £5 for the Branch). Branch Subs for Affiliated and Associate Members remain at £5. If by any chance you have lost your membership card Mick can order you a new one from the Membership Secretary, but it will cost you a fiver!

See you all on Tuesday 4th – usual time, usual place. The rum for the Loyal Toast this time is courtesy of the Will of our late Branch Member Tom Fell who has donated two bottles. Don't forget that it's a Quiz Night as well – so bring your thinking caps and don't be late!!

Best Regards,
Barrie

SOCIAL SECRETARY REPORT

Hi Shipmates

In January we had our K13 run to Faslane, eight of us attended and for £20 (which includes accommodation and a bang-up mess dinner) you can't go wrong. Obviously having to pay £1.50 for a full English breakfast and, at £2.50 a pint it almost broke the bank, but I still have a little left.

Diary Check:

Friday 7th February is our annual trip to 'first foot' our Morecambe friends. The coach is all booked (16 seats) and will depart the RBL at 6pm, cost per attendee is £10 and the shortfall will be made up by the branch. I will be taking names at the February Meeting. At present I have 5 seats available – great run ashore so please support this.

Saturday 14th March is our St Patrick's Day party at the Legion and tickets will be on sale from the February meeting at £5 each. Same routine as before live entertainment, disco, lots of drink and some nosebag to help us get through the evening.

Saturday 4th April is our pub crawl along the coast up to Coniston – it will be a gallon club challenge without the walking – I only have 6 seats left – cost for this is £15 per person to cover the cost of transport.

Saturday 16th May is our annual Branch Dinner - which is now being held the Saturday closest to the birth of the branch and will become more of a party - albeit still with branch blazers or jacket and tie. I have booked the Brown Cow this year and therefore it is limited to 35 – will update on costing and menu choice later.

Other items:

The members draw was not won in January so stands at £15 for February.

Don't forget to get your free beer if you were born in February – as I was, and next meeting I will be supplying chilli and a quiz, please stay behind for 90 minutes and support this!!!

Alex

FEBRUARY BRANCH CALENDAR

Branch Meeting	Tues 4 th Feb
Quiz Night	Tues 4 th Feb
Morecambe First Footing	Fri 7 th Feb
SM Memorial Appeal Launch	Fri 28 th Feb
Committee Meeting	As Required

MARCH BRANCH CALENDAR

Branch Meeting	Tues 3 rd Mar
Buddies in Boats Visit	6 th /8 th Mar
St Patrick's Party	Sat 14 th Mar
SA Reunion & Conference	27 th /29 th Mar
Committee Meeting	As Required

APRIL BRANCH CALENDAR

Gosport Weekend	3 rd /5 th Apr
Coniston Pub Crawl	Sat 4 th Apr
Branch Meeting & AGM	Tues 7 th Apr
ANZAC Ceremony	Sun 26 th Apr
St George's Day Parade	Sun 26 th Apr
Committee Meeting	As required

FEBRUARY BRANCH BIRTHDAYS

J. (Jimmy) Rimmer	04/02/1974
D. (Yorky) Thornton	20/02/1948
W.P. (Billy) Daniels	24/02/1940
A. (Alex) Webb	16/02/1960
R. (Richard) O'Callaghan	21/02/1974

Happy Birthday All!

REMEMBERING FORMER BRANCH MEMBERS

'CROSSED THE BAR' - FEBRUARY

Frederick Ralph Pillifent	1982
Walter A Brakewell	1995
Wallace King	1999
Geoffrey Bond	2000
Robert Moody	2002
Ronald Cooper	2007
Kenneth Williams	2014
David Crossland	2014
Anthony Sainty	2015

Alan Geoffrey Pillifent 2019
John Dalton 2019
John W B Taylor 2019

RESURGAM

DISCLAIMER

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NEWSLETTER CONTACT INFORMATION

Do you have a story to tell or have information you feel should appear in the Newsletter then ring Barrie Downer on 01229 820963 or, if you wish to send me an article, my postal address is The Firs, Dundalk Street, Barrow Island, Barrow in Furness, Cumbria LA14 2RZ. You may also send your contribution by e-mail to me on frozensouth55@gmail.com. Come on – every Submariner has a story to tell – some more than one! Let's see yours in print!

Constructive suggestions about the Newsletter are also very welcome. The Newsletter will be published in the last week of each month i.e. the last week in January for the February 2020 Issue. Please ensure you have any information with me by the 15th of the month to ensure its inclusion in the next issue. Thank you to everyone who contributed to this edition – keep them stories coming!

SUBMARINE COMMISSIONING CREW LISTS

Still looking for 'First Commission' Submarine Crew Lists/Brochures as follows: PORPOISE, GRAMPUS, NARWHAL, CACHALOT, WALRUS, OBERON, ONYX, ORPHEUS, ODIN, OTUS & UNICORN.

Any Crew Lists for any Re-Commissioning and Re-Dedications of any Conventional 'A', 'S', 'T', 'O' & 'P' Class and any refitting Nuclear Boat - SSN & SSBN. Have a look through your records and 'Ditty Boxes' and see what you can find. You can contact me by E Mail, Snail Mail or Telephone – see Page 2. Thanks, Barrie

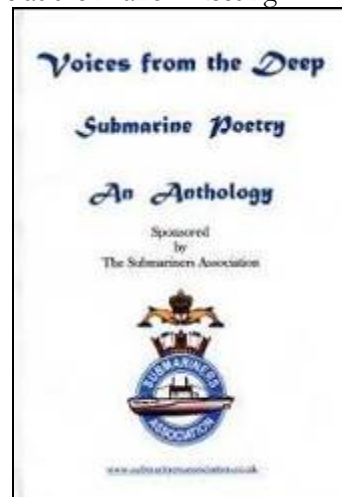
VOICES FROM THE DEEP

A while ago the Submariners Association sponsored a book - 'Voices from The Deep - Submarine Poetry - An Anthology' (see front cover below) as a way of raising funds for the Association.

Copies are still available!

Orders for the Book (16 copies still available) should be sent to me:

Barrie Downer, The Firs, Dundalk Street, Barrow Island, Barrow in Furness, Cumbria LA14 2RZ. Or you can always ask me at the Branch Meeting



Cheques (£5.00 per copy) should be made payable to the Submariners Association and enclosed with each application

BOOKS

No Books to review this month but please note that 'The Suicide Club' – the 'K' Class book by Andy South which was reviewed last month has been temporarily withdrawn owing to a mix-up in the AMAZON publishing software programme.

SUBMARINE LOSSES OF WWII

No Submarines were lost in February 1940 and no Submariners are reported to have 'Crossed the Bar'.

END OF AN ERA FOR GOSPORT'S ICONIC SUBMARINE ESCAPE TOWER

9th January 2020



For the last time the team who teach submariners how to escape from a stricken boat gather at a Gosport landmark before the iconic structure closes.

Tens of thousands of submariners have passed through the Submarine Escape Training Tank (SETT) since July 13, 1954 when the first man ascended the 100ft column of water to simulate emerging from a sunken submarine. With the entire submarine flotilla moving to Faslane – as well as advances in submarine design, escape training and

changes in the way rescues are handled – the SETT is no longer required.

The tower was built between 1949 and 1953 as part of a wholesale revamp of submarine escape training, prompted by a report drawn up by Captain Phillip Ruck-Keen just after World War 2.

The loss of HMS THETIS – on the eve of war – and HMS TRUCULENT – sunk in the Thames after colliding with a Swedish tanker in January 1950 – both with heavy loss of life, as well as many other submarines accidents and experiences played a significant role in the lessons taught.

Using the tank, submariners are expected to escape without breathing apparatus; they use an especially designed escape suit to breathe as required.

During the peak of usage in the 1960s and 70s, around 4,500 submariners every year made the daunting ascent – it's thought the escape tank has been used more than 150,000 times in its 66-year life.

Today the tank is just one element of the UK's submarine rescue capability, which also includes the Submarine Parachute Assistance Group (who leap from aircraft into the water to help crew who've escaped from a boat as taught in the SETT), and NATO's Submarine Rescue System 'Nemo', also based in Faslane.

The Royal Navy stopped pressurised ascent training in the 900,000-litre tank in 2012, but still uses the facility for non-pressurised drills and teaching.

In the SETT's existence, only one British boat – HMS ARTEMIS – has been lost (she sank at her moorings in an accident in 1971, ironically just a stone's throw from the tower), without any casualties.

In its place, opening later this year, is the Submarine Escape Rescue Abandonment and Survival Training Facility (SMERAS TF). The team will be moving en-masse from Gosport to Faslane, leaving a skeleton team behind on the south coast.

"2020 marks the end of an era, so it's a poignant moment for all of us," said Lieutenant Commander Gareth 'Griff' Griffiths, in charge of the team.

"We're looking forward to carrying the lessons of our past many years into the future of submarine escape, rescue, abandonment and survival training.

"Our success is due, in no small part, to our commitment to one another and the unique perspective of being submariners."

At the heart of the replacement complex at Faslane is a huge 'abandonment and sea survival training environmental pool' where various weather conditions and sea states can be replicated in the safety of an indoor pool.

As for the SETT, it will be preserved as it is a listed building, protected by law for its national and international role in submarine safety

SUBMARINERS FINISH EPIC ROW ACROSS THE ATLANTIC OCEAN

20 January 2020

Four Royal Navy submariners have completed an epic challenge that saw them row across the Atlantic Ocean.

Team HMS Oardacious made the 3,000-mile journey in 36 days, six hours and 40 minutes.

Their incredible voyage saw them face 40ft waves, shark-infested waters, busy shipping routes and heavy storms.

Known as the "world's toughest row", the Talisker Whisky Atlantic Challenge sees teams' row from La Gomera, in the Canary Islands, to Nelson's Harbour in Antigua.



Petty Officer Dylan Woods said: It was an incredible challenge for a worthwhile cause, and it feels great to be back on land, reunited with loved ones.

H.M.S. Oardacious, made up of Lieutenant Hugo Mitchell-Heggs, Lieutenant Callum Fraser, Petty Officer Dylan Woods and Leading Engineer Technician Matt Harvey, has raised more than £100,000 for the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity. Lt Mitchell-Heggs,

from Sheffield, said: "The beginning of the race was touch and go, due to the demise of our autopilot which meant we had to steer manually and took us down to three men for 24 hours. "But determination and great team-work meant we still managed to remain in the front pack."

The team of four had a strict schedule of rowing two hours and sleeping two hours – 24 hours a day. At their lowest, the team battled blisters, sores, dehydration and extreme fatigue in 40C, burning 12,000 calories a day and losing around 20 per cent of their body weight.

With the end in sight, HMS Oardacious experienced perhaps their worst day of the challenge. They revealed in their blog that in the middle of the night, a wave hit the 28ft rowing boat – sending Lt Fraser and PO Woods overboard. Intensive training meant the team knew what to do and the pair were quickly back in the boat, albeit PO Woods chipping his tooth and an oar snapping.

The blog said: "Without doubt, their submariner training also gave them the best possible preparation, their reaction was never to panic, but to get back on deck and make sure everyone was safe and everything was accounted for, then to get back rowing." The team reached the finish line over the weekend. PO Woods, from Northern Ireland, said: "It was an incredible challenge for a worthwhile cause, and it feels great to be back on land, reunited with loved ones. My gran was told to prepare bangers and mash for our return so that will be next on my list."

K13 REMEMBERED DURING SOLEMN FASLANE CEREMONY

Monday, 27 January 2020

Serving Royal Navy Submariners, veterans of the Silent Service and cadets were at Faslane Chaplaincy on Sunday, January 26, to commemorate the sinking of Submarine K13.

The early steam-driven submarine sank in the Gare Loch in 1917 with 80 people onboard, leading to the death of 32 men, some of them buried at Faslane Cemetery.

Members of the Submariners Association visited HM Naval Base Clyde on Saturday, January 25, for a weekend of K13 commemorations, beginning with a trip to Govan where a monument to shipyard workers who died during the tragedy is situated in Elder Park.

The next day they joined naval personnel at the Naval Base's Church of St John the Evangelist for a solemn ceremony led by the Submariners Association Chaplain – the Rev. Paul Jupp.

Members of Helensburgh Sea Scouts Group – TS Neptune – were given the honour of ringing K13's ship's bell during the ceremony – 32 times, once for every person who perished on board.

Submarine K13 sank during her sea trials on January 29, 1917. Onboard were Royal Navy Submariners, Admiralty Pilots and workers from shipbuilders Fairfield's.

The Captain of K13, Lieutenant Commander Godfrey Herbert, accompanied by Commander Francis

Goodhart, who was the visiting Captain of submarine K14, attempted to escape from the stricken vessel, hoping to use their expert knowledge to guide rescue efforts. Using the space between the inner and outer hatches as an airlock the pair tried to make it to the surface. Tragically Commander Goodhart died during the effort.

The 57-hour ordeal came to an end when an airline was attached allowing the bow to be raised and a hole cut in the side of the submarine. Forty-eight survivors were rescued.

Sent by Gavin Carr, Royal Navy Media & Comms, HM Naval Base Clyde.



Members of the Submariners Association at the Faslane memorial service.



THE DESMOND GERRISH AUTOBIOGRAPHY

(Continued from the January issue of Periscope View)

December 1954

We left VERNON with fond memories of a good place staffed with good 'blokes' and moved to H.M.S. COLLINGWOOD in Fareham for our last Course. This was to learn the technical aspects of Electrical Machinery in Warships and the Electronics of Radar, Sonar, Gun Computers etc.

We knew this was going to be an abrasive affair since Electrical Officers (the Greenies) like Engineer Officers (the Plumbers) were in effect subservient to us Exec.'s who would be their bosses as First Lieutenants and Commanding Officers (i.e. Captains of ships). So, we were their fledgling 'bosses' and they had to teach us the secrets of their trade.

The advance and expansion of all things Electrical during the war carried on apace post war, as the Electrical Scientists and Engineers of the major powers were pushed by the militaries to give us more lethal means of defeating opponents. COLLINGWOOD was a mirror image of this Electrical War Revolution and had rapidly expanded to become the R.N.'s largest Training Centre.

So, we reluctantly learned the complexities of all things electrical in modern warships and continually objected to learning the inevitable complex circuit diagrams of Radars, Sonars, Radios, Gun Computers etc. by saying that it was the responsibility of all Electrical Officers and Ratings to know all this in our warships and not ours as Seaman Officers. Halfway through the Course our Officer Instructor panicked and persuaded the Captain of COLLINGWOOD to give us a pep talk on the importance of this electrical knowledge, which he did, laced with dire threats of what would happen to our careers if we failed the Exams. By now we knew we had the upper hand, because of the storm which Admiralty would direct at COLLINGWOOD if we failed our exams en-masse. So, the day before our exams, the Senior Course Officer took us through previous exam papers and by us saying we hadn't a clue if this or that question turned up in our Exam., we frightened him enough into telling us what questions had been set for us! That evening we all swatted the known questions and achieved the best overall results out of all our Courses. COLLINGWOOD's Training Staff was so relieved we hadn't embarrassed them with shockingly low-grade results that they gave a Farewell Party for us.

Which partly made up for the earlier injustice of the Night of the Pigs. It was one of the weekly Guest Nights, when halfway through dinner, the Commander banged his gavel and ordered our Group to leave the Mess. Mystified, we shambled into the anteroom where the Duty Officer was waiting.

"Okay" he said, "Your pathetic prank of unbolting all the doors to our piggery has backfired and now you are going to round them all up in the rain". It wasn't us, but our reputation earned us the blame and we willingly enjoyed the sport of chasing pigs in our boiled shirt, stiff wing collar Mess Undress Uniform. We chased them up and down the many roads that criss-crossed this mini town of dormitories, classrooms, Mess Halls etc. with all the whoops and noise of a Wild West Show. Delighted when a dozen or so of the faster porkers got into the garden of the Captain's house and another batch into the grounds of the Married Quarters. By 1 o'clock in the morning we still hadn't secured a single pig back to its pen, but we had woken the 3,000 inhabitants of COLLINGWOOD. Then came the news from a mightily harassed Duty Officer that one of the Electrical Officers Courses had finally owned up to the prank and that we may go to bed.

We consolidated our victory by turning up late for the first lecture next day, saying we had all caught colds from the several hours endured in the pouring rain last night. Great lark all round.

Now we had completed the quite gruelling nine different Courses of Naval Warfare to become 'qualified', as opposed to 'Acting' Sub. Lieutenants and off home for leave and to await our appointments to ships of the Fleets. Mine was to join H.M.S. AISNE, a big modern Battle Class Destroyer. Even better, she was one of the four Battles that made up the 4th Destroyer Squadron in the Mediterranean Fleet, based at Malta. The other three were: AGINCOURT (the Leader), BAROSSA and CORUNNA

The whole Squadron was changing crews, the previous ones having finished their two-and-a-half-year Commission abroad. I had to join AISNE in Chatham Dockyard on 1st December 1954 and duly turned up to meet the newly joined Captain and Officers – I was the last to arrive.

The Captain	Archie Grey, a Commander and Comms specialist
First Lieutenant	Mike McGuire, a Senior Lt. Cdr. and Salthorse!
Gunnery Officer -	Dennis Hannay - Lt.
Navigating Officer	Alan Geidt - Lt.
Comms. Officer -	Brian Gallagher - S/Lt. (SD)
Warrant Gunner -	Smithy Smithers - S/Lt. (SD)
Engineer Officer	George Wood - Lt.
Electrical Officer	** Pike - Lt.
Supply Officer	** Benny - Lt. (SD)
Additional for Training	'Duffy' Duval - a Fleet Air Arm Pilot finished flying
Warrant T.A.S.	'Buster' Brown - S/Lt. (SD)
Additional for Training	** Kite - Electrical S/Lt.
Squadron Staff Officer	Lt. Cdr (Ordnance)

That evening, at pre-Dinner drinks in the comfortable Wardroom, I realised the unspoken fact that they expected me to be the 'life and soul' of the Mess for the next 2½ years we would be together. And by the end of that evening I knew my close cronies would be Mike McGuire, Dennis Hannay and Smithy. The others were going to be great friends but did not have the chemistry to set the world on fire. They were the perfectly reasonable conformers. Our smaller gang was the radicals!

The ship had just finished a good overhaul and renewal by Chatham Dockyard. The Wardroom furniture and fittings were spanking new and the Officers' cabins had been similarly refurbished. The cabin layout in the Battle Class was eight single cabins under the Bridge and, quite separately, three double cabins near the stern. I shared one with Duffy. Advantage of living in the 'Casbah' was being out of sight of Captain, 1st Lt. etc. The disadvantage was journeying to the Bridge to keep Watches in bad weather along catwalks and up vertical ladders. Very dangerous at night in severe gales with heavy seas breaking over the catwalks. The few days left in Chatham before sailing to join up with the other two destroyers at Portland allowed me to acquaint myself with my responsibilities.

These were:

Ship's T.A.S. Officer, with 'Buster' Brown under me as the Torpedo and Anti-Submarine Mortar Bombs Warrant Officer. I was in sole charge of the Ship's sonars. My Action Station was in the Sonar room under the Bridge, from where I was kitted up with the machinery to control the sonars, the torpedoes and the mortars.

No other Officer in the ship had any knowledge of how to use the anti-submarine armament, other than the Captain, whom VERNON had briefed on how to handle the ship while me and 'Buster' 'found' the submarine and attacked it. Of course, I had experienced Senior Ratings to operate the sonars for me and 'Buster' had come up the ranks as a Torpedoman and had a squad of experienced Torpedo Mechanics. Finally, there was a Specialist T.A.S. Officer on the staff in AGINCOURT who helped and guided us Sub. Lieutenants in the other three destroyers with our awesome responsibilities

Another of my jobs was that of Fo'c'stle Officer. You worked the ship's anchors and cables. I had a Division of forty sailors and two Petty Officers to do the work, including the daily upkeep of all the front end of the ship. And, of course, the welfare and good being of these sailors was my prime responsibility.

Yet another job – the worst and most hated by all Seaman Sub. Lieutenants – was to run the ship's Admin. Office. The 'Office' itself was a cramped little steel room in the bowels of the ship. The records of the Crew, hundreds of forms for regular reports to Admiralty, pay documents for the Crew, ledgers and stationery, were all crammed in iron filing cabinets. One typewriter and one hideous duplicating roller machine worked by hand and flooded with ink. Fortunately, my Leading Writer – a rating trained in secretarial and accounting work – was a gem. He would spend long hours stuck in this ghastly office typing, accounting and sorting without complaint. He would sort out incoming bags of official business mail for me, ready for me to present the important papers to the Captain. The replies to letters and reports to Admiralty drafted by the Captain would have to be immaculately typed, duplicated and despatched by the Writer and myself.

The galling part of having to be immersed in the burden of paperwork was that we had a Supply Officer onboard – 'Benny' Benson – who lived a quiet life simply attending to the food and stores of the ship and handling the cash part of the fortnightly pay system to the Crew. Admiralty had ordained this state of affairs after the war, so that Seaman Sub. Lieutenants would gain practical experience of Administration before going on to command ships themselves. 'Benny', of course, often helped me and my Writer out when we were in trouble – which was often”!

Apart from your allocated responsibilities, the main demand on any Seaman Officer was driving the ship at sea by the system of keeping Watches day and night. Traditionally, the Navigator and First Lieutenant did not keep Watches, so our roster in Aisne fell to the remaining four of us Seaman Officers, plus rotating 'Duffy' as 2nd Officer of the Watch for him to gain experience. The Squadron was often at sea for three or four weeks at a time. For the four of us O.O.W.'s it meant keeping a four hour Watch every twelve hours and, in bad weather with the open Bridges of ships in those days, this life style became quite wearing as you struggled to do your other work as well when not on Watch. The Watches themselves were exhilarating and always packed with action, as the Squadron moved at high speed in close formation – barely a ship's length apart – whenever at sea. So, you steered your 3,500-ton monster at these fast speeds exceedingly careful in this very close formation, always alert to avoiding catastrophic collisions should the slightest thing go wrong!

To be continued in March 2020.

GOVERNMENT FULFILS PROMISE TO VETERANS WITH NEW RAILCARD

Military veterans to get cut-price train travel to help boost job prospects and bring them closer to family and friends. Published 22 January 2020

- new railcard, available from Armistice Day this year, will help boost veterans' job prospects and strengthen family bonds through cheaper travel

- over 830,000 eligible for a third off their fares, saving veterans and their families hundreds of pounds a year
- discount forms part of government's new veteran's strategy to support former servicemen and women

Military veterans will get cut-price train travel to help boost job prospects and bring them closer to family and friends, with a new railcard on sale from Armistice Day,

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps announced today (22 January 2020).



Available from Armistice Day this year, the railcard will extend discounted train travel to the more than 830,000 veterans not covered by existing discounts.

Joined by veterans at St Pancras railway station, the Transport Secretary and the Minister for the Cabinet Office underlined the government's commitment to supporting former service personnel and recognised their service to the country.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said: Every part of society should honour the debt we owe those who've served our country. I'm proud that the Department for Transport, together with other government colleagues and the rail industry, is doing its bit.

This railcard will help open up opportunities to veterans, whether through employment and retraining, or by strengthening links with friends and family. I believe that enabling former service personnel to travel more easily is the least we can do.

The money-saving announcement, delivering on a manifesto commitment, forms part of the government's veterans strategy. This action plan, which is also being launched today, outlines what government is doing to deliver more for our veterans and sets out holistic support for those who served, in areas including community and relationships, employment and skills, health and wellbeing, finance and debt, housing, and contact with the law. The strategy will be coordinated by the recently established Office for Veterans Affairs.

Cabinet Office Minister Oliver Dowden, who represents the Office for Veterans Affairs (OVA) in Cabinet said:

The Office for Veterans' Affairs was set up to get things done for our veterans. I am pleased to see that the OVA is already able to show it is achieving just this, working with the Department for Transport to deliver this railcard.

Our new action plan will help to make the UK the best place in the world for veterans. The Office for Veterans' Affairs will drive the plan from the heart of government, working to help veterans on jobs, housing and health, through better data and a more joined up approach.

Minister for Defence People and Veterans Johnny Mercer said: Discounted train travel is a fantastic way to recognise those who have served this country, and the speed at which plans have been worked up shows how seriously we are taking our commitments to make the UK the best country in the world to be a veteran. The railcard is only the start though, and I'm clear we need to do more to look after the people who so selflessly put their lives on the line to look after us. Now the action

plan has been published, I look forward to continuing to drive forward this issue across government and the services we offer.

Today, the government is also releasing its response for the consultation into the veteran's strategy, which includes an action plan on how the Office for Veterans' Affairs will coordinate departments to help veterans over the next two years. Public responses to the consultation underlined the need for a more coordinated approach to veteran's support. Other key findings include a call to promote a positive perception of veterans and a need to increase awareness of the support already offered from across central and local government.

RUSSIA'S NAVY IS HAVING A SUBMARINE PROBLEM

(And There Is No Easy Solution)

Robert Beckhusen. January 22, 2020

Russia's ballistic missile submarines will be in somewhat better shape in 2030.

In March 2017, Russia's new Yasen-class nuclear attack submarine Kazan launched at the northern port city of Severodvinsk. Perhaps the quietest Russian submarine ever, the event was further evidence the Kremlin can still build capable and lethal subs capable of a variety of missions, including cruise-missile attack.

But it won't be enough. The Russian navy - already badly depleted since the collapse of the Soviet Union - can't quickly replace most of its existing nuclear submarine fleet, which is approaching the end of its collective lifespan. The outcome will likely mean a shrinking of the Russian nuclear submarine force in the years ahead.

By 2030, the bulk of Russia's nuclear-powered attack and cruise-missile submarines will be in their mid-thirties at least - with some pushing into their forties. For perspective, the three oldest active American attack submarines, the Los Angeles-class USS DALLAS, BREMERTON and JACKSONVILLE, are all 36 years old and waiting to be decommissioned during the next three years.

Submarines wear out in old age, particularly due to hull corrosion. Another serious concern is corrosion affecting components inside the nuclear reactor compartments, but data surrounding this subject are tightly guarded secrets among the world's navies. More to the point, naval vessels staying in service during old age require more maintenance and longer rest periods. Given that only around half of Russia's submarine force - a charitable estimate - can be at sea at any given time, a force made up of mostly old boats will strain operational readiness.

The Kremlin's relatively new multi-role Yasen class, of which two - the SEVERODVINSK and KAZAN - launched in 2010 and 2017 respectively, cannot make up for the future retirements of Russia's eleven Akulas, three Sierras, four Victor III attackers and eight Oscar II cruise missile subs, which are all getting long in the tooth. The youngest Akula class, GEPARD entered service in 2000. Most date to the early 1990s.

The Yasen is a late-Soviet design with seven planned submarines, with the last one planned to enter service in 2023. 'This is again being generous given the Yasen class' enormous expense, which is twice as high as one of Russia's new ballistic missile subs. While Russia could attempt to keep its Cold War-era subs going as long as possible, "given the obvious risk of rising costs, Russia will be able to have no more than 50 percent of the current number of nuclear submarines [by 2030]," the Russian military blog BMPD warned in a particularly grim assessment.

Russia's ballistic missile submarines will be in somewhat better shape in 2030. Few countries possess "boomers" capable of dumping nuclear warheads into enemy cities - the United States, India, China, France, the United Kingdom and North Korea. Russia currently has 13, including three from the new Borey class, with up to five more on the way.

But by 2030, Russia's three Delta III, six Delta IV-class boomers and its one Typhoon class will all be at least 40 years old if they remain in service. Nevertheless, even if Russia scrapped these boats and only relied on its newer Boreys, no country can likely match them in numbers except for the United States, China and possibly India. Russia could attempt to further make up the gap in attack and cruise missile submarines with its tentatively titled Project Husky, which is still in the design phase.

The Husky could come in three variants for attack missions, cruise-missile strike or SSGN - and ballistic missile roles. Dedicated SSGNs are particularly important for Russia, which has long based its naval doctrine around long-range missile attacks on American carrier groups. Russian anti-ship cruise missiles are especially fearsome.

But the most optimistic estimates have Russia possessing a mere three Huskies by 2030 if construction of the first of the class begins in the early 2020s - and that's if the Russian navy keeps up ordering one every two years with a four-and-a-half year build period.

While the Yasens probably have the ability to launch cruise missiles as well, that would still leave Russia with around 10 modern nuclear-powered SSNs and dedicated SSGNs alongside two-dozen boats in their thirties and forties facing looming retirement.

The diesel-electric fleet isn't in much better shape, with most of Russia's seventeen Kilo-class hunter-killers dating to the early 1990s. Although more advanced versions, the Project 636 Varshavyanka and the Lada class, have been commissioned at a brisker pace than the nuclear-powered Yasens.

WHY ARE SO MANY VETERANS GUNNING FOR THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGION?

It's one of Britain's best loved charities, but despite £70m cash reserves, it is closing down hotels for ex-servicemen and is accused of letting bureaucracy stifle cries for help.

By Sue Reid for the Daily Mail. Published: 21st January 2020

Byng House is a handsome seaside hotel near the promenade and a short stroll to the sands of Southport. It has offered free holidays to forces veterans and their families since a grand opening a decade ago by Prince Andrew. Hundreds have enjoyed good times at the hotel, which is funded by the Royal British Legion. But these may be over.

For the future of Byng House and three other hotels run by the 'poppy' charity - in Bridlington, East Yorkshire; Weston-super-Mare, Somerset; and Portrush in Northern Ireland — are in the balance. All face being closed next month as part of a 'cost-cutting' exercise. This week the hotels' websites say they have stopped taking future bookings.

Of course, the work of the Legion is legendary and admired throughout the military and civilian world. Not only does it play a major role in the nation's commemoration of our war dead, but in helping those veterans who have served our country in the Armed Services. As the Legion told the Mail: 'Our aim is to help those who come to us for support to live fulfilled and independent lives, and we will ensure an individual is given all they need to reach this outcome.'

Steve Scudder has set up a drop-in centre for veterans. It is called the Blue Van - after a popular NAAFI van in Germany which provided hot food and drink to troops - and provides legal and financial advice with the support of military charities including Combat Stress. But when we visited Byng House, the Legion's flag still fluttered, but its windows were shuttered, and an uncollected Amazon parcel dating from December was propped by the entrance.

Today, there is growing anger over the threat to these hotels by the Legion, which was set up to help World War I veterans nearly a century ago. A recent visitor to Byng House, Sheila Smith, wrote on Facebook: 'As a carer for my husband, the break away at Byng House was fabulous for us both. 'We shared a dream of returning, but sadly that is not to be.' Veteran Alan Crussell also visited. 'If the poppy break hotels close. I will discontinue my membership of the British Legion,' he warned. 'I stayed at Byng House for a fortnight in 2018. I was at a low ebb. It saved my life.'

Roland Sutton, 64, in the Artillery and Royal Logistics Corps for 46 years, contacted the Legion's head office to object. 'They said they had done a feasibility study and staying at Byng House only gave a "short-term fix". Most people go on holiday each year, and isn't that a short-term fix? It gives you a pick-up and helps you on.' Veterans in Portrush have been waving banners and protesting at their hotel's demise. In Bridlington, there is equal dismay. 'Our hotel was renovated by the Legion last year at a cost of tens of thousands,' says Mike Rubery, a former RBL official in Bridlington. 'It was a total waste of charity donations when closure was the intention.' Mr Rubery spoke to two men from the Legion's London headquarters - neither of whom, he claims, had military backgrounds - when they arrived in November to break the news about the closure of the hotel.

'They said there had been research showing that the hotels are not cost-effective.' Mr Rubery explains. 'Yet the hotels help veterans who are lonely, have combat stress, are in hard times financially, even terminally ill - the list goes on.' This rebellion by veterans is fuelled by one question: why must their precious hotels, which cost £6.5 million a year to run, be shut down when the poppy charity and others like it sit on vast sums of unspent money?

In 2018, the Legion recorded an income of £163.2 million and had reserves of £70 million, according to its last annual report. Each year, its nationwide poppy appeal reaps some £50 million. Recent anniversaries of both world wars brought an upsurge in donations as the commemorations pricked the national conscience and the public dug deep. The RBL is the wealthiest of Britain's ten biggest military charities. Between them, these ten have combined assets of £1.4 billion, plus reserves of £277 million, prompting increasingly angry accusations of 'cash hoarding'.

In all, the 1,500 Armed Forces Charities have a total worth of £3.1 billion - £1 billion more than the annual cost to the Ministry of Defence of running the Trident nuclear submarine programme. Yet despite these vast sums, 6,000 military veterans remain homeless, 10,000 have had serious brushes with the law or are in prison, and as many as 50,000 suffer mental health problems caused by experiences of conflict or their struggles to cope with 'civvy street' when their military careers finish. It was five years ago - when operations in Helmand Province, Afghanistan, came to an end - that Britain last had regular troops deployed on the ground overseas in a combat mission. Since then, the combined assets of the top ten military charities have increased by more than a third, according to Iain Overton, executive director of Action on Armed Violence, which seeks to stop conflicts worldwide. 'Yet a lot don't use this money,' he says. 'Now is the time to push the boat out, not for cost-cutting. It is important these charities spend and find out who needs the cash.'

He adds: 'There are veterans with age-related illness, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and the young one's home from wars on terror who need help right now. 'The public are uncomfortable about scrutinising these charities. 'They think it means they are criticising veterans. I have been called a traitor for saying that we could be sleepwalking into a major scandal about the military charities hoarding money.' Former defence secretary Michael Fallon has also expressed concern. 'There are too many military charities, if I can be brutal,' he said recently. 'They were founded with the greatest intentions, but all involve administration and fund-raise in the same area. They need to pull together - putting resources into helping veterans who might otherwise be left on the streets.'

A third voice - from a senior military charity co-ordinator who asked to remain anonymous because he feared retaliation for breaking ranks - told the Mail: 'Some wealthy charities have become slick marketing outfits. 'They are into merchandising and have websites

selling everything from 'poppy' dog collars, umbrellas and cushions to rose-gold petal cufflinks at £749.99 a pair. They advertise and sell products aggressively and this eats away at profits from donations. 'All the time I hear from disillusioned ex-military and their families begging for help with housing and health problems. They bang on the door of the charities and don't seem to get it.'

Given the mounting anger among veterans, the Mail decided to investigate why so many of our ex-military have, somehow, slipped through the net when their charities are so well resourced. Andy Price, 41, a former rifleman in the Devonshire and Dorset Regiment lives in Weymouth, Dorset. In 2017, Andy could no longer work because of PTSD after seeing a colleague killed in Afghanistan. He needed help paying his council tax bills. 'At first, I contacted Combat Stress [a mental health charity for veterans] to find they had a 10-month waiting list,' he says. He then turned to the Royal British Legion and ended up in a lengthy fight with them. He says he was asked to prove his council tax case was genuine by the charity and, at his lowest point, even planned his own suicide because the process was taking so long. 'There was so much form-filling it was unbelievable,' he says. 'They told me to wait six months until I was summoned to court for non-payment of council tax before they would consider help. It was very stressful. It was only when it got to court that they helped me by making a contribution, so the matter got settled. I went through a lot.'

So desperate did Andy become, and so concerned about the absence of immediate help, that he set up his own support service for veterans who are struggling, calling it The Veterans Hub. 'We should not exist,' he says with feeling. 'We should not be needed.' Andy's hub offers a relaxed social environment where veterans can have a hot drink, cake and a chat. It now has 150 regular users, aged between 20 and 96.

Six volunteer staff rely on donations and grants to cover overheads of up to £15,000 a year. The hub also gives financial advice on benefits and housing to ex-servicemen. One man who sought help is Lee Fudge, 52, an ammunition technician with the Royal Logistics Corps in Northern Ireland, Bosnia and Kosovo where he was injured in a blast before being medically discharged in 2004. Lee worked as a sales rep until his military injuries led to such severe arthritis that he had to leave the job in 2017. He told me he 'navigated' the benefits' system to top up his army pension. 'I contacted SSAFA, the Armed Forces Charity,' he says 'and they had only one representative in their office for one day a week. So that was no good.' More recently, he turned to the RBL, applying for an emergency grant to cover the cost of moving into a housing association flat at short notice after being on the waiting list for seven years.

Though it was an application for 'emergency help', the RBL process was 'painfully slow', he says. 'Once you actually speak to someone at the Legion, your request for money is passed up the line. An outreach worker came to see me and went over my service record and the

forms I needed to fill in. I got a call many days later asking me for more information and to photocopy extra paperwork and send it over.'

The trouble was he was about to lose his new flat. 'I had to accept it [the offer of the flat] within 28 hours - and move in ten days. 'In the end I successfully pleaded with the Legion. We all know how rich it is. You can see they throw money at Remembrance events. 'But they don't seem to offer a process to help veterans. It is a minefield of bureaucracy. I may be wrong, but the money men seem to have taken over the Legion which has lost its caring side.'

His story is similar to others we heard. In the seaside resort of Eastbourne, East Sussex, Steve Scudder, 57, has set up a drop-in centre for veterans. It is called the Blue Van - after a popular NAAFI van in Germany which provided hot food and drink to troops - and provides legal and financial advice with the support of military charities including Combat Stress. Steve, who was in the Territorial Army for 34 years and is now an NHS learning adviser, says: 'More of the charities' money should filter down to veterans. In the U.S. and Australia there is one centralised point of access which allows them to go to one organisation for help. There are so many different UK charities which are not co-ordinated. The lack of money at grassroots level is costing dozens of lives every year.'

Graham Cosham, 62, suffers from PTSD and uses the Blue Van centre. He served in Northern Ireland, Berlin, Belize and worked in bomb disposal in Kuwait after the first Gulf War. He saw colleagues blown up there, one just four feet away from him. He, too, feels the big charities hold on to money. 'Instead of stockpiling cash,' he says, 'they need to adopt a more "can-do" attitude to veterans.' In truth, the Government is taking action. Last summer, in one of his first acts as Prime Minister, Boris Johnson announced an Office for Veterans' Affairs to marshal life-long support for the estimated 2.5 million ex-military personnel in Britain. It will not save the hotels, however. The RBL argues that closure is the best option and that the resources are better directed

elsewhere. 'We are now consulting with staff about our proposals to close the charity's four hotels as support is available [to veterans] through other providers or more cost-effective means,' it told the Mail.

Hotel occupancy rates, which are good, did not influence the decision, according to the Legion. 'We have a duty to spend funds on activity that will have the greatest impact on the toughest challenges faced by our veteran community. 'Since 2016, the charity has seen a 20 per cent increase in people needing basic support with housing, financial issues, mental health and mobility,' a spokesman told the Mail. 'The average expenditure per household through our immediate needs funding has risen 45 per cent to £1,330 in that time.' It added that in 2018, the last year figures are available, it spent £56 million on welfare services and helped 42,871 veterans.

But why are there so many complaints about the time veterans have to wait to get help, when they often need immediate assistance? The Legion said: 'We are reviewing how we work and aim to be a more agile and responsive organisation, prioritising our support to tackle the tough challenges faced by our community today.' This will be scant comfort for the hotels' supporters.

In Southport, Tim Petford, 78, who served in the artillery and is the town's poppy appeal co-ordinator, told us: 'We are furious. 'Why has Byng House to shut when it costs a pittance to run compared to the money the Legion raises? I think I'll lose a lot of poppy appeal collectors next November over this. My deputy is refusing to help any more.'

The unfortunate timing of the Legion's announcement about the hotels, a few days after the 2019 Poppy Appeal ended last November, left a nasty taste. Thousands of veteran volunteers had just finished trawling the streets in all weathers selling poppies to raise funds for the charity. Perhaps the most damning comment of all comes from Mike Rubery in Bridlington, who says: 'We feel the Royal British Legion has treated us with disrespect.'

SUBMARINERS 'CROSSED THE BAR' REPORTED UP TO 31st JANUARY 2020

Branch	Date	Name	Rank/Rate	O/N	Age	Submarine Service
Dolphin Branch	25th September 2019	Dennis McCarthy Cooper	Chief Petty Officer Medical Assistant	P061090Q	76	Submarine Service from February 1971 to September 1983 in REVENGE (S) (on recommissioning at Rosyth in Aug/Sep 1975) & SPARTAN
ARNO Member	1 st December 2019	Anthony John Cooke	Rear Admiral	N/A	92	Commodore Clyde 1973 to 1975
Submarine Officers Association	5th January 2020	Timothy Everard	Lieutenant Commander	N/A	84	Submarine Service from July 1956 to January 1977 in TUDOR), TEREDO, CACHALOT, TABARD, GRAMPUS (IL), TALENT (CO), REPULSE (P) (IL) & OXLEY (RAN) (CO)
Scottish Branch	6 th January 2020	Ray A Edwards	Lieutenant Commander	CO30193D	70	Submarine Service from 1966 to 1999 in DREADNOUGHT (1967 to 1970), REPULSE (P) (1970 to 1972), DREADNOUGHT (1972 to 1973) & WARSPITE (1974 to 1976)
Plymouth Branch (ex-Colchester)	8th January 2020	Joseph G (Joe) Dale	Fleet Chief Petty Officer Marine Engineering Artificer (P)	P/MX 842910	88	Submarine Service from 1953 to 1973 in SLEUTH (1953 to 1955), SELENE (1955 to 1957), THERMOPYLAE (1957 to 1960), ANCHORITE (1961), TABARD (1961 to 1963), CHURCHILL (1968 to 1971 & on commissioning in Barrow on 15th July 1970) & VALIANT (1971 to 1972 on Recommissioning) on 12th May 1972)
Non-member	10 th January 2020	Frederick Knight Fowler, MiD	Lieutenant, RCNVR	N/A	102	Submarine Service in WWII in SCEPTRE (1943), TRUCULENT (1944) & UNITED
Ex-Manchester Branch	10 th January 2020	William Leslie Donnelly	Leading Seaman	P/JX 303701	96	WWII Submarine Service in TUNA & TRUCULENT
Nottingham Branch	12th January 2020	Brian Wainwright	Leading Signalman/LTO	P/SSX 890136	84	Submarine Service from May 1957 to March 1960 in SENESCHAL
Non-member	12 th January 2020	Gary Leafe (aka Dobson)	TBA	TBA	40	Submarine Service in VIGILANT & VENGEANCE
Ex Derbyshire Branch	January 2020	Albert William Birchnall	Stoker Mechanic	P/SKX 788773	91	Submarine Service from August 1946 to 2nd November 1953 in TRUCULENT (3rd December 1946 to 5th April 1948), SCOTSMAN (6th April 1948 to 17th September 1951) & RG Chatham (18th September 1951 to 2nd November 1953)
Submarine Officers Association	16th January 2020	Peter G (Spam) Hammersley, CB, OBE	Rear Admiral (E)	N/A	91	Submarine Service 1954 in ALARIC (EO 30th August 1954), TIPTOE & DREADNOUGHT (30th May 1960 & on commissioning on 17th April 1963)
Ex West of Scotland Branch	19th January 2020	David Lakeland	Warrant Officer Coxswain	D099440V	71	Submarine Service from 1971 to 1991 in REVENGE, RENOWN, RESOLUTION & ORACLE

Non-member	23 rd January 2020	Anthony E Braddick	Warrant Officer 2 (ET)(MESM)	TBA	TBA	Submarine Service including RENOWN (P) on 21st November 1992 & VENGEANCE (1st Commission Crew on 27th November 1999)
Submarine Officers Association	24th January 2020	Ralph Roger Chapman, CBE	Lieutenant	N/A	74	Submarine Service from 196* to 197* in DOLPHIN, RORQUAL, WALRUS & SWIFTSURE
Ex Southampton Branch	24 th January 2020	Martin R Webb	LMEM (M)	D176831Q	59	Submarine Service from October 1984 to April 1994 in VALIANT (1985 to 1991) & VANGUARD (1991 to 1994)
Welsh Branch	25 th January 2020	Fred A Read	Leading Radio Operator	P059299	75	Submarine Service from 1965 to 1971 in ANCHORITE, ANDREW & FINWHALE
Gosport Branch	26 th January 2020	Paul Mitchell	Chief Petty Officer Coxswain	D110367G	67	Submarine Service from 1975 to 1992 in RENOWN, VALIANT, RESOLUTION & REVENGE
Ex Nottingham Branch	January 2020	David H Pank	LM(E)	P/KX 921247	84	Submarine Service from July 1961 to August 1967 in TIPTOE, THERMOPYLAE & SWIFTSURE