



# 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

Issue No: 260

[www.submarinersassociation.co.uk](http://www.submarinersassociation.co.uk)

March 2022



## INDEX

Editorial	Pages 2 & 3
Secretary Report	Pages 3
Social Secretary	Pages 3 & 4
WWII Submarine Losses	Pages 4 & 5
HMS ANSON - Trim Dive	Pages 5 & 6
DDH Extension	Page 6
HMS VENGEANCE - back from Patrol	Pages 7 & 8
SMERAS Families Day	Pages 8 to 10
Desmond Gerrish Biography (continued)	Pages 9 to 12
Book Review	Pages 12 & 13
Crossed the Bar	Page 14

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### Cover Picture: Barrow and Morecambe Bay Branch Members at the 2022 'First Footing'

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*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**

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## EDITORIAL

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### Hello Everybody,

Well, that's February over and done with – now for March - which looks as if it could be quite busy one way and another starting with the Branch Meeting on Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> March. At the Meeting we will need to decide how our Delegate should vote on the Gosport Branch Proposal (One Man One Vote) and NMC Recommendations (Submarine Family and One Man One Vote) at the National Council Conference in Leicester later this month. There are some very important decisions to be taken as these matters could significantly change the way the Submariners Association does its business and how it is funded and could result in quite a few major changes to the SA Rules and Constitution. If you have any concerns or opinions over what is being Proposed and Recommended, please read the NCC Agenda and all the supporting Documentation carefully and come along to the meeting to make your views known.

As you will see from the front-page photo the February 'First Footing' to the Morecambe Bay Branch was well attended as usual – all the usual faces were there - plus a few new ones! For those who quite didn't make it this time Alex is organising another trip to meet them all at the Morecambe Brewhouse in June.

No news yet about any local events supporting either the 'Falklands 40' Anniversary or the Queen's Platinum Jubilee – I'm sure there will be some local events so if you hear of anything being arranged, please let the Branch Committee know.

Two reports this month supplied by the PR Team at Faslane. The first one is about the recent return from patrol of HMS VENGEANCE and the second is about the Families Day at the new SMERAS facility in the Base. SMERAS is the successor to the DOLPHIN SETT and is the 'Submarine Escape Rescue and Abandonment System' facility and this is your first chance for a glimpse inside. No more 100 ft Escape Tower and no more 'Suit Escapes' or 'Free' ascents at 30 ft, 60 ft & 100 ft! How many times did you 'do the Tank'? My paybook says eight times including a 'Dry Run' in 1966 - before joining VALIANT and another in 1989 – while preparing for ASTUTE Sea Trials!

Both reports from Faslane indicate the return of the Base to some form of normality with families and others now able to access the Base

There is a report (with photos) on the recent movements of HMS ANSON into the middle of the Devonshire Dock for the successful Trim Dive and Incline experiments. Another step on the way towards 'Acceptance', 'Commissioning' and 'In Service'.

The Desmond Gerrish Story is continued – in this month's extract he describes the movements of the Submarine Depot Ship HMS FORTH from Suez to Singapore in 1965.

Some late news! Are you going to be in Gosport this April? If you are, then remember that the **HMS AFFRAY Memorial Service** will be held at the HMS AFFRAY Memorial on Gosport waterfront on Sunday 17th April at 1045. On completion all are welcome at the Gosport Conservative Club.

That's about it for now – see you all at the Branch Meeting on Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> March – usual time – usual place and don't be late!

**Best Regards**

**Barrie**

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### SECRETARY'S DIT

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#### **Hello Everyone**

The following email correspondence has been received and where necessary distributed to Branch Members:

- a. From National Secretary: Email with NMC January 2022 meeting minutes attached.
- b. From National Secretary: Email with NMC Emergency Meeting minutes attached. Meeting held to discuss changes to Recommendation 1 that will be put forward for voting on at the AGM. (The Recommendations will be discussed and debated at Branch AOB on 1 March).
- c. Response from Barrie Downer on the minutes of the Emergency NMC Meeting.
- d. From National Secretary: Email with NMC February 2022 zoom meeting minutes attached. (discussing The Submarine Family (TSF))
- e. From National Secretary: Email with NCC Conference Agenda/Proposals attached.
- f. Email from Steve May. Commenting on concerns and issues with the Recommendations being put forward to Conference.
- g. Email from Steve May and response from SA Deputy Chairman and Branch Treasurer on issues from NMC February minutes regarding Data Protection and the proposed TSF database.
- h. Email from Robert Pointer. Raising a query on the relationship and responsibility of finances between the TSF and the RNRM Board and the reporting of account to the Charity Commission.
- i. Email from Barrie Downer. Commenting on the NMC Zoom meeting minutes and the concerns raised by Steve May. Barrie gives a detailed background account of the activities in leading up to the proposed NCC Recommendations and possible ways forward.
- j. Email from Ben Britten commenting on the NCC Agenda and NMC Emergency meeting.
- k. Email from Tim Chittenden commenting of the NCC Recommendations and Proposals.
- l. Email from Dave Oakes on the passing of ex CMEM Paul Rowlinson. Paul was not a member, but some members did service with Paul and attended his funeral at Thorncliff Crematorium. His family was asked if they wanted the SA to attend but they declined.
- m. Emails from Roger McMorris and Peter Schofield reference annual subscription queries. Both are to be resolved via the Branch Secretary and Treasurer.
- n. Email from National Treasurer. SA Monthly Balance report. The Main Account has a balance of £85.5K.
- o. Email from Malcolm detailing the current Branch Slops Stock List.
- p. Email from Ben Britten reference his visit to Joan Cole who, despite her son David being in the Ukraine, is doing well.
- q. Email from the National Secretary – Distributing the February Issue of the RNA Semaphore Circular containing details both RNA F40 and RBL Commemoration Events.
- r. Email from WRS Chair giving details of the WRS AGM meeting and inviting Branch Secretary to attend (via MS Team). (Which he did).

As you can see from the list above the theme of this month's correspondence has been the National Conference Recommendations and Proposals. This will be discussed, debated, and voted on at the Branch Meeting on 1st March. In support of this several documents have been distributed to members. As far as reasonably practical all the relevant and available information is there for members to consider before voting and you are encouraged to attend if possible. If not please forward any comments to the Secretary so they can be put to the members for consideration during the discussion.

**David A J Smith**

**SA Barrow Branch Secretary**

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### SOCIAL SECRETARY REPORT

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**Chairman, Ladies & Gentlemen**

Happy March everybody, hope that this finds everyone well.

February saw us have our first trip away to the Morecambe Branch. What a great bunch of lads they are. Great time, loads of drink and fantastic company; as always. Can't wait to meet up with them in June - woohoo!!!

It also saw Valentine's day and my birthday – not a bad month at all!!

Next up is the Buddies in Boats reunion coming to Barrow first weekend in March. Friday night (4<sup>th</sup>) at the Blue Lamp and then at the Legion on Saturday (5<sup>th</sup>). If you ain't busy see you there.

March is the St Patrick's do - Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> March at the RBL - £6 each tickets on sale now which gives you live entertainment, disco, raffle and lots more. I haven't sold many tickets so I am hoping that we have a big rush on at the meeting – Use it or Loose it!!

Of course end of March is the SA Reunion/Conference at the Holiday Inn in Leicester

I have this year's programme available so if you are a social animal and do attend functions please feel free to ask/take one.

Yours Aye

Alex

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### **MARCH 2022 BRANCH CALENDAR**

Branch Meeting	Tues 1 <sup>st</sup> Mar
Buddies in Boats Visit	4 <sup>th</sup> to 6 <sup>th</sup> Mar
St Patrick's Party	Sat 19 <sup>th</sup> Mar
SA NCC & Reunion Leicester	25 <sup>th</sup> -27 <sup>th</sup> Mar
Committee Meeting	As Required

### **APRIL 2022 BRANCH CALENDAR**

Branch Meeting & AGM	Tues 5 <sup>th</sup> Apr
AE1/AE2	Sun 24 <sup>th</sup> Apr
St George's Day Parade	Sun 24 <sup>th</sup> Apr
Army/Navy Rigby (Twickenham)	29 <sup>th</sup> -30 <sup>th</sup> Apr
Committee Meeting	As Required

### **MAY 2022 BRANCH CALENDAR**

Branch Meeting	Tues 3 <sup>rd</sup> May
Cameron Blue Plaque (Carlisle)	Sat 7 <sup>th</sup> May
Branch Birthday Party at Brown Cow	Sat 14 <sup>th</sup> May
Submariners Memorial Unveiling	Wed 18 <sup>th</sup> May
Buddies in Boats (Bridlington)	27 <sup>th</sup> -29 <sup>th</sup> May
Committee Meeting	As Required

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### **MARCH BRANCH BIRTHDAYS**

C. (Charles) Berendt	01/03/1982
J (Jean) Brumby	01/03/1948
T.R. (Charlie) Henshaw	05/03/1946
R. (Bob) Arthur	07/03/1948
J. (John) Duffy	13/03/1959
J. W. (Jeff) Bennett	18/03/1964
P. (Peter) Dow	28/03/1967
J. (George) Hughes	30/03/1943
A.B. (Alan) Hoskins	31/03/1949
K. (Karl) Williams	31/03/1981

**Happy Birthday All!**

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### **REMEMBERING FORMER BRANCH**

#### **MEMBERS**

#### **'CROSSED THE BAR' - MARCH**

Arthur Roberts	1990
William Farrell	1990
George Layden	2004
Hughie Short	2017
Henry Sibbitt	2019
Michael Dack	2020

#### **RESURGAM**

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### **DISCLAIMER**

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Nothing printed may be construed as policy or an official announcement unless so stated. Otherwise, the Association accepts no liability on any issue in this Newsletter.

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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 [frozennorth55@gmail.com](mailto:frozennorth55@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 2022 Issue. Please ensure you have any information with me by the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month to ensure its inclusion in the next issue. Thank you to everyone who contributed to this edition – keep them stories coming!

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### **SUBMARINE LOSSES OF WWII** **MARCH 1942**

One Submarine was lost in March 1942. The Submarine was HMS P39:

HMS P39 was a 'U' Class submarine. During an air raid on Malta on 26<sup>th</sup> March 1942 Submarine P39, which was alongside at the Dockyard for repairs, was hit by a bomb from a STUKA dive bomber. The bomb exploded under the Engine Room Artificer's Mess and



almost blew the submarine in two. There were no casualties as the crew were all ashore in shelters. The submarine was later raised, beached and was 'written off' as a 'constructive total loss.'

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## SUBMARINE COMMISSIONING CREW LISTS

Commissioning, De-commissioning and Re-dedication Crew Lists – are still wanted, thank you very much.

I am still looking for 'First Commission' Crew Lists as follows: PORPOISE, GRAMPUS, CACHALOT,

WALRUS, OBERON, ONYX, ORPHEUS, ODIN, OTUS, UNICORN & AUDACIOUS

Also looking for copies of Crew Lists for subsequent Commissions of any 'O' Class, 'P' Class or Nuclear Boat – SSN & SSBN. Crew Lists for any Commissioning or Decommissioning of any Diesel 'A,' 'S' or 'T' Class Boat refitting in Home Dockyards or in Malta, Singapore or Sydney are also required. 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. Thanks, Barrie Downer

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### HMS ANSON

HMS ANSON was moved from Wet Dock Quay into the middle of Devonshire Dock and, on 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> February, the boat dived for the first time for Trim & Incline checks. The two photos below - taken from the Michaelson Road Bridge - show the Submarine prior to the Trim Dive and also, show the progress with the construction work on the new Wet Dock Quay.



**HMS ANSON IN DEVONSHIRE DOCK**

The Royal Navy's next attack submarine is one step closer to entering service after completing a major milestone. HMS ANSON was submerged completely in a 'trim dive' at Devonshire Dock in Barrow on 10th February 2022. Crew Members checked and tested onboard systems to ensure they were water-tight, as well as other capabilities.

The 7,400-tonne, 97-metre-long HMS ANSON is the Navy's fifth Astute-class submarine - four of the seven other vessels are already in service.

The Commanding Officer of ANSON, Commander David 'Bing' Crosby, said: "The trim and basin dive is a key step in the commissioning of HMS Anson.

"This period will enable us to set the boat's internal weight, prove her water-tight integrity, test sensors and put some of our systems through their tests ahead of sailing for the first time."

A 'trim dive' is essential to help engineers establish the vessel's centre of gravity and precise weight, with more than 60 crew members and tonnes of ballast on board to help test stability.

HMS ASTUTE, HMS ARTFUL, HMS AMBUSH and HMS AUDACIOUS are the other Astute-class subs to have gone through similar testing before commissioning into the Royal Navy



**PROGRESS WITH NEW WET DOCK QUAY & HMS ANSON IN DEVONSHIRE DOCK.  
DEVONSHIRE DOCK HALL IN BACKGROUND**



**HMS ANSON in Devonshire Dock for the Trim Dive**

(Picture: BAE Systems).

HMS ANSON is set to be the fifth in line and, the final two, HMS AGAMEMNON and HMS AGINCOURT, are at different stages of construction in the Devonshire Dock Hall at the Barrow shipyard.



## DEVONSHIRE DOCK HALL EXTENSION



The continuing development of the Barrow Shipyard continues apace. As will be seen from the above photo (taken from the Dock Museum Grounds) the Devonshire Dock Hall Extension is still growing and, currently (26<sup>th</sup> February) the build has reached the height of the original entrance doors.

Not sure how much higher it is going to get but, when the concrete works are complete, insulation and cladding will be needed.

It is also understood that the re-cladding of the whole of the Devonshire Dock Hall is planned!

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### **FAMILIES GATHER ONCE AGAIN TO WELCOME HOME SUBMARINE CREW**

ROYAL NAVY MEDIA RELEASE

HMNBC 2/22 Thursday, 17 February 2022

There was much excitement, tears of joy and laughter recently, when families gathered to welcome home their loved ones onboard Royal Navy Vanguard-Class submarine, HMS VENGEANCE, as she returned home from patrol over Christmas. The Vanguard class vessel and her 140-strong crew were re-united with family, friends, and loved-ones at her home port at HM Naval Base Clyde.

For the last couple of years families have not been able to come together to welcome their loved ones home due to covid restrictions. However now, with the rules relaxed, mums, dads, brothers, sisters, partners, and children headed to Rhu to catch a glimpse of one of the giant ballistic submarines glide past.

The families, who had travelled from all over the UK, enjoyed rolls of sausage and bacon to keep them warm as they waited and gift bags were handed out to the children to keep them amused.

After waving banners and cheering as the submarine passed by, the welcoming party of over 200 people, headed up to the Naval Base to be reunited with their loved ones. They were hosted in the Warrant Officers and Senior Rates Mess, where some refreshments and entertainment were laid on for everyone while they waited.

Commodore Jim Perks CBE, Commodore Submarine Service said: "It was a pleasure to welcome the families onto the Naval Base to welcome home HMS VENGEANCE after what has been a challenging period at sea, including being away from home over the festive period.

"We continue to ask a lot of our people and they consistently rise to those challenges. Having the families back on base for the first time since the start of Covid restrictions definitely makes the homecoming more special."

The homecoming event was organised by Royal Navy Family and People Support, Submarine Support Crew and HMNB Clyde staff to provide an opportunity for families to have fun and connect with one another. Volunteers were on hand to answer any questions and provide support, especially to those who were experiencing this for the first time.

HMS VENGEANCE is one of four Vanguard class submarines which, between them, maintain the country's Continuous At Sea Deterrent. Since 1969, at least one Royal Navy ballistic submarine has been on patrol, a constant deterrent against the most extreme threats to our national security and way of life.

Sent by: Royal Navy, Communications & Influence (RNMCE) Regional Press Office (Scotland & Northern Ireland), HM Naval Base Clyde.



Families take pictures as HMS VENGEANCE sails past



Families wait at Rhu Spit for a glimpse of the submarine



HMS VENGEANCE with some crew on the Casing



HMS VENGEANCE returns home to HMNB Clyde

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## **FAMILIES DAY AT THE SMERAS FACILITY IN HM NAVAL BASE CLYDE**

ROYAL NAVY MEDIA RELEASE

HMNBC 3/22 Wednesday, 23 February 2022

"It was better than the Ninjago ride at Legoland!" That is how six-year-old Rhuairidh McClement described the new state-of-the-art submarine training facility at HM Naval Base Clyde. Loved ones were invited into the Base on Saturday, February 19, when a new Royal Navy training facility held its first Families Day.

The Submarine Escape, Rescue, Abandonment and Survival (SMERAS) Facility opened its doors to the families of staff members allowing them to see first-hand where their loved-one's work and the training they deliver to Submariners on a daily basis.

The building was officially opened in June last year by the Commodore-in-Chief of the Submarine Service, HRH Prince William, however due to restrictions at the time it was not possible for families to attend this event.



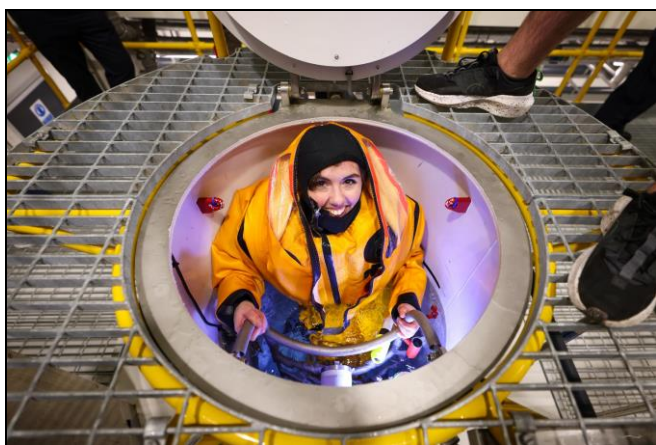
Around 44 visitors attended, including 22 children and they all enjoyed an action-packed day with a full demonstration of what the facility can provide. One of the highlights was watching the staff show how the state-of-the-art realistic simulator can mimic a variety of weather conditions and sea states.

Normally it would be students, however on Saturday, the staff had to jump in at the deep end and be put through their paces in the water, demonstrating to the group how to abandon a submarine and escape to life rafts. All of this while wind, rain and even thunder and lightning raged around them.

SMERAS training was relocated from SETT Fort Blockhouse to a new purpose-built facility in HMNB Clyde in November 2020. It brought a brand new, world leading dynamic SMERAS training solution, which needed to be designed, formatted, and delivered at the height of the Covid pandemic.

The Families Day was organised by the SMERAS training staff to showcase the new facility and was enjoyed by adults and children alike. Warrant Officer 1, Patrick Sheekey, Head of Training at SMERAS, who coordinated the event, said: "It is not an understatement to say that the team's effort and commitment since moving from Gosport have completely modernised and reinvigorated the approach taken to Submarine Escape Rescue and Abandonment and is looked at enviously by other Submarine operating nations."

He continued: "Although the building was officially opened by Commodore-in-Chief Submarines last year, due to the restrictions, it was impossible to invite the most important part of the team, namely our families and loved-ones, to the event. As such, with the kind permission of the Naval Base Commander, we are taking this first available opportunity to show them what we do."



One family member tries out the escape hatches



The staff demonstrate what the simulator can do



Rhuairidh McClement with Dad Commander Duncan McClement, CoS, FOST (SM)



One little girl is given a guided tour



Family members watch as loved ones demonstrate what the facility has to offer



All kinds of weather are recreated in the SMERAS pool

Sent by: Royal Navy, Communications & Influence (RNMCE) Regional Press Office (Scotland & Northern Ireland), HM Naval Base Clyde.

## THE DESMOND GERRISH AUTOBIOGRAPHY

(Continued from the February 2022 Issue of Periscope View)

### THROUGH THE SUEZ CANAL AND ON TO SINGAPORE

Captain SM had detailed me off to gather this intelligence, back in Athens, giving me plenty of time to pick and train up a small group of 'Gatherers'. I had the Ship's photographer, the two best sketch artists in the ship and a small group of Officers who had the best eyesight through binoculars. I chose the highest deck behind FORTH's funnel for my team to work from – raised the canvas screens – all of us, out of sight from the Egyptian Pilots in FORTH's Bridge.

The Navigator, John Allen, stuck on the Bridge to work with the Pilots, was the lynchpin of my team, having trained up his Radar Plotters to keep a mapped track of FORTH's exact position every minute, in the Radar Room – again, out of sight of the Pilots. We simply synchronised watches between my Spy-Deck and the Radar Room and agreed every sighting we made would be put on the map when the object was exactly at right angle to FORTH. We observers estimated the range, assisted by some crude hand-held range finders. We were looking for Anti-Aircraft Missile sites, A.A. Gun positions, military Radars, Tanks, and anything else with a military connotation, as far as the eye could see.

Before we started, I knew Egyptian Intelligence (assisted by Russians who were good at this game), would know precisely what we were doing and attempt to fool us with mock-up sites, other decoys etc., while hiding the real hardware with camouflage etc.

Even at FORTH's stately speed of six knots through the Canal, we Intelligence Gatherers were flat out, cataloguing all the military sites we passed. We got a much-needed break, lasting two hours, as our southbound convoy anchored in the Bitter Lakes – the halfway stage of the Canal – waiting for the northbound convoy of shipping to clear the southern half of the narrow Canal.

As soon as the anchor was dropped, we all rushed inside the ship to get away from the scorching Egyptian sun – we had been in the sun with no shade at all for five½ hours. A hot meal and a rest was welcome too, the chief part of the rest being for the eyes, out of the glare of the sun on sand and from the strain of looking continually through powerful binoculars. We also used the 2-hour break to consolidate the vast amount of detail of military sites we had frantically scribbled down. Thus refreshed, and better practiced at what we were doing, made the second leg through the Canal easier for us.

The Navigator and his Team undertook the drawing of a comprehensive map, showing the exact position of all the Armaments and Airfields we had detected, ready for immediate R.A.F. despatch to Admiralty as soon as FORTH arrived in Aden. Admiralty took the unusual step of congratulating FORTH on the quality and volume of military intelligence so gained. Not bad for a Team of Amateurs! Once through the Red Sea, FORTH put into Aden – a major British Military Base in those days, before Britain withdrew a year later.

We stayed 3 days, to top up fuel and fresh provisions and deal with the avalanche of mail – private and official – and to give the Garrison the standard breath of fresh air of a bunch of new faces recently out of U.K. My chief recollection of Aden, as we rested and socialised with the Army and R.A.F., was that it was the hottest place I had ever been to. The heat was searing and scorchingly dry, nights as well as day.

We left Aden to continue eastwards heading for Cochin, on the western side of the bottom tip of India. Cochin, a major port, just inside the estuary of the Cochin River, was also India's second biggest Naval Base and our reason for this stopover was to enhance the partnership between R.N. and Indian Navy, one of our big allies in the Far East. The

partnership had been going on since I was there last in H.M.S. WILKIESTON and the 104th Squadron, back in 1961. (Now 1966).

We stayed a full week in Cochin, mainly doing Staff work with the Indian Navy. This left ample time for socialising with our Indian Navy hosts – most of their Officers were Dartmouth trained, so we all met old friends from our differing Years of training back in the U.K.

The Tea Planters - mostly English – living in the foothills of Southern India had invited forty of us, Officers and Sailors, to join them for the day. I was the only Officer to accept this particular invitation and set off at the crack of dawn, together with 39 Chiefs, Petty Officers and Sailors, in a rickety Indian coach, driven by a Peter Sellers look-alike for the 120-mile journey to the Tea Plantations.

The road, which made its tortuous route from sea level, rising all the time up to the foothills, had a reasonable tarmac surface, but was narrow and used by all sorts of traffic – rickshaws, 3-wheeler vans, pedestrians driving herds of goats etc. – causing our barefoot, turbaned driver to make continuous urgent blasts on the coach's horn. We loved it. At least the forty of us travellers were seeing every aspect of real life in Southern India – its people and its breathtaking terrain of forested valleys and steep-sided gorges.

We arrived at the chosen Plantation by mid-forenoon, to be greeted by a small group of Planters and wives, who gave us a snack lunch prior to the afternoon event which was a tour of the nearby National Park Reserve of lakes swirling around a flooded petrified forest – trees which had become fossilised by higher lake waters eons ago. The whole area teemed with wildlife, including monkeys, bird life and Indian tigers. The irregular shaped lakes were surrounded by a lush tropical vegetation which we did not enter – snakes, monkeys, tigers – but kept to the safety of large flat-bottomed boats which we paddled around the lakes – one Planter with a rifle in each punt – just in case! A fascinating experience which kept us occupied until 6 p.m. Then a fast ride back to the Plantation for sundowners!

Our friends in Cochin had briefed us that the Plantations were fairly remote, cut off from Cochin in the worst of the Monsoons when roads and tracks suffered landslides. So, what to take them to boost their reserves of everyday things we take for granted in towns with shops – after all, forty of us were going to eat out of their domestic reserves at the evening Bar-B-Q – and the answer was unanimous; just take 'em Scotch Whiskey! The Planters had plenty of whiskey – but it was Indian. Scotch whiskey was not allowed to be imported into India to protect the trade of their own firewater! No problems for us in a large Duty-free warship and we all chipped in to give them a couple of crates of this sought-after commodity. Well, if we had given them boxes of gold, they couldn't have been more delighted. We went a further step at sundowners and said we would drink the Indian, leaving more of the Scotch for their Fort Knox cupboard.

By now a few more Planters and wives from outlying Plantations had arrived and the Bar-B-Q actually got underway by late evening. Indian Servants did all the cooking and chores, which also meant we ate Indian! An ages old fundamental governing the lives of all mariners is that you do not miss your ship when she departs any port. FORTH was departing Cochin at noon tomorrow. So, I announced the coach would leave at midnight. Mutiny!

The Planters thought we were spending several days with them – beds had been prepared around all the Planters' houses. My 39 Crew – post Bar-B-Q were in a very happy state – FORTH was like a dim distant recollection sitting around the Jacaranda Trees, in the warm evening air, imbibing Indian whiskey – they all assured me it was a perfectly practical plan to return to Cochin next morning in time for a noon sailing.

No way. It was a 3-hour drive given no breakdowns and a clear road and this little lot were not going to be up with the larks in the morning! Midnight departure it was, as I robustly stuck to my guns against the onslaught of begging and beseeching of Planters and Sailors to stay overnight.

Religion assisted my plan. Our coach driver was a Muslim, so not only was he sober and rested, but also keen to do the night ride in order to be back in Cochin for prayers at his Mosque at first light in the morning. And so, it was. We rumbled off into the darkness at midnight. Me and a couple of others succumbed to a food bug and its ghastly searing diarrhea symptom, causing me to stop the coach five times for imperative squits in the roadside bushes! I blessed the privacy of darkness.

I was never so relieved as to get to my cabin in FORTH that night and remained there, hors-de-combat, for several days afterwards. FORTH sailed at the appointed time and apart from a brief stop at Colombo, in Ceylon, to collect mail, we were on our final leg to Singapore via the crowded Straits of Malacca.

Two things happened as FORTH approached the Straits. Our Surgeon Captain diagnosed Captain S/M's state of health as being unfit to continue his duties for the time being – the decision was made by Captain S/M and readily endorsed by Doc. – Ken Martin was not a well man, heart palpitations etc. This automatically gave full command of H.M.S. FORTH to the second-in-command – the Commander! Even though our Commander – John Schofield – was on the newly created Dry List – Senior Officers who could receive commands of Shore Bases, but not seagoing warships. And John Schofield's previous Naval career was made up of Staff jobs chiefly, involving little sea going - hence him being on the Dry List. He cleared this newly created anachronism in one minute following the Doc.'s announcement. He sent for the Navigator, the First Lieutenant (Dicky Dunne) and me. He said we were far better skilled than he was at steering FORTH through the Malacca Straits and basically, handed command of FORTH to us.



Funnily enough, the quixotic and totally illegal (under Admiralty Law) arrangement worked for this imperative situation – the huge FORTH with over five hundred men onboard steaming ahead at 14 knots, entering one of the busiest shipping Straits in the world as sunset approached.

John Allen, our superb Navigator, had been on the Bridge anyway, giving the Officer-of-the-Watch safe courses to steer as we wound through the Nicobar Islands at the approach to the Straits. We three immediately agreed that I would take the Captain's function of steering FORTH through the shipping traffic – immediate alterations of course to avoid collisions with other ships, interpreting the International Rule of the Road etc. And me to have prime role, since I was the only one onboard who had been Captain of my own ships. Dicky Dunne assisted me greatly by studying the navigation lights of all shipping coming towards us through his binoculars and working out what angle they were relative to FORTH's track. The worst aspect at night to us newcomers was the hundreds of fishing sampans with their naphtha very bright lamps hung over the stern to attract shoals of fish. And while I continually altered course to avoid shipping and fishing boats, John was constantly fixing the ship's position and giving me safe courses to steer in deep water, away from shoals, rocks, and shallow patches. After several hours of this intense concentration, we were safely through the narrowest and busiest stretch of the Straits and the onset of daylight was also a great relief.

The second event went as previously planned. Cdr. S/M - Johnny Moore – had fixed for an R.A.F. helicopter to set him down on FORTH as we cleared the Malacca Straits, giving him 24 hours to brief Captain S/M before FORTH sailed into Singapore.

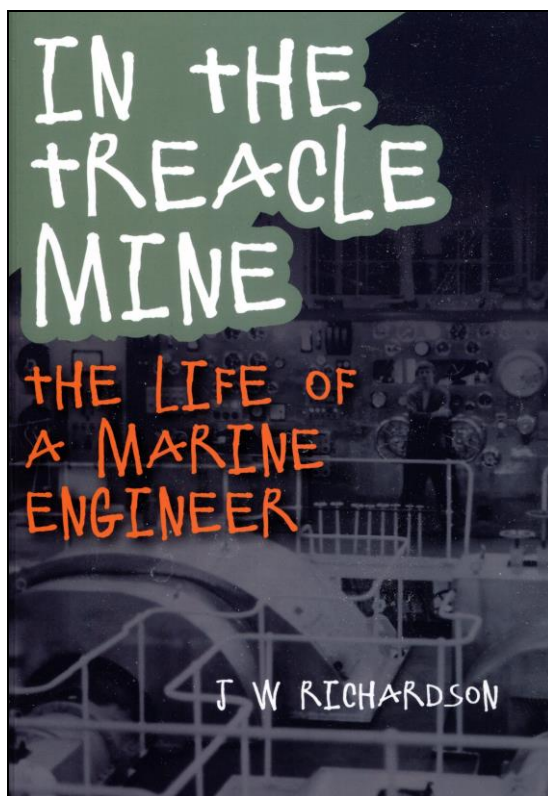
To be continued in the April 2022 Issue of Periscope View

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## BOOKS

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### **In the Treacle Mine (The Life of a Marine Engineer)**



By Editor

This time one for the 'Back Afties', Clankies and all you 'Steam Engineers'.

This month's book review is of 'In the Treacle Mine - the life of a Marine Engineer' By J. W. Richardson. J. W. is a Marine Engineer whose career started as a 1960's Engineering Cadet in the steam propelled Merchant Marine and whose career timescale probably mirrors those of many Submariner Engineers. Ships he served in – tankers of all sizes, container ships, ferries, sludge carriers and one paddler were propelled variously by steam reciprocating (triple expansion) engines, steam turbines and compound paddle diagonal engines before Merchant Marine propulsion was taken over almost entirely by

Diesel propulsion systems. He is obviously a steam propulsion fan, and he has a fund of knowledge in operating, maintaining, and repairing engines of all types and is able to describe his experiences in fine technical detail whilst maintain the reader's interest.

In retirement J W Richardson obviously still hankers after steam propulsion and volunteers on heritage railways – even becoming a qualified train driver to keep his hand in. However, he appears to believe that the days of steam propulsion at sea are long forgotten. As all of you 'Back Afties' will know that is very far from the case and Steam Propulsion is very much alive and well in the Submarine world – with Steam Generators, Feed Water Chemistry, Primary & Secondary systems, Steam Turbines etc. and everything he would find familiar with, perhaps, the exception of a Nuclear Reactor.

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### **Publishers Information**

In his autobiography J W Richardson describes his life as a Marine Engineer in the Merchant Navy during the final years of steam propulsion and the transition to diesel power. There are many interesting anecdotes about incidents that occurred during the author's career, his fellow shipmates, and descriptions of the places he visited. There is a wealth of information for Marine Engineering enthusiasts about steam and diesel propulsion machinery, how it worked and details of some of the defects and deficiencies encountered and how they were overcome.

If anyone has ever wondered what happens in the engine room when the Captain on the bridge rings 'Full Ahead' on the telegraph, then this book will enlighten the reader. This is a story of one man's life at sea, from his beginnings as a lowly Cadet to his qualification as a Chief Engineer.

There are many anecdotes about his experiences some amusing and some terrifying together with pen portraits of a few of his fellow seafarers and the places he visited. 'In the Treacle Mine' starts in the 1960s when steam power was still the preferred option for larger and more powerful ships but over the following decade, the availability of ever more powerful and more fuel-efficient, diesel engines sounded the death knell for steam propulsion. Now there are only a few preserved steamships left as a reminder of how things used to be down below in the 'treacle mine', which was how Geordie Marine Engineers described the engine-room.

Despite the fact that steam power has disappeared from everyday use, there are still a great many enthusiasts from all walks of life who are prepared to give up their spare time to ensure that steam lives on. This dedication means that heritage steam railways, steam traction engines and even the occasional preserved steamship, can continue to operate and give pleasure to millions of visitors every year.

One whole chapter is devoted to a voyage with an 'up and downer' (a steam reciprocating engine) and although the remaining steamers were all turbine vessels which may lack the same visual appeal, there will still be much that will be of interest to any steam enthusiast. Following his experiences with steam, the author eventually began working on motor ships, but these were also not without incident and there is much in this book that will spark the interest of anyone who enjoys stories of the sea and seafarers

ISBN 978-184995-488-4 240 × 170mm 256pp illustrated with c. 30 b/w photographs, softback @ £16.99. December 2021

Available from Whittles Publishing, Dunbeath, Caithness, Scotland, UK. KW6 6EG

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### SUBMARINERS 'CROSSED THE BAR' REPORTED FEBRUARY 2022

Branch	Date	Name	Rank/Rating	Official Number	Age	Submarine Service
Non-member	2 <sup>nd</sup> December 2021	Michael Patrick William Halden Paine	Surgeon Rear Admiral	TBA	82	Submarine Service from 1966 to 1970 in DOLPHIN & REPULSE (P) (MO 19th June 1967 & on Commissioning at Barrow on 28th September 1968 to 1970)
Non-member	2 <sup>nd</sup> February 2022	Darren Pedler	Chief Petty Officer Weapons Engineering Artificer (TS)	TBA	TBA	Submarine Service in VICTORIOUS (S) (1st Commission Crew) on 7th January 1995 & VENGEANCE (1st Commission Crew) on 27th November 1999
Non-member	4 <sup>th</sup> February 2022	Paul Rowlinson	Chief Marine Engineering Mechanic	TBA	66	Not given
Ex West of Scotland	10 <sup>th</sup> February 2022	Nicholas Oliver Gunning 'Nick' Knox	Commander MESM	CO 16413V	75	Submarine Service from 1972 to 2001 in DOLPHIN (1972), REPULSE (S) (2nd Commission 1972 & 1973 NL), CHURCHILL (1973 to 1975), OTTER (1975 to 1977), RNC Greenwich (1979 to 1980), COURAGEOUS (MEO 1980 to 1982), NEPTUNE (1984 to 1986), TRENCHANT (SEO 1986 to 1988), SM3 (1991 to 1992), NEPTUNE DSQ (1998 to 1999) & FOSM Faslane Staff (2000 to 2001)
Scottish Branch	15 <sup>th</sup> February 2022	Lloyd Wilkinson	Chief Petty Officer WEA	D087302F	78	Submarine Service from July 1972 to November 1986 in RESOLUTION (1974 to 1978), RENOWN (1978 to 1982) & REPULSE (1983 to 1986)
Vectis Branch	19th February 2022	Tom R Truman	Chief Petty Officer MEM	K894431F	89	Submarine Service from August 1952 to January 1973 in AURIGA, AMPHION, TACITURN, TRUNCHEON, ARTEMIS, TRUMP, ANCHORITE (on Commissioning at Singapore on 11th October 1962), RESOLUTION & OCELOT
Dolphin Branch	21st February 2022	David W Rosson	Petty Officer (2nd Coxswain)	P/JX 864004	89	Submarine Service from 1953 to 1963 in TRUNCHEON, ANDREW, ASTUTE, SENESCHAL & TUDOR
Non-member	February 2022	Adrian 'Ade' Richardson	TBA	TBA	TBA	Not given