



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: 248

www.submarinersassociation.co.uk

March 2021



INDEX

Editorial	Page 2
K13 Report	Page 4 & 5
Trainee Submariners	Page 5 & 6
Submarine Memorial	Page 6 to 8
Cold War Museum update	Page 8
Spearfish Mod 2 Trials	Pages 9
Desmond Gerrish Biography (continued)	Pages 10-12
U-96 Engine Room Clock	Pages 12-13
Crossed the Bar	Pages 14

BARROW BRANCH OFFICERS

Hon President:

Alan Hoskins

01229 588792

Abhoskins@btinternet.com

Chairman:

Richard Cambridge 01229 586668

Richardcambridge@outlook.com

Secretary:

David A J Smith 01229 583008

davidajsmith@msn.com

Social Secretary:

Alex Webb 01229 839551

alexjan1516@hotmail.com

Treasurer & Membership:

Mick Mailey 01229 821290

Michael.mailey@btinternet.com

Chaplaincy:

Vacancy

Committee Members:

Steve May 07974 357014

snm18463@yahoo.co.uk

Mark Butchart 07965 272933

m.butchart@hotmail.co.uk

Jeff Thomas 01229 464943

jeffbrendathomas@tiscali.co.uk

Welfare:

Mick Mailey 01229 821290

Michael.mailey@btinternet.com

Newsletter Editor:

Barrie Downer 01229 820963

frozenorth55@gmail.com

Standard Bearer:

Alex Webb 01229 839551

alexjan1516@hotmail.com

Slops:

Malcolm Hogg 07768 170325

bloke52@hotmail.co.uk

Website Manager:

Dave Oakes 01229 475140

Dave.oakes@btinternet.com

Cover Picture: HMS OCELOT in the Snow in Chatham Dockyard

'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,

Firstly some very sad news – in case you haven't heard already – Bett Spurling has very sadly passed away after being ill for some time. She moved down south to be closer to her daughter a while ago but has been kept in touch with Branch happenings via a posted copy of the monthly newsletter. Many Members will remember Bett as being a regular attendee at Branch social events and as someone always ready to get on the dance floor with her late husband Terry. She will be very much missed. I had a look through my photos and found a picture of her with Terry on the Canal Trip back in 2014 which I have included in this Newsletter.

So what else is going on? Not a lot as you will be aware with the continuation of lockdowns, social distancing, face masks and restrictions on travel etc. However, now we are being offered a route map back to 'normal life' and we must hope that 'normal life' is to be just that – go where you like when you like, meet who you like and pop into shops, restaurants and pubs just because you feel like it - with none of the continuing restrictions that so many keep going on about. Hopefully, most of you will have had your first Covid jab by now and are looking forward to your second one?

No Social Report again this month. Unfortunately – as you all know - the Social Programme

so carefully put together by Alex for 2020 had to be constantly changed and replanned as circumstances dictated and, in the end, nothing which was intended was able to go ahead – 2021 has started out in the same way! Alex is working on a Branch Social Programme for 2021 which, hopefully, will include most – if not all – of the usual events but we will just have to wait and see how things progress and if restrictions are either eased or lifted. The normal K13 Weekend programme was cancelled and the First Footing to the Morecambe Branch has been deferred and will be later than usual this year. Travel to Scotland is still not permitted except for work and, in any case, access to HMS Naval Base is not possible. This issue contains report on the limited K13 Remembrance Service at the Base Church - attended by Base personnel only - and the wreath laying and poppy crosses placed on the graves in the Garelochhead Cemetery. A Wreath was also laid at the Elder Park Memorial. This Memorial is now receiving some long overdue restoration work

In the meantime take it steady everyone – hopefully it won't be too long before we can all get back to normal, hold Branch Meetings, have our socials and other events, forget about masks, social-distancing and staying indoors – but at least we are till allowed to go out for walks, exercise and shopping!

Best Regards, **Barrie**



Terry and Bett Spurling on the Canal Trip - May 2014

MARCH 2021 BRANCH CALENDAR

March Branch Meeting Tues 2nd Mar
 Committee Meeting As Required

APRIL 2021 BRANCH CALENDAR

April Branch Meeting Tues 6th Apr
 St Georges Day Parade Sun 24th Apr
 Committee Meeting As Required

MAY 2021 BRANCH CALENDAR

May Branch Meeting Tues 4th May
 Committee Meeting As Required

NOTE: All March/April/May Meetings and Events are subject to cancellation at very short notice and are dependent on further Government advice!

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!

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

DISCLAIMER

This Newsletter is published by the Submariners Association (Barrow in Furness) and is © 2021. The opinions expressed in these pages are not necessarily the opinion of the Editor, The Submariners Association, the MoD or the Submarine Service unless otherwise stated. The Submariners Association may not agree with the opinions expressed in this Newsletter but encourages publication as a matter of interest. 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.

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 frozensnorth55@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 2021 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 LOSSES OF WWII

March 1941

No Submarines were lost in March 1941 and no Submariner Casualties were reported.

ROYAL NAVY SUBMARINE K13 & HER CREW - REMEMBERED AT FASLANE CEMETERY

HMNBC 03/21 ROYAL NAVY MEDIA RELEASE 1st February 2021

Royal Navy personnel from HM Naval Base Clyde recently remembered those who lost their lives when Royal Navy submarine, K13 sank in the Gareloch on January 29, 1917. The memorial service, which was held at Faslane Cemetery in Garelochhead, would normally be attended by veterans, serving submariners from nearby HM Naval Base Clyde and local Sea Cadets. This year things are very different with only a few people at Faslane Cemetery to mark the anniversary of the tragedy.

Reverend Mark Noakes, Chaplain of the Faslane Flotilla led the service, which was attended by Captain Irvine Lindsay, Captain of the Submarine Flotilla on behalf of the Royal Navy. During the poignant service a wreath was laid by Captain Lindsay. In addition, the K13 ship's bell was rung 32 times – once for each person who lost their lives in 1917.

"The K13 memorial is an important event in the submarine calendar, commemorating not only those lost in K13 but also as a reminder of the hazards faced by members of the Submarine Service in peacetime and in war," said Captain Lindsay.

"It's also crucial, that despite the limitations imposed by the Covid 19 restrictions, we continue to remember those who have gone before us and, as Captain Submarines, I feel honoured to represent the Submarine Flotilla at today's service".

The steam-propelled submarine K13 sank in the Gareloch on January 29, 1917, during sea trials. On board at the time were fifty-three Royal Navy submariners, fourteen employees of Govan shipbuilder Fairfields, five Admiralty officials, a pilot, and the captain and engineer from sister submarine K14.

The crew of K13 were trapped beneath the icy waters of the Gareloch for some 57-hours before help arrived. Captain of the vessel, Lieutenant Commander Godfrey Herbert, and K14's Captain, Commander Francis

SUBMARINE COMMISSIONING CREW LISTS

Commissioning Crew Lists are still coming in however, things have slowed down a bit of late. I am still looking for 'First Commission' Submarine Crew Lists/Brochures as follows:

PORPOISE (1958), GRAMPUS (1958), NARWHAL (1959), CACHALOT (1959), WALRUS (1961), OBERON (1961), ORPHEUS (1960), ODIN (1962), OTUS (1963), ONYX (1967) & UNICORN (1993)

Also, 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

Goodhart, made a desperate attempt to escape the stricken submarine in order to get help. The pair used the space between the inner and outer hatches as an airlock, but only Herbert made it to the surface alive, Goodhart sadly dying after striking his head during the escape.

An airline was eventually attached to the vessel allowing the submarine to bring her bow to the surface where a hole was cut allowing the survivors to be rescued. Unfortunately, by that time 32 submariners had already perished.

The submarine was later raised from the Gareloch and returned to service as HMS K22.



Captain Irvine Lindsay at Faslane Cemetery to honour those who lost their lives in 1917



Captain Lindsay with Reverend Mark Noakes at the K13 Memorial



The K13 Memorial at Faslane Cemetery



Andy Knox rings the K13 bell during the Garelochhead Ceremony



The Elder Park Memorial

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

TRAINEE SUBMARINERS ATTEND FIRST PASSING-OUT PARADE OF 2021 AT HM NAVAL BASE CLYDE

HMNBC 05/21
Friday, 26 February 2021

A Class of submariner trainees at HM Naval Base Clyde recently passed-out from the first phase of their Submarine Qualifying Course (SMQ) On Thursday, February 18, the class of twenty-three students – being trained for service on board Vanguard Class submarines – reached the culmination of their ten-week “dry phase”, the classroom part of the course conducted on dry land at Clyde’s Fleet Operational Sea Training (North) (FOST)(N).

The Class, the first of 2021, graduated on the day with Captain FOST (N), Captain Ian Breckenridge presenting each student with their certificates in the HMS Neptune Supermess under strict social distancing conditions. The best student award was presented to Engineering Technician (Mechanical Engineer Submarines) ET (MESM) McCarthy for delivering the best overall performance during the course. This award is based not only on the trainee’s academic achievements but also on their attitude, commitment and, most importantly, their teamwork and support of their peers whilst on course.

Warrant Officer 1, Ian Brown, SMQ Training Officer said: “It is always a proud moment for the students to pass out from SMQ (dry). The course is designed to be intense and to prepare the students for the next phase of their submarine training, SMQ (wet) prior to achieving their ‘Dolphins’ and becoming qualified submariners.

The students are, of course, in possession of their “Training Dolphins” at this stage of their training. The Training Dolphins which were introduced in September last year are a similar size and design as the traditional Gold Dolphins but are black in colour.

Prospective submariners join FOST (North) at HM Naval Base Clyde for the dry phase of their training. After successfully completing a final exam, oral board and walk-rounds of a nuclear submarine, they pass-out, eventually joining a nuclear submarine. It is there the second phase of training begins – known as the “wet phase”. Students complete their SMQ training at sea on board a Royal Navy submarine and it is only then that they are entitled to swap their Training Dolphins for the

coveted “Gold Dolphins” badge – the mark of a qualified submariner.



The class of twenty-three students at their Passing-out Parade.



Captain Ian Breckenridge presents the prize for the best student to ET (MESM) McCarthy at the passing-out.

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

The Submariner Memorial Appeal: famed British Sculptor Paul Day to create Memorial

The Submariner Memorial Appeal today announces that renowned British sculptor Paul Day’s creation will be installed at the National Memorial Arboretum and unveiled at a ceremony attended by HRH Prince William, Commodore-in-Chief Submarines. Known for creations like the *Battle of Britain Memorial* on Embankment and the *Meeting Place* sculpture at St Pancras, Paul Day’s design for the Submariner community takes its inspiration from the winning entry of a national competition, announced last year by Johnny Mercer MP, Minister for Defence People and Veterans.

The Submariner Memorial Appeal is currently raising £375,000 to fund and maintain the memorial, which will replace the current small plaque. Actor Colin Firth is supporting the appeal after starring in *Kursk: The Last Mission* about the loss of a Russian submarine. He is also due to play naval officer Ewen Montagu in upcoming film *Operation Mincemeat*.

The designer, Paul Day, said: “Mirroring the winning design, I imagine visitors walking through a somewhat confined space to suggest the constraints upon movement that dictate life onboard a submarine. The conning tower shape has that advantage of being instantly recognisable, a beacon that could be easily spotted and identified within the plethora of monuments at the arboretum.

“In order to honour the sacrifice of families who bear the brunt of separation and worry, I decorate one side of the conning tower with a low relief depicting spouses, children and parents waiting for their loved ones to return. They are present in the hearts and minds of those onboard. Their subtle presence in relief would signify this and the very real part they play in keeping submarines working at sea.”

Actor and Submariner Memorial Appeal supporter Colin Firth said: “Filming *Kursk: The Last Mission* gave me a vivid insight into the lives of our submariners. “The service and their loved ones have made huge

sacrifices over the past century - and continue to do so today as they carry out their secret work far from public gaze. As so many of our lost submariners have no graves, a fitting memorial at the National Arboretum will give those left behind a place to gather and grieve. “I can’t wait to see this appeal reach its goal.”

Chris Groves, on behalf of the Groves Family, whose design won the public national competition to inspire the final design, said: “Three generations of our family have been submariners - my father Adrian, me, my son Nick and his girlfriend Si. “We are really passionate about the Submarine Service and we wanted to create a design that would fittingly be a memorial for all the submarine family. We will be hugely proud of the eventual memorial.”

For more information contact Alice Farrow (07966 886180 or alice@just-alice.com).

Pictures of the design are available for download at submarinermemorial.uk/memorial-gallery.

Case study

Sisters Ann Matthews, 81, and Gill House, 79, have no memory of their submariner father.

AB James Shanahan was lost with WW2 submarine HMS *Utmost* in the Mediterranean in November 1942, aged just 30. Four months earlier the gun layer had been awarded the Distinguished Service Medal at Buckingham Palace by George VI. The medal’s citation spoke of AB Shanahan’s “efficiency as a helmsman at diving stations, his keenness as night lookout and excellent hearing during depth charge attacks, contributing to HMS *Utmost*’s success”.

The U Class submarine had significant impact in the Mediterranean during the first years of the war, sinking German and Italian vessels. But she is thought to have been lost in a minefield while returning to Malta at the end of her 24th war patrol. Following AB Shanahan’s death, his wife Bridget worked to support Ann and Gill, who were sent to live with their grandmother Annie Scanlon in Country Cork for safety. In 1947, Bridget

was able to have her daughters back home in England but, until then, Gill's granny was the only mother she knew. The sisters still have the letters their father sent home from Malta but have only looked at them once because his loss remains so raw.

"The last time my father left the house he said, 'it won't be long before Ann's 21st'.

"When I went into the kitchen on my 21st birthday, there was a present on the table and my Mum was crying her eyes out," said Ann.

The sisters have made a significant contribution to the Submariner Memorial Appeal, which plans to replace the current, small remembrance plaque at the National Arboretum. For them, a new, fitting memorial will be "a recognition of just how many submariners died". "When you look at all the other memorials and you look at that one, it's just so sad. "Many of our submariners died in a terrible way," they added. About one third of WW2 Royal Navy submariners perished, most without graves.



AB Shanahan outside Buckingham Palace after receiving his medal

The picture below shows the winning Submariners Memorial Design from the competition, which was published on Facebook, however, the picture on the second picture shows what the architect that has been appointed is going to build.



Models showing what a new Submariner Memorial sculpture will look like when built at the National Memorial Arboretum, in Alrewas. (Image: The Submariner Memorial Appeal)



DEVONPORT COLD WAR MUSEUM - UPDATE

Since the fantastic response to the fundraising campaign in late 2020, reaching £40,000 in just nine weeks, work has been underway to establish a rigorous Feasibility Study, to determine whether it is possible to create a sustainable Cold War Centre in Plymouth.

The name 'Cold War Centre' is a working title that emphasises the contribution that Plymouth and particularly Devonport played in this unique period of political intrigue and technological advancement. Timing is a key factor: a window of opportunity exists to acquire unique Cold War artefacts as part of the MoD Submarine Disposal Programme running in HMNB Devonport and display them in an iconic setting for preservation and the education of future generations.

The Study will be a substantial piece of work and form the basis of a business case should the conditions for success be satisfied. A detailed project brief has been prepared and Commodore Ian Shipperley CBE, formerly Naval Base Commander (Devonport), has agreed to lead the Study with support from various specialists.

CONCEPT: There are many museums and collections dealing with military history however, none address adequately the maritime contribution to the Cold War and parallels with today's international relations. More importantly, none have the unique draw of the UK's only preserved nuclear submarine, COURAGEOUS; one of only 3 worldwide and arguably the best exhibited with the highest level of visitor interaction. However, COURAGEOUS is located within the Naval Dockyard and not easily accessible to the general public. The concept is therefore very simple:

"At the heart of the CWC will be a preserved nuclear submarine acting as the centrepiece of an irreplaceable collection of artefacts displayed in an iconic setting. The CWC will portray the maritime aspects of the Cold War in an informative and entertaining way while using historic, current and future submarine & nuclear technology to promote STEM and innovation through interactive experiences."

OWNERSHIP: The National Museum of the Royal Navy (NMRN), is the prime body through which the Royal Navy explains its history. It has liaised with Plymouth's new museum The Box, to display its heritage collection of naval figureheads. It is advising and supporting the volunteer run Devonport Naval Heritage Centre; it has expressed a desire to further extend its role in Plymouth and has agreed to receive the output of the Feasibility Study.

TIMING: The Study is expected to take approximately 16 weeks and to deliver its findings to the NMRN in July 2021.

NOTES:

1. Further details can be obtained from Commander Ian Whitehouse, Royal Navy. 07778 789104 / ian@fradds.co.uk
2. Remote interviews with the Executive Sponsor - Rear Admiral John Weale, CB, OBE can be arranged.

ROYAL NAVY'S NEW TORPEDO PUT THROUGH ITS FINAL TRIALS

5th February 2021

Submarine HMS TALENT has put the world's most advanced torpedo through its final trials – including firing the lethal weapon at itself.

The Trafalgar-class boat – whose mission is to hunt and, if necessary, kill hostile submarines – fired the upgraded Spearfish on the BUTEC ranges near the Isle of Skye to rigorously test it before it enters service. During the three-day trial, the cutting-edge Spearfish was fired at TALENT three times – and was programmed to safely pass the submarine to ensure there was no risk of the boat torpedoing herself. The trials provided valuable data in the final stages of the upgraded torpedo's development ahead of its impending entry into service.

Commander Paul Jamieson, Commanding Officer of HMS TALENT, said: "TALENT has been the host platform on two occasions for this trial and my team are proud to have had a role in this important programme.

"The Spearfish upgrade will ensure the submarine service continues to possess a very credible weapon system, capable of dealing with potential future threats."

Captain John Aitken, the Spearfish Programme Director, and a former commanding officer of TALENT, said: "This trial marks the culmination of a tremendous amount of hard work from the Spearfish team and our partners in industry.

"The 'Mod 1' weapon is at the very cutting edge of torpedo technology and underscores Britain's position as one of the global leaders in underwater capability.

"That TALENT continues her proud tradition of delivering exactly what is required of her makes this all the more pleasing for me."



Dreams of reopening Soviet submarine at Strood still afloat despite pandemic

By [Chris Hunter](#)
chunter@thekmgroupp.co.uk

01 February 2021

Looking for the perfect self-isolation location? If the new strains of COVID keep growing more extreme than a U-475 Black Widow Soviet submarine could be the ideal retreat of choice. And as luck would have it there is one moored in the River Medway just off Strood where it has been for almost two decades.

But the man in charge of it, John Sutton, remains optimistic he won't have to seal the hatch and prepare to dive next time Boris Johnson calls a press conference. Instead, he hopes the Soviet sub can yet become a popular tourist attraction, but he told KentOnline the plans will in all likelihood involve moving it to a new location. "We are in the process of renovating it and looking for somewhere to put it," he said. "That's the problem. We thought maybe we could run people out to it from Rochester Pier but the pier is condemned and the council haven't got money to repair it. "It's terrible because you think Rochester was built on the River Medway and the piers are disappearing. If it was operational we could ferry people around and do tours."



The Black Widow submarine at Strood

Mr Sutton, who looks after the submarine for property company Skelwith, spoke out after a video of a tour around the submarine was reposted on the Facebook page "Exploring With Josh" this month. He explained the tour, which was arranged with permission, took place two years ago, but said the visit was welcome publicity, nonetheless.

In the post, entitled "Old Soviet Submarine Emerges from Water! We Explored It!!!", the intrepid Exploring with Josh team enter the submarine amidst gasps of awe - but they are, in fact, following in the footsteps of many others, including ex Tory Minister Michael Portillo who boarded the Soviet Vessel in order to explore its role in the Cold War as part of his 2018 documentary 'Portillo's Hidden History'. "On a suitably murky day I went aboard," stated Mr Portillo, "and with the help of a vice admiral of the Royal Navy and two former Soviet naval officers, relived some of the most perilous moments in our nation's history."

YouTuber Josh's narration offers an alternative take as he descends into the sub, exclaiming: "I'm so excited. Yo, it smells like just dirt and rust, like so much. "Alright, here we go. Oh it's so. Yo! It's hot in here. Really hot! "Oh my god. There's a proper torpedo in here!" Such appearances on TV and YouTube are bread and butter for the Russian sub, which has starred in rap videos, playstation adverts and the movie Black Sea starring Jude Law.

And while Mr Sutton explained the Exploring with Josh YouTubers had been a professional outfit, he did have some concerns over copycat 'explorers'.

In 2016 three men had to be rescued from the submarine during the early hours of a March Morning when their rubber dinghy sprang a leak, after they attempted to film on board without permission - and Mr Sutton is now expecting more.

"A lot of them don't think it's a crime and they think they can do what they want because it's 'exploring'. "The only issue I have is because he's reposted the video, someone will try and get on board the submarine. It's pretty secure now so people can't turn up in their £5 dinghy and climb aboard. "Some followers will just try to emulate it, but I suppose it's good coverage for us."

Built at Sudomekh shipyard in Leningrad and commissioned in 1967, the Black Widow served with the Soviet Baltic Fleet before being used as a training vessel for crews from overseas until it was decommissioned in 1994 and sold. After passing into private hands it was moored near the Thames Barrier in Woolwich and opened as a museum ship, until it was moved in 1998 to Folkestone, where it was again opened to the public, before it was moved to Strood in 2004.

These days though, it remains in a dilapidated state, awaiting a brighter future. But just in case anyone gets any ideas of taking an undersea cruise to escape the pandemic, the submarine wouldn't be much for deep diving, and you couldn't use the torpedoes if a coronavirus-infected cruise ship came too close. "It's got all its engines but you wouldn't want to start them up," said Mr Sutton. "We'd probably be in the news if you started it up. "We've got one torpedo in case there's any issues," he joked, but added: "It's a practice torpedo though - they were decommissioned."

THE DESMOND GERRISH AUTOBIOGRAPHY

(Continued from the February 2021 issue of Periscope View)

1961 - Clearing Wartime Mines from the Balabak Straits

The United Nations launched a worldwide campaign to rid the High Seas of mines left over from the war. The 104th M/S Squadron were detailed to clear the Bababak Straits – the main shipping route from the China Sea, around the north cape of Borneo, leading into the Celebes Sea and thence to Australasia.

The Straits were quite narrow, winding through small islands and submerged coral reefs. We researched

wartime archives and found that the Japanese were the first to mine the Straits, followed by the Americans in the second half of the Pacific War when the Japanese were retreating. We also found that both sides had air-dropped a lot of mines which had landed outside the main shipping channel in shallow water used by fishing boats and other small craft. So, the R.N.'s Hong Kong Squadron of 6 Inshore Minesweepers (craft similar to my M.L.) were detailed to sweep the shallow waters, allowing us 8 Coastal Minesweepers to concentrate on the main deep-water channel.

Captain M/S (Cuddly Dudley) set up his base on H.M.S. WOODBRIDGE HAVEN and R.F.A GOLD RANGER, anchored close to where the small Inshore Minesweepers were to operate, leaving us bigger ships 100 miles to the north in the Straits proper. So, whenever our big magnetic-loop sweeps broke, (roughly every 3 days), we had this hideous 100-mile passage through the reefs to get repaired alongside the WooHa – and you went day or night, regardless. The 8 of us prayed that any breaks occurred in daylight – the passages in the dark were hair-raising! One night, H.M.S. HOUGHTON, the Squadron Leader, and Wilkie were going to WooHa for sweep repairs. Great, I thought, because all I had to do was follow-my-leader! We had just entered the narrow channel through the reefs when his vital Radar broke. I had to creep very close to him, both of us at dead slow speed and then lead him for the 90 miles left. Another sleepless night!

The whole operation was going to take seven weeks of non-stop minesweeping – day and night – and Captain M/S knew well the worst strain was on the Commanding Officers. So, any time we berthed alongside WooHa, he made sure us C.O.s were well rested while the 'Factory Gangs' worked on the sweep repairs. Baths, meals, films, drinks, all in air-conditioned luxury of WooHa's Wardroom. Bliss for the several hours before repairs were completed. One night, Ben Bezance, C.O. of DARTINGTON, had the usual hospital treatment in WooHa and his repairs completed at 0330. Dudley said to him, "If I was you Ben, wait for dawn – 0530 – and have a passage back in daylight". "No Sir" says our bold Ben, "that would waste 2 hours of sweeping time". "Very creditable Ben" says Dudley, "so off you go then".

He did. Straight up on a reef less than ½ a mile from WooHa at full speed. H.M.S. DARTINGTON came to a halt fully stranded on a big reef, which at low tide meant she was sitting in ONE FOOT OF WATER. It was a misunderstanding between Ben and his young Sub. Lieutenant Navigator – the Navigator had laid off a perfectly safe and sensible heading for leaving WooHa, but Ben had used full power on both engines to turn once slipped from WooHa and turned his ship so tightly that when he rang on Full Speed Ahead and shouted, "What heading Navigator?". The poor Sub. Lieutenant could only give Ben his pre-planned course, which, following Ben's dramatic tight turn, lead them straight up on a reef.

DARTINGTON was fortunate in that she ran up on a DEAD CORAL REEF – similar to a bank of shingle – no jagged rocks to rip open her bottom. Work began immediately to empty her heavy stored – ammunition, oil fuel, all heavy objects – taken off by WooHa's boats, fuel oil and drinking water tanks emptied by pumping over to Gold Ranger, who anchored as close as she dared to the reef. The simple object was to make DARTINGTON as light as possible, ready for WooHa to tow her off the reef at the next high tide. In the event, all this took 3 days until finally WooHa pulled DARTINGTON off the reef – DARTINGTON still watertight and no damage to her propellers. A great feat of seamanship by Captain M/S, his Officers and Men, who kept our running repairs to sweeps going throughout. Two Admiralty Salvage Tugs, racing towards us from Singapore, were ordered to return to Base.

After our own Squadron divers had minutely surveyed DARTINGTON's bottom to confirm no damage or potential leaks, DARTINGTON re-embarked her own stores, fuelled up and departed for Singapore Dry Dock, for the final survey by Admiralty Constructors and a re-paint of her bottom.

Ben Bezance's inevitable Court Martial was delayed until the whole Squadron was back in Singapore. He chose me as his "Prisoner's Friend" – my responsibility was simply to make sure he appeared at Court at the appointed time – rather like being Best Man at a Wedding – although, I did have to take his life in the last resort, if he chose to make a run for it!

Ben pleaded 'Guilty' to the solitary charge of "Did hazard Her Majesty's Ship, DARTINGTON" and exonerated his young Navigator of any shred of blame – standard conduct for any Navy Captain and after the Court heard the glowing testimonials as to Ben's ability as a Commanding Officer and Seaman, the Court sentenced him with 'Severe Reprimand'.

To this day, Ben claims he would have got away with just 'Reprimanded', rather than next step of 'Severe', if the buttons on my Ice-cream Uniform hadn't fell to a clatter on the marble floor of the Court Room on the last occasion of that long, hot, drawn-out day, that I had to march him back into Court. The Court President was a Big-Ship type of Rear Admiral, who didn't really go along with the less formal ways of Officers and Men in small-ships or submarines! The great result was that Ben was not 'Dismissed his Ship' and thankfully finished his time with us as C.O. of H.M.S. DARTINGTON. We all conjectured that the C.-in-C., Admiral Sir David Luce, had inferred that this would be a 'suitable' outcome, when he appointed the Court.

It was lovely to be back in Singapore after the 7-week non-stop minesweeping job and for me a bit of home life, with Hazel, Sue and Bill. Not so Dudley, whose family remained in the U.K. The Squadron was his family now and he hated lying idle in Singapore Dockyard. So he cooked up a scheme of taking the Squadron to India to work with the Minesweeping Squadron of the Indian Navy and persuaded the C.in-C. this was a very good idea – after all, India was now one of our important allies in the Far East!

C.-in-C., wise old owl of course, picked the bones out of Dudley's enthusiastic plan. The voyage from Singapore, across the Indian Ocean, was 4500 miles. Our ships were officially designated as Coastal Minesweepers – not ocean-going ships – and C.-in C. sent Dudley away, saying, "If you can come up with a navigational plan, that allows a safe anchorage part way of this long voyage for repairs and rest for the Crews, then I will allow it.

Dudley (Captain M/S) was back in C.-in-C.'s office next morning with the 'Safe Anchorage Plan'. It was to be the Andaman Islands, a group of almost uninhabited islands, the last land before crossing the Indian Ocean. Sir David Luce approved and off we went. The voyage turned out to be pleasant and no strain at all for the Minesweepers and the Squadron arrived fit and well at our first port in India – the large and pleasant port of Madras. We spent several days at Madras, socialising with our R.I.N. hosts and local people, before sailing around the southern tip of India to the Indian Naval Base at Cochin. We spent two weeks at Cochin, going out to sea for minesweeping exercises with Minesweepers of the R.I.N. and back into port for lots of very good socialising between the two Navies.

Our voyage to southern India was so successful that once back in Singapore, Captain M/S asked the C.-in-C. if the Squadron could visit Northern Australia. The voyage was just too far for C.-in-C. and he came up with a plan for the Squadron to visit Indonesia instead. Relations between U.K. and Indonesia had improved and U.K. and Foreign Office fixed for us to do a Courtesy Visit to Surabaya, the second largest city in Indonesia and main port of the country. We would be the first official visitors from the Western World since the end of the war, when Sukarno and his army threw out their Dutch masters and aligned their new independence with the Soviet Communist bloc. The seven-day visit was a success with both sides pushing to lay on as much goodwill hospitality as could be crammed into one week. At one of the Indonesian Government's Parties, halfway through this amiable evening, the Indonesian Police Chief whispered to the French Ambassador that, regrettably, local thieves had stolen the Ambassador's car! Earlier that day the Indonesians had been told that, regrettably, the Ambassador's car had been stolen in Paris. What a coincidence!! Both cars were recovered next day!

The Indonesians Navy lay on a demonstration of their Naval Forces for us in the Straits outside Surabaya. Lots of V.I.P.s had been invited to watch and Wilkie took the British Ambassador. We steamed up and down the Straits watching the Indonesians perform, together with a submarine they (Russian built) showed off. The Ambassador was a friendly, easy-going old cove and quite enjoyed "roughing it" in a Minesweeper for the day. He was delighted when Steward served Tea – tea and buttered toast at 4 p.m. – took him back to his childhood days, apparently, and said, "These Orientals just don't understand the finer points of life!"

Our Squadron Commander – Gus Halliday, a Fleet Air Arm Pilot, was uneasy about his post. He had carried out several bombing raids on Surabaya in the last year of the war, as a preliminary to pushing the Japs out of Indonesia. He hoped the Indonesian Intelligence Services would miss this juicy bit when they put the inevitable microscope at all of us in the Squadron while we were their guests in Surabaya. Out Intelligence was desperate to get real knowledge on how effective Sukarno's new venture into arming himself with a Submarine Squadron was. Could these Soviet-built submarines really take out a British or United Nations Task Force if we had to invade Indonesia?

We got the answer and it was an emphatic - No! The Indonesians had put their Senior Submarine Captain as our Liaison Officer. We quickly learned that he was competent, but his Officers and Crew were useless. With the few other submarines, the C.O.s were just as useless as their Officers and men and spare parts were so long overdue, that only our man's submarine could go to sea by picking bits needed from the harbour-bound other S/Ms. To be continued in April 2021.

THE ENGINE ROOM CLOCK FROM WWI U-BOAT U-96



This Clock from the WWI U Boat U-96 is from of the Collections of the Royal Navy Submarine Museum at Gosport, has been on display in the Museum for some time. U-96 was one of the 177 U Boats which were surrendered after the Armistice of November 1918

Of the surrendered U-Boats 195 were allocated to the British authorities and several, including U-96 were used for Trial purposes and for Exhibition Tours around British Ports – partly to raise funds for Naval Charities.

All of the U-Boats allocated to Britain were later sold and broken up for scrap.

U-96 was one of those used for Trials and Exhibition purposes manned by a reduced RN Crew under the command of Lieutenant Douglas John Gavin and his First Lieutenant (who was the impressively named Sub Lieutenant Alexander Arthur Digges La Touche).

The U-Boat was scrapped shortly afterwards under the terms of the Armistice. Exactly how the Clock ended up in the museum is unclear but I would guess that the Engine Room clock was either 'liberated' as a souvenir by one of the RN Crew or was sold off by the ship breaker

Engine room clock from the German submarine U96, surrendered at Harwich in 1918.

This submarine was responsible for sinking 31 allied ships and damaging 3 others.

Shortly after the Armistice in November 1918 dozens of German U-boats officially surrendered to the Allied Forces at Harwich. They were met by British ships and then escorted to the River Stour Estuary. The line of U-boats stretched for 2 miles.

People came from miles around to see the fleet which was later broken up.



SUBMARINERS 'CROSSED THE BAR' REPORTED TO 28th FEBRUARY 2021

Branch	Date	Name	Rank/Rate	O/N	Age	Submarine Service
We Remember Submariners	7th December 2020	Nigel J W Howchin	Chief Petty Officer Marine Engineering Artificer (SM)	D157685J	68	Submarine Service from 1984 to 1989 in SWIFTSURE (1984 to 1986) & SPLENDID (1987 to 1989)
Submarine Officers Association	3rd January 2021	Jeremy Bernard Herklots	Lieutenant	N/A	84	Submarine Service in AMBUSH (January 1960 NL). ALARIC (Spring 1962 (NL) & ORACLE (on commissioning a Birkenhead on 14th February 1963)
We Remember Submariners	10 th January 2021	Robert Irving	TBA	TBA	TBA	Submarine Service including OPOSSUM
We Remember Submariners	29th January 2021	C (Chris) Hobson	TBA	TBA	TBA	Submarine Service from 1968 to 1975 in RESOLUTION
Portsmouth Branch	2nd February 2021	Leslie R Hanks	Petty Officer (Telegraphist)	P/JX 194803	97	Submarine Service from 1947 to 1954 in THULE, THOROUGH, THERMOPYLAE, AUROCHS & ALDERNEY
We Remember Submariners	2nd February 2021	Michael D Dunn	Chief Marine Engineering Mechanic	TBA	TBA	Submarine Service in CACHALOT, WARSPITE (1st Commission Crew) on 18th April 1967, CHURCHILL on commissioning at Barrow on 15th July 1970 & CHURCHILL on recommissioning at Chatham on 28th October 1975 & CONQUEROR at the Falklands
Dorset Branch	3rd February 2021	Rupert Thomas Nicholas Best	Commander (X) (SM)	Not given	77	Submarine Service from 1966 to 1989 in OCELOT (1966), SEALION (1966 to 1967 NL), TRUMP (IL 1967 to 1969 NL), VERNON (1970 NL), COURAGEOUS (1970 on commissioning on 16th October 1971 to 1973); OPPORTUNE (IL 1973 to 1974), OCELOT (CO 1974 to 1975), SCEPTRE (1976 to 1979) & COURAGEOUS (CO 1982 to 1983)
We Remember Submariners	9 th February 2021	David Marcus Sturgeon	Lieutenant Commander (S)	N/A	TBA	Submarine Service in TIRELESS & DEFIANCE
Northern Ireland Branch	12th February 2021	Robert G Wright	Leading Seaman (Tactical Systems)	D159396 B	61	Submarine Service from 1979 to 1988 in REPULSE (S) (1980 to 1982) & RENOWN (P) (1983 to 1988)
Manchester Branch	21st February 2021	James Axford	Chief Petty Officer (Coxswain)	P/JX 896189	88	Submarine Service from May 1956 to December 1966 in SCORCHER (1956), THERMOPYLAE (1956 to 1958), ANCHORITE (1958 to 1960), ORPHEUS (1960), TOKEN (1962 to 1964), CACHALOT (1965) & ARTFUL (1966 on recommissioning on 22nd July 1966)