

**The Newsletter of the
Royal Naval Amateur
Radio Society
Winter 2016**



Retiring RNARS Chairman, Doug Hotchkiss being presented with a mounted silver Quaich for his long service to the society.



*The Officers and Committee
wish you all a
Merry Christmas and
Peaceful New Year*



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Overseas members: Subscriptions via PayPal is the preferred option, see above for details.

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Not the Chairman's Chat

Although the position of Chairman is vacant I thought it would be a shame if the regular slot in the Newsletter was left empty.

The AGM passed off quite successfully, my thanks to everyone that attended especially those who travelled some distance. This year I made arrangements with the Mess Manager to provide a special lunch for us served in the bar of the Warrant Officers & Senior Rates Mess and judging by the number of people who went up for seconds the beef stroganoff went down particularly well. As usual it had been preceded by up-spirits in the shack. This is a custom which our German members Hans-Juergen DK9OS and Maren DK9MOS are starting to get used to.

The departure of Doug G4BEQ from his role as Chairman was one of the main items on the Agenda. Doug looked back over his time with the RNARS and what he had achieved in that time. After the usual awards were presented, much to his surprise, Doug was presented with two awards. The first was made by our President, Commodore Paul Sutermeister of an engraved Quaich thanking Doug for his service to the RNARS. For those who do not know, and I was one of them, a Quaich is a Scottish friendship drinking cup for sharing a drop or two of whisky. The cover of the Newsletter shows Doug receiving his award. The second award was made by Hans-Juergen which made Doug an Honorary Submariner Telegraphist of U995.

It was a pleasure to see Nigel MØNAF at the AGM and once disabled access to the Shack is available Nigel says he plans to come in on a regular basis.

The success of any society or organisation is down to the dedication and hard work of its members and in the RNARS we have many who year after year fulfil their roles quietly and without fuss, members such as Doug GOMIU our Commodities Manager, Sid GM4SID who manages the Call List, Ian G4JKD who looks after awards and particularly Adrian 2EØJVM our Treasurer all of whom just get on with what they have to do. They all deserve our thanks.

Finally, I would like to pay my own tribute to Doug our retiring Chairman along with the many others that have been published. He guided the Society through some rocky times and ensured it ran according to the founding tenets set down in 1960, he consolidated our presence in HMS Collingwood, he opened discussions with the societies of the other Services and throughout his time as Chairman he was clear on what the RNARS should be doing. Thanks to him the RNARS is well set on its second half-century. We wish him many long and varied QSOs.

Joe G3ZDF Honorary Secretary

Eight years before the mast, a Lambretta & The Post Office

My Merchant Navy career started in October 1952, a school friend and I applied to join the MN as deckhands, unfortunately for me; I failed the medical to work on deck as the powers to be didn't think that I would be strong enough for heavy work. So I was advised to go into catering which I agreed to do, and I enjoyed every minute of it.

Here is the class photograph taken with our instructor who's name with the rest of the class I can't remember, but what I do remember they were a



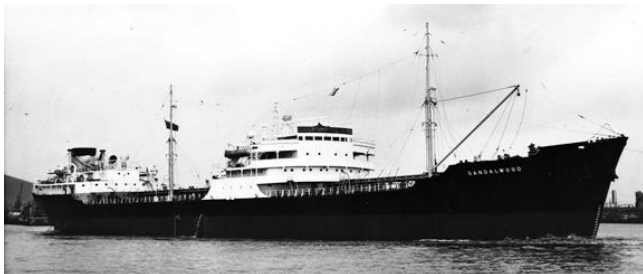
great bunch to be with. The Sea school was in Gravesend in Kent on the river Thames. The school is no longer there, in its place stands a block of flats.

To describe the school, I would say it was spartan and looked like a prison, however I enjoyed my short time there. We weren't allowed out much, I think on two occasion we were allowed out in groups of three to walk on the promenade and meet up with some of the local boys and girls who I found to very nice and pleasant to talk to, and never heard of any trouble with the locals. We had roll calls in the morning to check that everyone was there just as you see in the war films, apparently some lads couldn't take it and went over the wall and went home, but to me it was like a holiday camp.

Our training was good, so much so that even to this day seeing some people eating in restaurants makes me feel like telling them it is not a shovel in their hand, they just don't seem to know how to use a knife and fork properly, their table manners leave a very lot to be desired.

The training lasted two months after which we were all sent home to sign on the Merchant Seamen's Pool; mine was in Aberdeen. After about a week at home I was shipped off to North Shields to join my first ship which was an oil tanker on her maiden voyage bound for the Middle East. Winter was upon us as twelve of us stood in a cold wooden hut on the jetty waiting for the medical examiner to come along and give us a physical examination. It seemed like hours before this old man came in and walked down the line of us all standing in our heavy overcoats and pointing a finger at each one of us saying; "fit, fit, fit...." He got to the end of the line and then he said; "Right I am away to collect my five pounds." And off he went, medicals duly completed; we could have been half dead for all he knew.

I joined MV Sandalwood (picture below) as a cabin boy, I had no sooner got on board when the second steward told me smartly that we don't wear uniform in the MN. I told him "that's all I have got", to which he replied well; "You can wear the trouser and shirt but the rest goes", and me so proud of my uniform.



We sailed after a week preparing for sea, and boy was I sick going down the River Tyne, and for the eight years that I was at sea. I was always seasick for the first few days. Signing articles was for two years, but if the ship came back to Blighty you could sign off, and I did after two months as there were other two seamen from my home town on board the ship, and they were not staying, so I left with them, and signed on at the Pool in Aberdeen for another berth. This was quite common among Merchant seaman you could demote yourself or look for advancement with other ships or companies.

I was a "pool man"; I never belonged to a company. Which meant that I could take longer leave when I came ashore, a company man couldn't do that.

My career came to an unexpected end when I was sent by the pool to join a ship in Sutherland as a cook - steward, I walked into a seaman's strike, and since I was a union member I had to come out on strike with the rest of them.

I stayed for about a fortnight in a seaman's' home, we were given very little money for our keep from the union, I think it was about three shillings a week, but we couldn't live on it, so another man and myself approach the union officials and told them we were leaving they agreed as long as we left our discharge book with them, the other man went home, and I headed for Birmingham as my brother was working there, and he sent me my train fare. He also found me a job working in a Courthalls factory in Coventry building an extension. Travelling from Birmingham to Coventry every day was too much, so I manage to get a job in Sellyoak in Cadbury's chocolate factory on the night shift which didn't agree with my landlady whose other clients were day workers. So now I had to find new digs and a new job, digs were easy to find and my new landlady found me a job through her son in law with a building firm.

I was on dangerous ground, working ashore I could well be called up for National Service, but since I didn't have a P45 which the firms kept asking for, I told them it was in the post, I had to pay a higher emergency tax rate. MN personnel were exempt from National Service, but if you jumped ship you were called up which happened to one of the lads on my first ship, the army got him and he served as a military policeman; he said he enjoyed it.

I stayed in Birmingham for about a year, by this time I bought a Lambretta 150cc scooter to get around on. I had a driving license which I managed to get when my ship came into Leith when I sailed with the North & Scotland Shipping Company as an assistant steward, so it was easy for me to learn to ride a scooter, which in turn was my only means of getting home as my money was dwindling away. I was getting £9 a week working ashore compared to my sea pay which started off at £14 a month seven days a week and with some companies you could be expected to work for almost eighteen hours a day without overtime pay, but promotion at sea gave you an increase in wages, and half of our pay was sent home to the family who were struggling in the 1950s. I was

advised to do this when I joined a ship, I have never regretted it. It was common practice in the MN in those days.

I decided to go home to Peterhead after working a year in Birmingham, but before leaving I was told that I must sit my driving test on the scooter and that was on the day that I was leaving to go home, so I promptly failed the test. So off I went staying clear of the motorway, as it grew dark my lights failed so I had to find a B&B for the night, and set off again in the morning reaching home at night at 10pm, a long journey indeed on a scooter.

Now I had to find a job, lucky for me, my school friend who was supposed to have joined the MN with me but didn't go to sea, he stayed at home and married the boss's daughter, was knocking on my door offering me a job driving a truck in his father in law's business. I was there for a short time, and I was replaced by a motor mechanic who I was told would do the driving and repair his trucks, so off I went looking for another job and as luck would have it, a job came up in the Post Office Motor Transport garage in Peterhead. I applied for it and got it, working as a garage assistant which entailed repairing punctures, greasing, making the tea, sweeping the floors and washing the vans, a great job. After spending about eight years on that job covering the back shift: 1pm to 10pm five days a week, we moved on to day shift which was great, for now I could go to the further education classes in the evenings and study to take seven "O" grades.

From there I was encouraged by the Post Office Managers to go to Aberdeen Technical College on day release to be trained as a motor mechanic and take my Motor Vehicle Certificate.



After four years I obtained the certificate, and was given a job in the Post Office workshop in Peterhead as a motor mechanic until I retired in 1992, where we were subject to early retirement due to workshop closures.

I had terrible ambition in those early days; I wanted to be RMTO for Scotland, not happy to be working on the floor as a mechanic, I was striving for a managerial position in the service that I study for two years at home and took my diploma for the IMI; the Institute of Motor Industry which I was made a member. But unfortunately it was all too late the writing was on the wall; closures of workshops in England and Scotland were taking place, so ended my working life.

Jim Smith MMØCJF 4593

Dear Editor,

Through your newsletter, may I draw the attention of your readers to an amateur radio group aimed at older amateurs interested in maintaining and keeping their old apparatus in full working order.

The club is named; **Pre-Historic Amateur Radio Transmitting Society** or **PHARTS** for short. Membership is open to all who have held an amateur licence for more than thirty years.

Members are dedicated to assisting each other by sharing their knowledge of using older equipment and servicing tips in order to restore and return worn out apparatus to peak working condition.

Members who have held an amateur licence for over forty years are known as “Old PHARTS” and after fifty years are known as “Golden PHARTS”.

Readers interested in becoming a member of PHARTS, should in the first instance email me: rafil.pool@windupradio.com

Rafil Pool
PHARTS Publicity Officer

A very warm welcome to our new members and up-dates

New Members

Stephen Legg	SWL	5019
Stephen Wright	EI5DD	5020
Kelvin Paul Crocker	G1ZSE	5021
Ian Warnecke	2EØDUE	5022

Re-joiners

Mike Rowe	G7BLX	4651
Alan Witt	G7SLD	4765
Bill Cooper	GØKDL	4134
Peter Kirsop	GM4WCE	3077
Christopher Wilkinson	M6FUW	4990
Chris Tong	G7DSU	4904

Changes

No reports

Resigned

Jim Gibb	M1CNH	4564
John Hewson	ZL3CE	0158
Rod Wild	2EØCTS / VP8CT	4591
David Chalmers	G3WQG	3966

Silent Keys

Bill Hunter	GM3HUN	0032
Ray Wilkin	GØUKX	4023
Les Bagnall	ZLM3WD / G4CWD	0909
Jack Bell	MØLLE	4567



U995 on the air for DMB (German Naval Association) Jubilee

During this year's International Museum Ship Weekend (IMWE), members of the "U995 Friendship Crew" were active from the submarine's original radio room using both Morse and voice.

111 military and civil museum ships were on air for the 2016 event. Special highlights this time were contacts to a lot of foreign museum submarines and especially the legendary museum cruiser "Rotterdam" of the Holland America Line.



Our new antenna; an end fed G5IJ aerial earthed to the hull of U995, was tested and did a good job. Next year we'll have another trial with a longer wire.

There were some problems due to thunderstorms (QRN) and poor propagation which didn't allow us to contact GB6COD (HMS Collingwood open day) or other stations in the UK, and the US stations were weak. But who cares; it's just a hobby, not a profession. We were happy about any contacts we made and had fun within good friends.

Same as for the IMWE events before, the operators of our friendship crew came from different countries recruited from members of the DMB (German Naval Association) or its sister association, the RNA. This year, for the 125th anniversary of the DMB, we used the call sign DLØDMB (RNARS 4865) with the short-period authorized addition 125DMB. But beside our operations on air, we also welcomed a number of visitors to U995 and gave them the chance to get an idea of how radio contacts are made. Of course, they also learned a lot here about submarines in general and about the DMB.

Our nice evening socials were spent overlooking the Kiel Fjord and were complemented this year by musical performances through the Naval Comradeship of Rottenburg present at Laboe with their shanty choir. We very much enjoyed their shanties and other songs and finally joined in singing with them.

Photographs (page 12) and text: *Jack* DK9OS RN4636
DMB web site: www.deutscher-marinebund.de



Maren DK9MOS RN4946



Left to Right Bob MØBZZ RN4779
& Jack DK9OS RN4636



Visitor from U36



Relaxing after a hard day



Rally Reports starting with **Eastbourne SERF**

Left home at 07:00 and drove the eighty-eight miles to the Ecat Centre, Eastbourne Sports Park and arrived just before 09:00. The hall was as I remembered it from last year but with a few more stalls this time.

Our stand was next to the RSGB and I had just over an hour to set up before the public arrived, all the exhibitors and public had wrist bands to wear which was a neat touch. Fifteen visitors signed in; twelve RNARS and one former member Derek GØNFA (ex RFA) and two RSARS, their organisation had no representative present and likewise RAFARS.

RNARS and RSARS Members attending were G1LKJ, G0IUU, M6UBI, G6DGK, G0IEY, G0LFI, G0GCQ, M0KTT, OZ1EVA / G4MJC, G0NQZ, G6GOS, G0NFA, M0LRE, G3WWS and G8PUO.

Phil G1LKJ 2954

Flight Refuelling

I attended the rally at Wimborne, Dorset on Sunday 14th August and had eighteen members sign in, the highest turnout of members for a long time, perhaps the added note on the RNARS Yahoo Group may have made the difference.

I was out in the field with the car and a table as the marquees are no longer available.

Members attending were, myself, Andy 2E0REE, Richard G3ZGC, Dave G3VXM, Roy G4PRL, Mick G0TZE, Clive G3YTQ, Jeremy M0VIT, George G4NFT, Dan M0CVR, Trevor G3ZYY, Paul G3VCN, Dave 2E0GLL, Tony M1AFM, Jack G4PIJ, Ralph G4ALY, Doug G0LDJ and Dave G1OCN. Furthest travelled was Trevor G3ZYY from Saltash. Thanks for coming along chaps, hope you enjoyed the experience.

Phil G1LKJ 2954

Huntingdon

This rally was held at Enulf College at St Neots. We had an inside table next to the Royal Signals ARS, and as we all know each other there was a fair bit of banter exchanged.

There seemed to be a few more buyers this year and the good weather helped. Only four signed in and no new members. Sold one log book, and nobody imbibed, we are all on the pills as we get older, so we can't.

We had some enquiries about foundation courses, resulting in one getting in touch with our main tutor. Many thanks to the Huntingdon Club for a well organised rally.

Glenn GØGBI 3481 and Henry MØZAE 4955

Milton Keynes

The Rally was a bit smaller than in the past and at a new venue, but still an enjoyable day. The weather was very good, a bit drafty but OK. The Bedford Club RN 4961 had already erected the gazebo when I arrived so it didn't take long to set the stall up. We had a steady flow of people coming to talk to us, but no new members. Only four signed in and one tot was enjoyed. Hopefully this rally will grow at this new permanent site.

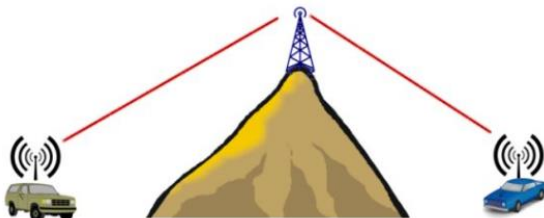


*Amanda M6BJD, Alan 2EØGLD
& Glenn GØGBI*

Glenn GØGBI 3481 and Henry MØZAE 4955

Support Your Local Repeater Group

Eric Bray recently contacted me with an interesting thought. His local repeater group, like many others is facing financial problems. This is coupled with a fall in membership and



increases in site rental and electric charges. The upshot is that Eric's group is shortly going to hold an EGM with a view to winding down the group and close of the repeaters they run.

Eric pointed out that a UK amateur licences used to cost £15 per year. So, Eric suggested all amateurs donate the money we save on a licence fee to your local repeater group to keep them operational?



A Real Radio Sea Anchor

It was during 1953 aboard HMS Nereide, (opposite) we were returning from a three month antisubmarine exercises with the South African Navy at Durban, to our base at Simonstown (near Capetown), calling at a few small ports on the way.



One such port was Knysna; a small town situated on the Garden Route in the Cape, approached from seaward through a 100-yard-wide break in steep cliffs, known as 'Knysna Heads' which led into a large lagoon. Knysna is also



known for the dense forest nearby and I remember seeing a cartoon painting in a shop window there, of the dense forest and a large number of dogs looking at a signboard pointing "to the big tree".

We had a pleasant four day stay there and our next port of call was to be Mossel Bay, about fifty miles to the west. The day before our departure, it had been arranged that eight members of the ships company would sail the ships' whaler to Mossel Bay and the ship would meet up with them there. All were experienced 'sailors' and for safety a telegraphist armed with a type 46 portable radio was included. Skeds were arranged for two hourly intervals and the weather forecast was fair.

In the early hours of the next morning a sked was missed followed by another two hours later. News came in that there had been a minor

storm at sea during the night. We couldn't sail early as there was a sandbar across the Heads which we could only cross at high water and even then it was touch and go. So we left Knysna and carried out a search for the missing whaler en route. There was still no radio contact and nothing sighted until we were just a few miles from Mossel Bay when the dismasted whaler was sighted.

All on board were safe and well except for a bit of exposure. Apparently, during the night, a local storm blew up and tore the mainsail before they could get it down and the mast broke. The telegraphist was asked about missing the radio skeds and he replied that the cox'n, a three badge seaman Petty Officer, had tied a rope around the radio and thrown it off the stern as 'a sea anchor'.

Ken G3RFH RNARS 175

The Life Of Brian – MØDAY

During this summer of 2016, RNARS HQ received a call for help with re-establishing the radio shack of a charismatic member; Brian/MØDAY.

Joe/G3ZDF our illustrious secretary duly put out a message on the RNARS Yahoo group asking for a volunteer to accompany him on a sojourn to assist Brian in his quest to 'get back on air'! I offered my services if other members closer to Brian were unable to respond. Joe subsequently and gladly accepted my offer and set the wheels in motion to respond in a timely manner to Brian's request.

Brian's Situation

Brian has seen a multitude of moon phases and is a man of many, many talents. (Must ask him if I can visit one day in the future and record his life and times for an article in our newsletter). He lives with his wife in their beautiful home set in a wonderful landscape of flora and fauna and has a daughter and her family, residing close-by. Regrettably, these days, both Brian and his wife are not enjoying the best of health, hence, he has sought help from fellow RNARS members to re-establish his radio shack that has been under wraps since 2004.

His equipment is a Yaesu FT747GX along with Yaesu - Musen FC700 ATU, aerial system G5RV. plus a Palstar power supply. There is also

other equipment configured for VHF use but Brian has kept that part to one side at this moment in time. His prime aim is to get back on the HF bands and operate on R3E mode as and when he is able. His last contact in 2004 was with a station in Venezuela.

Setting The Scene

Brian's home is nestled in the countryside of the rolling hills of the South Downs, North of Petersfield, in the County of Hampshire. Joe's is located in the city Chichester, on the South Coast of Hampshire just East of Portsmouth. A distance of approximately 26 or so statute miles by road from Brian. I'm four miles North West of the City of Southampton, in the suburb of Calmore, very close to the lower reaches of the river Test; four miles downstream from Broadlands, the stately of Lord Louis Mountbatten, (deceased), our present Queen's uncle. The area is administered by the New Forest District Council; a distance of forty statute miles by road to Brian.

The agreed date and time for rendezvous was 24th August 2016. at circa 1030Hrs. Evidently, Joe had a clear road and made the journey to Brian's in good time.

My journey was somewhat different. The sun was shining brightly and the temp was 25C when I departed in my limo; a Suzuki Splash, along with my faithful companion, Lady Maia, a Shih-Tzu, age eight years. I allowed myself a reasonable amount of time to enable me to achieve an arrival time of 1030 Hrs. but I met with much congestion of traffic on the M27 and the M3 motorways prior to exiting at junction 10 of the M3 onto the A31 Alton/Four Marks highway. This section of the journey took me through the rolling hills and twisting roads of the Hampshire countryside of the South Downs, very much agricultural landscape. The fields showed evidence of hard work having been performed by combine harvesters, gathering in the crops of seeds some earlier in the year. I wonder how much was barley



is destined for making a tippie? Seeing all the various farmsteads brought back memories of my younger days in the 1950s, when as a farm hand, working on a mixed animal and arable farm in North Devonshire, prior to joining the RN in the summer of 1955. After a number of miles on the A31, I needed to turn onto the A32 and onto a very narrow country road, for the last section of the journey; this took me through very similar countryside, but with more steep hills, twisting narrow roads and wooded areas, finally arriving at Brian's QTH twenty minutes or so adrift from planned ETA! Parked up, alighted and knocked on the front door.

Brian answered the door along with Joe at his side, both with broad smiles on their faces, welcoming me and Lady Maia, into the house and promptly offered a glass of non-alcoholic ginger beer as a refreshment.

The Cooks Tour

Brian proceeded to show Joe and me around the grounds of his beautiful home, set in a landscape of Flora and Fauna in abundance, the house nestled in amongst well established trees and other shrubbery, adjacent to extensive farm land. First stop was to view the beloved dinghy he used to sail many years ago; today, instead of sea water on the outside and bobbing along on the crest of the waves, it is firmly anchored to terra firma in a part of the garden which is generally in the shade, minus the mainmast and sail, filled with fresh water. a number of goldfish and obligatory plant life; all fed via a very intricate pumping system to keep the pond aerated. Next was to view the aerial system, a G5RV array which is connected at one end to a fir tree, the height of this leg is possibly thirty-five feet or more and only accessible via a very long ladder. Not something for the average person to reach, best left to an established tree surgeon to carry out any maintenance! The other leg is terminated on a pole fixed on the outside wall of his garage, with two support stays with a rope system to raise or lower the aerial. The height in raised position, similar to that at the Fir tree terminal point. The centre dipole 'dog bone' isolator and ladder line falls perpendicular and then fed into the radio shack on the first floor, via an established pipe system set into the wall structure just below the window line. This side of the house faces in a south-westerly direction and enjoys the afternoon sunshine. Not to forget the poultry to provide fresh eggs, the poultry enclosure set in a section of the garden.

Re-Establishing The Radio Station

As the aerial array is the pivotal part of any radio station, Brian lowered the aerial leg connected to the pole on the outside of the garage so that Joe and me could check the condition of the dipole leg, ladder-line connection point and the line itself. The aerial showed weathering of the two legs but still in a serviceable condition; but severe corrosion at the dipole/ladder-line connection point, so connector removed, dipole terminal points recut and fed into new connector. The ladder line showed extensive resistance and needed to be replaced. Hmm, no ladder-line immediately available! Joe volunteered to go to Nevada Radio store, located at Fitzherbert Spur, Farlington Portsmouth to purchase 15m of brand new ladder-line, a round journey of circa forty miles or so.

As the time was near enough 13:00, Brian requested we take a lunch break prior to any further work on the aerial. The outside temperature was around 31C at this time! The meal (a ploughman's menu) was most welcome and enjoyed by all with Brian doing all the honours to ensure Joe and I had plenty to eat and drink. On completion Joe jumped into his 'sleek limo' and sped off to buy the ladder-line; Joe was back in no time with the goods.

As time was marching on, we immediately set about stripping the ends of the ladder-line, checked the continuity to ensure no breaks or other nasties evident, connected to the dipole intersection link, fitted long cable ties to act as strain links between the ladder line and the dipoles, via the ends of the 'dogbone' isolator, conducted another continuity check to ensure all was well and fed the new ladder line into the shack. Raised the G5RV into its optimum/safe height and secured the downhaul on its cleat. Now it was time to check the radio gear, earth arrangements and power source to ensure it was safe to apply power and check radio to aerial. Hey presto! tuned the FT747 to the 20m band and checked VSWR 1:1 direct to the aerial, bypassing the FC700. Checked other frequencies with the FC 700 in circuit, all found to be AOK. A pre-arranged QSO with Mick/G3LIK, located some 15 miles away 'as the crow flies' was made; as the time of day did not favour 40m, went down to 80m and on the key, made a successful two way QSO. Brian was very happy with our efforts and looked forward to manning his shack once again and enjoying the delights of ham radio!

Left the radio tuned to the 20m band, as long range comms at the time of day was at its best.

Having completed our task, Joe and me bade farewell to Brian and went on our way back to our homes. Subsequently received an email from Brian thanking us once again for our efforts and informed he had received notification that he would be going into hospital for a planned operation very soon. Hoping in his convalescence time to incorporate as much time as possible in the radio shack.

Conclusion

A well worth exercise and gave me the opportunity to give time to others whom are in a less favourable condition than myself. Thank you Joe for allowing me to work alongside you and many thanks Brian for your hospitality.

Doug GØLDJ 3686

Sea Story continued - Chapter four: Hermes © Eric Bray

At the dockyard gate, I showed my nearly new ID card, and asked for directions to Hermes. "Middle Slip, Jack." The dockie copper pointed the way. "Past Victory, turn left, and if you go splash, you've missed it. It's that big grey thing with a flat roof."

I looked in vain for a flat-roofed structure amongst the tangle of cranes, power pylons, and flagpoles, then set off in the indicated direction, glad that I wasn't being squashed flat by my kit bag. The name Victory rang a vague bell, something to do with an old sea battle, so when I found an old, wooden sailing ship, painted in black and yellow stripes, with pirate cannons all over, in a dock, I turned left, and asked a passing Dockie for Middle Slip, whatever that was.

"Ermes? That grey thing there, sonny!" He pointed at an aircraft carrier about twenty yards away, then shambled off. It looked enormous, as it towered above me, extending left and right for a vast distance. It was a huge expanse of grey paint, streaked with rust stains. I stood there, just looking, the hairs on the back of my neck bristling with nervous fear and excitement.

“I said – ‘Don’t you salute Officers?’.” A voice demanded, bringing me back abruptly.

“Oh! Sorry, Sir, I was – “. I fired one off at him.

“Big, isn’t she!”

“Yes, Sir, I was - .”

“About to go aboard. I presume that you are one of our new box of baby Gollies that we are getting.”

“Yes, Sir. I - .” wasn’t going to finish a sentence, obviously!

“You’re early! You aren’t due until Monday week.”

“I wasn’t welcome at home, Sir.” I managed to finish one!

“Ah, been there, done that! I don’t know whether there will be room for you. The previous hands haven’t left, yet!”

He looked at me. “I’m your Divisional Officer, by the way, Sub-lieutenant Jones.” He pointed at a gangway that led from the dock, up to an opening in the vast grey flank. “Go on up, report in, and see what happens.”

“Yes, Sir. Thank you, Sir. I saluted again.

“Once is enough! You aren’t in training, now, well, sort of not!”

“Sorry, Sir!” I stopped my arm as it came up again. I probably looked as though I suffered from Sydenham’s chorea!

As I headed for the steep hand-railed plank, I detected a smile, from the corner of my eye. Was it amusement, or pity? Just short of the top, I banged my head on the top edge of the opening, then saw the notice on the wall – bulkhead - opposite that read – ‘Don’t quack – DUCK!’ A burly seaman with a propeller badge was standing near a lectern. He wore tatty no 2’s and a smirk.

“Goin’ somewhere?”

“Joining.”

“Where’s yer papers?”

“I wasn’t given any.”

“Oh gawd! Where’s yer ID then?”

I produced my card.

“This a photo of you? Looks like a chimpanzee!”

“That is what happens when people are treated like monkeys.”

“Smart-arse, ay? I don’t like smart-arses! You’d better report to the Jimmy’s office.” He wrote my name and ID card number into a big book on the lectern, then added the time.

“You still ‘ere?”

“Where do I go?”

“Four deck, forrard, opposite the NAAFI!”

“How -?”

“Down that ‘ole,” He indicated an oval doorway, “down two flights, along the passage to the main drag, turn right, and keep going, through the canteen, to where the passage splits in two. Go left, and it’s on the corner.”

I found it, eventually, after collecting a few scrapes on my shins along the way, from stepping over the hatch coamings, although I didn’t know they were called that, as I tried to avoid getting hooked up on the clips that ringed the openings, for fastening the doors shut, making them watertight. I didn’t know that, either!

A Petty Officer with a crossed guns badge on his sleeve was lounging on the lower half of a stable door, watching the paint dry.

“Excuse me, P.O. Where’s the Jimmy’s office?” The P.O. straightened up to his full height of five feet and one half inch, adjusted his cap, glared at me, and said, - “Do you mean the Master at Arms’ office?”

“I was told to go to the J -.” My brain clicked into gear.

“Yes, P.O.”

“You are learning!” He pointed above his head, to an engraved plaque above the door opening. “What does it say?”

“Ah!”

“That’s me. I run this ship, although the Captain thinks he does. Who are you, and what do you want?”

“I’m joining, Si – P.O. From Mercury.”

He studied my nearly new uniform, with its lack of badges of any description, except the gold butterfly.

“Trainee?”

“Yes, P.O.”

“You call me Master. That is my title. I’m like the village Policeman. I didn’t know any sprogs were due yet.”

“No, P – Master, I’m early.”

“That’s one for the book, un-adrift! Where’s your papers?”

“I don’t have any. I think they were all being sent direct, with all the kit.”

“No kit?”

“No, Master.”

He looked at the ceiling for inspiration and guidance.

“So, all you have is what you are wearing?”

“Yes, Master!” I proffered my I.D. card.

He took it, studying the photograph, then me, with a puzzled frown.

“It looks like a chimpanzee!” I said it, before he could.

“You said it, not me!” He grinned, then pulled open a drawer in a filing cabinet. From it, he pulled a thin file that contained two sheets of A4. “Hmm, too young for a rum ration, too young for a beer ration, no criminal record, yet. You’ll be in 4P2, but because you are early, there’s no room yet. Hmm.” He scratched an itch. “Best thing you can do is – got any money?”

“A bit.”

“Then I suggest you wander up to the Sailors’ Home, outside the front gate, and book in there for a few days. As it’s outside the dockyard, you can come and go as you see fit, and you won’t get lumbered with any duties, you are supposed to be on leave! You can wear civvies, too. If you can afford to, stay there until you are due to join. In the next cubby-hole is my scran-bag, unclaimed kit. See if there’s anything there that fits you, five bob an item.”

“Thanks P – Master. Where is this home?”

“Out of the main gate, put your back to the railway station, and wander up the road for half a mile or so, past the barracks gate, and it’s on the right. You can’t miss it.”

“Thanks.”

“Well, go on, then, or I’ll have to notice that you are here, and start filling in forms!”

“Yes, Master!” I departed, about six feet forward, and had a rummage, paid for my ‘new’ clothes, then went for a wander round, trying to find essentials like the heads, because I needed to.

Eventually, I stumbled on a ‘you are here’ map that was bolted to the wa – bulkhead, and puzzled over the hieroglyphics. The heads were on five deck, P section, which seemed an appropriate place to go for a pee, port side. So I went there first, as the need was getting urgent. After that, I tried to find a way out. I took a wrong turn, somewhere, and ended up in a huge dimly lit space, apart from a gaping hole in one side at the far end. The floor – deck! was covered in wheel-marks.

As my eyes adjusted to the gloom, I saw bits of aeroplanes fastened to the walls – bulkheads, I must get the names right! That was when I realized that I was in the hangar. I had better explain that ships are divided up into little boxes by dividing walls that run from top to bottom,

over the full width of the frame, as well as by the different deck levels, that have watertight doors, or hatches, in them at the main passageways. On a big ship, there are also dividers that run from top to bottom, but front to back. The walls that run from side to side have water-tight doors in them, that are fastened shut by clips called dogs, presumably because they keep barking your shins! There are other doors, for closing the openings between deck levels. Starting at the sharp end, the space in front of the first cross-bulkhead is labelled 'A', and so on, alphabetically, until you get to the last one.

Starting at the top deck, and going down, they are numbered 1, 2, 3, etc. Anything above one deck is superstructure, and numbered S1, S2, etc, working up. Only the door-hatches to the outside, or between decks, up there, are watertight, to keep weather and fire out.

I about-faced, then blundered about in a maze of identical-looking cream coloured passages, until I found a hatch at the top of a ladder that allowed daylight to stream in. I emerged, to find two lifeboats covered with tarpaulins, in their cradles, and a vast expanse of water, far below. I was on the wrong side! I could see no obvious route directly across, so I went all the way round, across the quarterdeck, and back along the other side, until I got to the plank, which everyone called a 'brow'. I waved a cheery 'goodbye' to the sailor on duty, and half-fell, half slid, down the much steeper slope. The tide was coming in, so the ship was rising, but the jetty was not!

At the bottom, a one-ring Officer collared me. "Oy, you! Are you Ship's Company?"

"No, Sir!" I replied, as I saluted. I wasn't, not yet!

"Well, push off, then, out of the way!"

Off I pushed, found the wooden sailing ship, turned right, made it to the gate, turned left, and wandered, following instructions, up the street. As I passed the Barracks gate, a voice bellowed at me, - "Oy! Sailor! Don't slouch!"

As I was outside, I ignored the shout, there wasn't much he could do, and I wasn't going to march all on my own!

From the outside, the Royal Sailors' Home Club looked like an old hotel. I hesitated, then went up the steps, expecting the room charges to be horrendous. Inside was a rather run-down foyer, with doors to the left,

right, and rear. Just inside, on the right, an old chap in a doorman style uniform manned a small desk in a cubby-hole that was not much larger than the 'Reception' sign that hung above it.

"Yes, Sir?"

"Er, - " Sir, me? "Sorry, Sir, I've not been in -." "Here before. I'm not Sir to you, Sir, you are Sir to me! I presume that you are looking for digs for a few days. Hasn't your ship arrived?"

"Yes, and sort of. Hermes, but the present crew hasn't gone yet, and there's no room!"

"Drafty's mucked up again, hey. How long?" He opened a register.

"That depends! I don't have much money!"

"Ah. Pound a night, canteen at the back, pay at the till, like a café. Bedding and sheets provided. Washbasin in the room, heads and bathroom at the end of the passage. No booze or women in the rooms. No noise after 2230, or before seven.

Hermes, hey. It only arrived this morning!"

"A pound a night I can manage! Is it B and B style, or can I stay in?"

"You may stay in, if you wish, Sir. The rooms are rather small. The cleaners change the bedding each Monday, or when a room becomes vacant."

"Ok. Where do I sign on?"

"In, Sir, not on! How many nights do you wish?"

My room proved to be a horizontal telephone booth. It was six feet wide, eight long, and six and a half high. A single light bulb dangled from the ceiling rose on a stub of wire. The mean shade absorbed most of the light it produced. A single bed occupied most of the right-hand wall, with a narrow tallboy at the foot, occupying the rest of the space. Opposite it, a pedestal basin, with hot and cold water, then a two drawer dressing table, and finally a wooden chair, completed a circuit of the room. A threadbare curtain hung at the window, through which was a spectacular view of a gable end, twenty feet away to the left. To the right, an enclosed quadrangle gave a home to a couple of potted plants. The floor of the room had a piece of linoleum on it.

Inside the tall-boy, on a high shelf, I found a couple of tatty Playboy magazines, a used condom, and a layer of dust. Below the shelf, a metal rail supported a few distorted wire hangers, an old tie, and an odd sock. In the dresser, I found a three-tooth comb, a bald toothbrush, and a long-dead spider. The spider had died of starvation, whilst waiting for a

fly to land in its carefully constructed, now dusty, web, in the drawer. I hammered the sliding window open, letting in a fresh smell of boiling dishcloths from the kitchens.

On the bed lay a bare mattress, a caseless pillow, and a newspaper dated three months ago. I went back down to Reception, where I advised the old chap on the lack of bedding, and said I was going for a wander. I asked which way were the nearest shops. He said that there was a Somerfield supermarket half a mile further up the road, and when I came back, the bedding would be in place, very sorry, etcetera.

I wandered up the road, found the Supermarket, and a road sign indicating the town centre, so, with nothing better to do, I kept going, keeping track of where I turned, so I could find my way back again, in this strange to me town. After being stopped by Land-Rovers full of Red-caps, (Military Police), for the third time, because I was wandering around in uniform, I gave up and found my way back. At the Supermarket, I bought a small box of washing powder, a bar of soap, and the other essentials, as all my stuff was in my kitbag, somewhere! I added a bag of apples and a pork pie, then made my way back to the Home Club, collected my key, and went up.

Sheets, pillowcase, blankets, and a towel lay neatly folded on the mattress, and the worst of the dust had been scraped up. I was glad about the towel, I had forgotten that! With a relieved sigh, I removed my jacket, and that silly corset-collar thing, then hung them up out of dirt's way, before trying the taps. With an evil slurp, they discharged a brown sludge, and started a pipe hammering, outside in the passageway. Gradually, the sediment flushed out, and the water ran clear. It also got hotter, and hotter, until the tap was spluttering gouts of steam that filled the room with fog. I opened the window again, presuming that the cleaners had closed it, then dhobeyed the tee-shirt and jeans, to ensure that there was no live-stock in them. With that done, I hung them on wire hangers that I had bent back into something resembling coat-hanger shape, to dry.

Taking stock of my miniscule budget, without raiding my bank account I had six pounds and some copper to last ten days. That meant that I had ten bob a day spends, and a bit left over. It doesn't sound like much, but it was also more than I had ever had before, so I was happy. I had

nothing to do, and nowhere to go, so I relaxed on the mattress, and, unplanned, dozed off.

My watch claimed it was three-o'clock, and as it was dark outside, I presumed it was a.m. I went for a pee, then assembled my bed, and occupied it. Later, I put on my almost dry civvies, and went for a wander, a pattern I was to repeat for the rest of the week. Seeing a lot, spending a little, and getting to know my way around Portsmouth, from the 'old town', via Southsea, round to Whale Island, and up as far as Fratton. I don't claim to have walked every street, but I learned the layout.

The following Sunday afternoon, I signed out, turned in my key, and wandered down to the dockyard. I waved my I.D. card at the gate copper, and made my way to Middle Slip, to be greeted by a view of water. My heart leaped out through the top of my head, while my stomach clanged into my boots. Had I mis-heard? After a minute, the brain re-started, and I remembered that I was due to join tomorrow. A passing Dockie, slouching along with a tangle of red and blue hoses over his shoulder, looked a question at me.

"Hermes?"

"Oh ar! She be in dry-dock." He pointed vaguely into the depths of the dockyard. "Round corner."

"Thanks."

"Ar." He shambled off, a brass fitting clanking on the ground at each step.

I reported to the Master's office, once I managed to find it again. The Leading Hand scribbled a note. "Come back tomorrow after breakfast." He said. "Do you know what mess you're in?"

"The Master said I was in 4P2."

"Ok." He turned his attention back to his book.

I wandered off, picking my way over the tangle of pipes and cables that trailed along the passageway, sprawled untidily over the hardboard sheeting that covered the floodeck. Black grease was splattered everywhere, and I tried to avoid getting it smeared onto my clothing. Black hand-prints surrounded each hatchway, where people had been climbing over the tangles of junk and bits of machinery that were scattered everywhere. I found 4P2 mess, and opened the door.

"Yer?" A two striper RO1 asked.

"I'm looking for the person in charge of the mess."

"Yer!"

"Is that you?"

"Yer. Killick's on leave."

I explained that I was joining, from Mercury.

"Woss yer branch."

"Electronic Warfare."

"Oh, a Golly. Your lot are in 'Gobbler's Gulch', round there!" He pointed at a two-foot gap between the end of a row of bunks, and a stack of lockers. I went through, and started again.

"I heard! I'm Dan. There's no pits left in here, so you'll have to crash outside, for now." He raised his voice.

"Charlie? Give 'im Jacko's old pit, for now."

Someone called "Ok."

"Jacko's left. Dan explained. "Where's yer kit?"

I explained how it was being quote sent ahead unquote.

"Well, it ain't here!" He laughed. "You'll have to find the Buffer's mate, an' ask 'im. Buffer's on leave."

"The Buffer?" I thought that was a bit of a railway track.

"Buffer. The Bo'sun. He's in charge of everything like that."

"Ok. Where can I find him?"

Dan looked at my clothes.

"You got any kit at all?"

"My number ones."

"Bloody hell! Don't they teach you sprogs anything at all? Always but always have a bare minimum of kit in your hand, in case of fuck-ups! One's, two's, eight's, and a dhobey kit, at least! Ralph, you doin' anythin'?"

"Nothing that can't wait." A head poked out of a hidden corner. "Then will you take the sprog to the Buffer's, and see if you can find 'is kit? Bring 'im back with you."

"Sure." Ralph stood up. "I'll just go for a piss first, then I'll pick you up from here."

"No, I'll come with you."

"You going to hold it for me?"

Another voice called. "Nah! He needs you to take his nappy off!"

"Up yours, Charlie!" Ralph turned to me. "I'll take you the long way, from the main drag, but there's another door in the opposite corner of the mess."

I followed him, ignoring the jeers, smutty remarks, and catcalls, out, round the end of the mess, right, and along a cross passage I half-remembered. “That’s it!” Ralph pointed at a doorway marked 4P4. He led me through a hatch, and down some steps into a polished steel and tile room. One side was lined with urinals, the other with ‘traps’, fitted with half doors you could see under and over. “Try to remember where things are, then you can show your chums, when they arrive.”

We went back to the main drag, then further aft, to X section, where we ducked into another side passage, then into a room full of bits and pieces.

“Buffer about?” Ralph yelled.

“Shoreside, in the containers. Try the paint-shed!” Came a reply from a hole in the wall labelled ‘boat store’. I couldn’t see how they got boats in and out.

Off we went again, back to the main drag, then forward, across, up two, and came out on the boat deck by the brow, down it, and in and out of a collection of sheds until we found the Buffer, an A.B. liberally splattered with grey primer paint. He heard my tale, then hauled a bunch of keys out of a drawer. “They’re in number three. Le’s go.”

Number three was at the extreme opposite end of the line of sheds, and the dry-dock. Inside was a heap of kit-bags, brooms, paint-brushes, old cans, paint-clogged rollers and other debris.

“Find yours, Kid.”

Of course, it was at the bottom of the heap.

“When’re the rest due to land?”

“Tonight, or in the morning.” Ralph replied.

“I’ll leave it open, then, so they can get in without pestering me. You can show ‘em where the stuff is.”

“Right, kid. Pick your bag up, and I’ll guide you back to the mess. We don’t want you getting lost, do we?” Ralph wandered off, leaving me floundering under my bag, which seemed to have increased in weight since I last saw it. By the time I reached the brow, I was sweating. At least, it was nearly level, as Hermes was nearly on the blocks. Over half of the water had been pumped out, ready for the final adjustments and settling, in the morning.

“When you want to crap, and from tomorrow, piss or bathe, you have to go in there.” Ralph pointed at a low stone building. “If you go ashore

anywhere in the dockyard, you have to be in the correct rig of the day, except going to the shit-house. If you're going there, you can leave your cap in the mess, or wherever. You don't wear your cap between decks, unless you are on parade.

I half fell down the ladders to four deck, then staggered into the mess. "That one was Jacko's. Dump it there, then I'll take you on a quick tour of the important bits." We started in the locker room. (Got a padlock?) and the bathroom, next door, below another mess, 4P1, which was filled with seamen, normally. We then made a whistle-stop tour of the ship, from the sick-bay, to the NAAFI shop, then the bedding store, which was locked, the broom store, then went up to the flight deck, which, I was told, was out of bounds when the hairy planes were landing! Back inside, the tall narrow bit was called the Island, we went up again, to the EWO, the Radio Shack, and the bridge, all places I might get sent, on errands. Back on the flight deck, I was shown a quick way back to the mess, across the width of the deck, at a shallow angle aft, then into a slot over the side. We ducked down into a low doorway, and came out in the top of the hangar. Down some more steps, onto the hangar floor, through a doorway, down two decks, and we were in the cross-passage by 4P4 door. Ralph led the way in. "That's the Bunts' section, in, round, and through the tangle" I learned that there were seventy-eight bunks in the mess. "Think you can find everything?"

"Er, -."

"It's easy, really. If you get screwed up, find your way back to four deck, and start again!"

"Thanks."

"I'll leave you to get sorted. While we're in dry-dock, we can stay in eights, because you get crapped up too fast, with all the muck. If you go shoreside, though, you have to change."

When I had dragged my kit-bag down to the locker room, I discovered that someone had stuffed a couple of bricks and a mangy old length of rope into the neck! All my kit felt damp, and smelled musty. I got everything sorted in time for the evening meal, and followed the crowd to the canteen. The meal was stinking fish, anaemic chips, and green paste.

Afterwards, I made a few practice runs from one place to another, trying to find more direct routes, with the aid of the 'You are here' map. I found

myself in some pretty obscure places, most of them dead ends! That earned me some funny looks from the bod's who were supposed to be in there, although there weren't many, on a Sunday evening. Tired of climbing ladders, and ducking under hatches, so that I could bang my shins instead, I headed for the deserted mess, where I sat for a while, staring at the empty bunk opposite mine, that was three feet away. Bored of that, I consulted my wallet, found a pound note, and a couple of shillings, and tried my luck at the NAAFI, where I bought a can of pop and a Mars bar. I then decided to try and re-find the empty space I had stumbled into, up on the Island, when I was wandering, earlier. It turned out to be the Flag Deck, which offered a good vantage point over the flight deck. Mounted one on each side, were a pair of huge 20" signalling lamps, and a cluster of telephones. From there, I watched nothing happen, until the sun set and it got chilly.

Back in the deserted mess, I sat for a while, then did a bit of laundry, my socks, underpants, and the tee-shirt I had worn earlier, after which, I looked in vain for somewhere to put them while they dried. They ended up draped over the 'modesty board' at the rear of my bunk. There was a similar perforated steel sheet backing the next bunk, with a three inch gap between the two. After some experimenting, I found which switch turned out the lights nearest my bunk, and turned in.

Later that night, I found why I had been given a bottom bunk. Everyone that came in - sat on me! I also learned, the smelly way, to make my bed with the plastic bedding cover with the zip towards the 'modesty board'. I also learned to keep most of the cover over my bedding, while I was in it, so that when the drunks threw up over me, it went onto the plastic, and not into my bedding. I still got sat on, but the plastic wiped clean easily. Luckily, I only got splattered, and not deluged, and a quick mattress swap in the early hours solved that problem, although I had to wait until about three a.m., when there was a 'dead' period, and nobody was coming off shore-leave.

After breakfast, I returned to the Master's office, from where I collected various bits of documentation with instructions to report to various places. I made the rounds of the Medics, the Dentist, the Chaplain, the Barber shop, the Laundry. (There was a laundry, run by a group of Hong Kong Chinese). I was poked, prodded, tested, signed, scribbled, and shorn, again. The list did help, in that it had the compartment and deck

number next to the place, to help in finding the location. I also learned that I could have stayed at the Home Club for another night, as us new arrivals weren't due until 'some time' on Monday, and not 0845 latest! I collected my bedding, a pair of supposedly non-skid 'deck boots', and a plastic, double-skinned, foul weather jacket, along with a lifebelt, a gas mask, and anti-flash gear, which consisted of a pair of long gauntlets and a sort of balaclava, made of a thick white cotton fabric. I remade my bed, using my clean sheets, and took the splattered ones to the laundry, where I was issued with a number, which I wrote on the 'shopping list' that I still carried. That used up most of the day, with interruptions when I had to go looking for the body who was supposed to be in the place I had been sent, but was not. I had barely sat down, in the mess, when I was 'piped', (sent for), by the p.a. system. When I got to the Master's office, I was given the task of showing the rest of the arrivals round, because I now knew where everything was (ha!). What was not said was that I was the only gullible, useless sod available, and everyone else was too busy drinking coffee! So, round I went again. This time, though, I was only carrying myself! We started in number three shed, collected the kitbags, then went to the mess, to find bunks. I now knew why all the free ones were on the bottom! Then round to the bedding store, and back to the mess to unload, before beginning the circular tour of all the 'offices' again. Finally, back to the Master's office, just in time to catch his 'writer', or secretary, locking up for the night. We were told to return at nine, tomorrow for an issue of station cards, and cap ribbons.

The evening meal was brown water with bits of vegetable, and shredded boot-sole in it. A tray of sliced bread was rapidly emptied. Later, a chip-shop van on the jetty near the base of the brow, and a Kentucky Chicken shop, just outside the main gate, did a roaring trade. I watched the others trying to work out how to assemble their beds, in the limited space available, each one of them in the others' way! Er! Someone's puked all over my mattress! Tommo complained. He had to wrestle it up the passage, up the ladders, across the brow, and down to the sheds, to exchange it for a clean one.

Eric Bray MØHFF 4834

To be continued

Thanks to Eric Bray for allowing the use of his published work.

Accumulators

My daily newspaper; 'The Courier' published in Dundee by DC Thomson recently ran a series of readers' articles concerning the days before mains electricity and the associated weekly recharging of two-volt radio accumulators. Below is my published anecdote which may stir memories for some. Incidentally, DC Thomson was the last news publisher with offices in Fleet Street.

The recent articles on accumulators brought to mind an incident when I was about five years old.

Battery wireless sets employed two batteries. The first was a high tension dry cell of 90 volts for the anode supply and a glass-cased two-volt lead acid rechargeable battery (accumulator) for the valve heaters. Older readers will remember the pleasing soft warm red glow from the valves and the warming up period that might take ten to thirty seconds before the radio came to life.

Back in the early sixties, my late uncle Drew had an old Ford car which had six volt electrics; the norm for many cars of that age. As the lights had been left on, the battery was flat and no starting handle available and I was too wee to push start the car.

After removing the six-volt car battery, three redundant two-volt radio accumulators were found at the back of the garage which fitted neatly into the battery compartment and wired in series to provide the six-volts needed to start the car. The reason I can recall this event was that my uncle was taking me to Cupar where he knew the railway signal man who allowed us access to the signal box to see many steam locomotives pass, some entering the now closed sugar beet factory to hook up to freight trains, others were pulling crack express passenger trains on their way between Aberdeen, Edinburgh and London on the busy East Coast Main Line.

My grandfather's old battery charger is still in my father's possession and like many chargers of the period, has a little jumper plug for setting the charging voltage at 12, six or two volts. The two-volt tap was specifically for charging radio accumulators and the tapings for 12 and six volts for car and motorbike batteries.

Perhaps it was this brief introduction into the wonders of electrics that sparked my interest in what has been an almost lifelong hobby: amateur radio, later sitting the required City & Guilds examination. Since then I have built many receivers and transmitters and of all the projects I've built, valve radios have given me the greatest satisfaction.

Returning to valve receivers, many of the early domestic sets were of a type known as regenerative receivers, where in very simple terms, a small portion of the incoming signal was fed back into the detector circuit to provide amplification. If the 'regen' gain control was advanced too far, the receiver oscillated and became a low powered transmitter blocking out the signal for other listeners for some distance and wasn't an unknown event in built up areas.

Colin Topping

Colin,

If you print this, can I ask you to omit my name, number and call please? The following is not aimed at any individual, it is all to do with good practice, not finger pointing; but I know from experience, if someone puts their head above the parapet to express a view, there are some who will take umbrage.

We all know that the HF bands are in very poor shape and may be for some time. This makes it difficult for some to hear and be heard by net controllers. However, it is not uncommon to hear other stations on a net. If **all** stations on a net were to leave a short break of a few seconds each time before they transmit, it would allow weak stations to call in and be heard by others and control station informed. Also in view of conditions, it would be handy if overs were kept short to allow stations to call in before the band fades out. If members want an extended rag chew, please make arrangements to do so after the net has closed.

Another point in view of the very poor conditions, can net controllers please use their own callsign as per the list in the Newsletter and RNARS web site rather than a club callsign or get the club calls listed to make it obvious for anyone searching for a RNARS net on a flat or noisy band, particularly new members.

A final point, when a RNARS associated special event station calls in to a net, would it not make sense for net control to hand over to the special event station operator so that he or she can call each station for a brief exchange

rather than control laboriously passing over to each station on the net in turn to call the special event station?

As I've explained, all I'm doing is suggesting good practice and not pointing a finger at anyone. However, to be on the safe side, I'm off to the attic to dig out granddad's old Home Guard steel helmet for the flack I suspect some might be preparing!

SM

Pictures from the 2016 AGM; full report in the Spring Newsletter



Doug G4BEQ is made an Honorary Submariner Telegraphist of U995 by Hans DK9OS



Doug GØLDJ receiving the G3AWY award for his aerial article in the Newsletter.



Nigel MØNAF with his certificate of merit.



David M6ØRL receives his certificate of merit



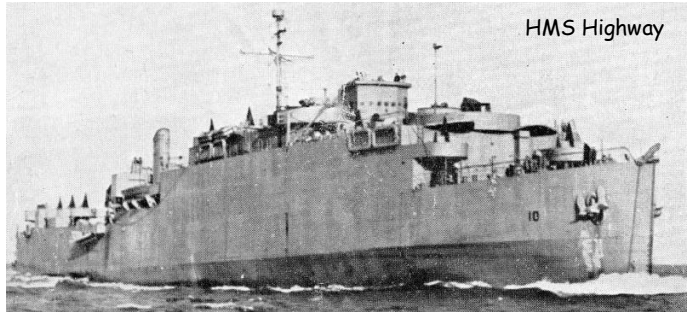
Following “Up-Spirits”, only Ray (right) and Mick (left) were sober enough to look towards the camera for a group picture.



President (left) and retiring Chair (right). Any suggestions for a caption?
Picture by Martin Longbottom

HMS Highway Part II and Landing Craft (Smoke)

During a perusal of the Yahoo E-mail comments, one of our number mentioned his old ship which was in fact an LCV Smoke.



The vessel had an aircraft propeller installed on the after section, to make the smoke. However, his curious announcement did not appear to draw any comment and should he have been dismayed, it occurred to me that, I could corroborate his statement, with the following.

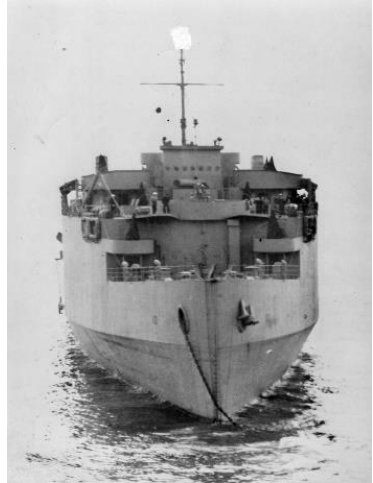
The beginning of June 1944, HMS Highway, was exercising around the environs of Messina (Sicily) in company with a flotilla of a new type of Landing Craft, known as, Landing Craft Smoke (LCS). This vessel was designed and employed to literally create a smoke screen. An aero type engine was clamped to the aft section and connected in some fashion to smoke canisters. Highway's responsibility was to convey the craft and personnel, to the objective zone which, in the event, proved to be the Island of Elba. Even the communication department were unaware of the destination in the first instance; therefore, the instructions were probably conveyed via a shore establishment visit by our Captain.

The assault on Elba, was a Free French enterprise, together with Royal Navy support, which encompassed the 19th Minesweeping Flotilla and include "Highway", (LSD 10) and the operation was assigned the code word "Brassard", and executed on the 17th June 1944.

Having completed our exercises with the Landing Craft, (smoke), we lowered our stern gate, and Highway's unique ballast tanks were put into operation. The vessel then partially submerged, allowing the sea to enter the bowels of the ship, and in turn the landing craft were taken inboard under their own power. The procedure was then reversed, to expel the sea water, and the ramp raised, thus the visitors, plus their

craft were berthed high and dry, as in a dry dock yard facility. Their Crews were fed and accommodated with us, but in the event it was a very short trip.

I experienced another of those very strange coincident on this voyage. On the upper deck, enjoying the setting sun, and a calm Mediterranean Sea, which was pleasant, apart from the possibility of something lurking and about to happen! My companion of the moment was a crew member of a landing craft, and we chatted idly about our backgrounds, and perhaps pending events of the morrow.



It transpired that, he lived in the St. Marylebone district, (London) but, remarkably, a good friend of his acquaintance was a chap that I worked with, at a film company, in Wardour Street (London) who also advised me of the requirements of the job I was assigned to before moving on to another section in the company, and eventually became a friend. Such encounters although possibly meaningless, never cease to amaze me.

Very early, the following morning our visitors departed. They had the unenviable task of going in close inshore, which I believe was “Portoferraio”. Be that as it may, I did not meet my brief colleague again, for to my knowledge, his craft was not included in our return pick-up. That does not necessarily imply that he was a casualty, other circumstances may have prevailed, and I hope that all was well for him.

Highway returned to Messina (Sicily) and it was possibly on this occasion that we were regaled with an account that at the time of our departure, a Fascist group carried out an abortive attack on the Port. It would have appeared to be a very unwise venture on their part, in view of the Royal Marine garrison, in situ and also futile as Italy had already surrendered.

Bill GØIEC 3526

The winning entry for the **Caption Competition** came in from Henry (MØZAE) with; *“I’ve adjusted, the angle of the backstay aerial for DX propagation, just have to dry out the bedding”.*

Dr Ken Lown was a very close second with; *“Don’t anchor at low water and spend hours in the pub!”*



Let’s see if anyone can come up with a caption for this picture; entries to the editor as per the instructions in the editorial.



Going back to the Summer edition and suggestions for a name for the Newsletter, so far the following have come in and will be discussed amongst the committee. I would also point out that a number of members thought we should retain the present title.

The Message Pad
Magazine of the RNARS
RNARS Magazine
RNARS – QTC
Bright Sparks
Key Notes
Radio Active
Wavelength
Fluctus Frequentiam
G3BZU The RNARS Newsletter

Joe Kirk
Jurgen H Timcke
Jurgen H Timcke
Jurgen H Timcke
John Scully G3GUR 4606
John Scully G3GUR 4606
Wishes to remain anonymous
Colin Topping
Colin Topping (It’s Latin)
Doug GØLDJ 3686 (G3BZU was the first call-sign held by the RNARS)

QRT – Closing Down

As always my sincere thanks to all who have taken the time to send in items for the Newsletter and to Jim Smith for his excellent article on his service in the Merchant Navy and Post Office; thanks Jim, good to have you on board. Now a personal vote of thanks to Doug Hotchkiss for his most recent tenure as Chairman. Without Doug's support and encouragement, I doubt I'd be the editor today; thanks again Doug.

When you consider Doug's very long service to the society, I sincerely hope we can still rely on his wisdom should we need to call upon him for advice? Also standing down from his role as Membership Officer is another stalwart; Wally Walker, who like Doug has served the society in a number of capacities over many years. Thanks Chief for all your assistance, wit and foresight.

I did receive a couple of comments about the last issue concerning the number of articles on aerals. I'm not going to apologies; I can only use the material that members kindly take the time to send in. Needless to say the two members concerned have never sent in an article, not even a picture of themselves for the 'me in my shack spot'. An article doesn't have to be pages long, several short items provide for a more varied newsletter.

Nothing else to add bar to wish ain and aw all the very best for Christmas and trust the New Year is a good one. Forgot to say; I'm back in front of the Sheriff Court again. I fancied pheasant in place of turkey this Christmas; so off I went with my old double hammer shotgun and a couple of black powder charges to shoot one. I've never seen so many people run like hell out of the frozen food section of the supermarket once the smoke cleared.

Colin

Contacting me	E-mail: news@colinsmagic.com ONLY enter RNARS in the subject Mobile: 07871 959654 Home: 01592 774085
Out with the UK	Mobile: 00447871 959654 Home: 00441592 774085 Skype: colintop
Post	26 Crathes Close, Glenrothes, KY7 4SS, UK

RAFARS & Royal Signals ARS Nets

RAFARS	Time	Freq	Control
Daily	1100 A 1830 A	3.71 3.71	GØSYF GI4SAM G3HWQ MØRGI
Monday	1900 A	3.7	G3PSG GØBIA
Tuesday	0730 A 1400 A 1900 A	14.27 7.015 3.567	G4IYC
Wednesday	1500 Z 1530 Z	14.29 21.29	?
Thursday	1830 Z	14.17	ZC4RAF
Friday	0730 A	14.055	CW Net
Sunday	0900 Z	5.403	?
First Monday of the month	1000 A	3.71	?
RSARS Nets	Time	Freq	Control
Monday - Friday	1000 A	7.17	GW3KJW M3VRB
Monday	1830 A	3.585	GM3KHH (RTTY)
Tuesday	1400 A	7.17	MØOIC
	1600 Z	14.18	G4BXQ
Wednesday	0600 Z	14.143	Various
	1030 Z	3.615	?
	1830 A	3.565	GM3KHH
	2030 A	1.946	2EØBDS
Thursday	1400 A	7.17	GØRGB
	1800 A	3.743	G6NHY
Friday	1830 A	3.583	GM3KHH (PSK31)
	1830 A	3.565	High speed CW
	2000 Z	14.055	CW
Saturday	0600 Z	14.143	SSB
Sunday	1000 A	3.565	G3JRY (Slow speed CW)
	1100 A	7.17	GW4XKE
	1100 A	3.745	GM4FOZ
Joint Service Net	Time	Freq	Control
Sunday	0900 A	5.4035	G3RAF
Tuesday	1900 A	5.4035	G3RAF



RNARS Nets

All frequencies +/- QRM. DX nets are GMT; UK nets are GMT or BST as appropriate. The list is compiled by Mick Puttick G3LIK
mick_g3lik@ntlworld.com – 02392255880.

UK	Time Local	Frequ	Net	Control
Daily	2359-0400	145.727	Midnight Nutters	Vacant
Sun	0800	3.667	News 0830	G3LIK
	1000	7.065	Northern Net	GM4VUG
	1100	145.4	Cornish Net	GØGRY
	1100	7.02	CW Net	G4TNI
Mon-Sat	1030	7.065 / 3.743	Bubbly Rats	GØGBI GØOKA GDØSFI MØZAE
Mon	1400	3.575 / 7.02	QRS CW	GØVCV
	1900	7.088 / 3.743	North West-News 2000	GØGBI
Tue	1900	7.028 / 3.528	CW Net	G3RFH
Wed	1400	3.74 / 7.088	White Rose	G4KGT
	1930	3.743	SSB News 2000	GØOAK
	2000	145.4	Stand Easy	Vacant
Thur	1900	3.542	Scottish CW	Vacant
	2000 GMT	1.835	Top Band CW	GØCHV G4KJD
Fri	1600	10.118	CW	SM4AHM
Sat	0800	3.74/7.088	GØDLH Memorial Net	GØVIX
DX	Time GMT	Frequ	Net	Control
Sun	0800	7.015/30555	MARAC CW	PA3EBA/PI4MRC
	1430	21.41/28.94	RNARS DX	WA1HMW
	1800	Echolink	Echolink	VE3OZN / K8BBT
	1900	14.33	N American	WA1HMW
Mon	0930	3.615	VK SSB	VK1RAN/VK2RAN
Wed	0118-0618	7.02	VKCW	VK4RAN
	0148-0648	10.118	VK CW	VK4RAN
	0800	3.62	ZL SSB	ZL1BSA
	0930	7.02	VK SSB	VK5RAN
	0945	7.09	VK SSB	VK1RAN/VK2RAN
Thur	1430	21.41	RNARS DX	WA1HMW
Sat	0400	7.09	VK SSB	VK2CCV
	1330	7.02	VK CW	VK2CCV
	1400	7.09	VK SSB	VK2CCV
	1430	21.41	RNARS DX	WA1HMW

RNARS activity frequencies

FM	145.4								
CW	1.824	3.52	7.02	10.118	14.052	18.087	21.052	24.897	28.052
SSB	1.965	3.66	3.74	7.088	14.294	14.335	18.15	21.36	28.94

RNARS Commodities

Item	Price
Body Warmer , embroidered with the new RNARS logo, your name and callsign. Colour: Black only Sizes: S to XXXL	£30-00 P&P £3-00
Polo shirt , embroidered with new RNARS logo, your name and callsign. Colour: Navy only Sizes: S to XXXL	£16-00 P&P £3-00
Sweatshirt , embroidered with the new RNARS logo, your name and callsign. Colour: Navy only Sizes: S to XXXL	£16.00 P&P £3-00
Fleece jacket , embroidered with new RNARS logo, your name and callsign Colour: Navy only Sizes: S to XXXL	£21-00 P&P £3-00
Gold blazer badge with new RNARS logo	£10-00 P&P £2-00
Lapel badge with new RNARS logo	£2-00 P&P £1-00
RNARS Tie with old logo	£4-00 P&P £2-00
RNARS Log Book	£4-00 P&P £2-00

Size in inches:

Small 36-38

Medium 38-40

Large 40-42

Extra Large 42-44

2 Extra Large 44-46

3 Extra Large 46-48

4 Extra Large 48-50



RNARS Commodities Order Form
PLEASE write clearly and use block CAPITALS

Call-sign | RNARS No: _____ | _____
 Name: _____
 Address: _____

 Post Code: _____
 Telephone: _____

Advisable to check before ordering as to availability in your size.

Item Description	Size	Colour	Qty	Price	P&P	Sub Total
Total Payment £						
Enclose cheque payable to: Royal Naval Amateur Radio Society						

Overseas members, please add £5 to cover additional postage.

Send orders to: Doug Bowen GØMIU
 14 Braemar Road,
 Gosport, PO13 0YA
 E-mail: g0miudoug@btinternet.com

Please allow fourteen days for delivery and while these prices are correct when going to press, prices do vary and are subject to change.