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Views and opinions expressed in the R08 are those of the contributors and unless stated are not necessarily those of the Association.

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EDITORIAL/CHAIRMANS CHAT

Welcome to the Christmas issue, it will be arriving a little before Xmas for our UK members. This is due to the fact that I do not return from holiday until the end of November and I have to get it out earlier to ensure everyone receives it before Xmas. I feel this has been a good year for our association, membership numbers are still rising thanks mainly to the efforts of Colin Taylor, and our website which generates considerable interest not just from “old ships” but the world at large with many enquiries. The social scene included our AGM weekend, a committee meeting in Birmingham, the first held away from Portsmouth in an annual programme intended to hold one meeting a year somewhere in the UK. Finally culminating in the Jubilee/Trafalgar night dinner, an account appears in this issue. Also encouraging is our liaison with the new ships this can only be good for the future of our association.

IN MEMORIUM

CPO(AH) Sidney(Red) Lister aged 79 CTB 22 January

CREL George “Bob” Eaton aged 76 CTB 10 February

Cdr Frank Burke CTB 21 July

R I P

*Signals from the
“Island”*

LATEST NEWS

Trafalgar Night Dinner

This was a huge success despite the fairly low turnout; those that did attend had a thoroughly good time. The top prize of £100 in the draw was won by the Chairman. Very many thanks to the Sir Patrick and Lady Symons for being our guests of honour and of course to our VIP guests from HMS Bulwark and Albion.

Birmingham Away Committee Meeting

A successful meeting was had by all, thanks to John Bessant, Bob Styants and Doc Halliday for their help in arranging the event. Five members attended and joined the committee for an evening social at the Nautical Club.

Please note my new email address :-sec.bulwarkassoc@ntlworld.com

SEC SAYS.....

AGM 2003

Please send items for inclusion in the AGM 2003 Agenda to arrive no later than January 31st, the agenda will appear in the Spring RO8. As a reminder the AGM/Social is on Saturday 5th April 2003 at the Home Club, Portsmouth. **Please book your accommodation now!**

Association Badge

The badge is now available for your blazers and will soon be included on an Assoc. tie, and other items if interest is shown; please contact Robbie Cowan, Treasurer for your orders. Two plaques with mounted Assoc. badges have been purchased for presentation to HMS Bulwark and Albion.

And Finally..... Attendance at Events

The number of members attending the AGM and other organised events (*monthly Association meetings, HMS Victory Guides Mess Social, Trafalgar Night Dinner*) have fallen sharply. The committee are aware of the increasing costs of accommodation, travel, other Assoc. commitments etc. but members who live locally and near to Portsmouth are not taking the opportunity to join us at events. This situation is unfortunate but we would like to see as many members as possible at our events especially at the AGM. Any views or suggestions to rectify this would be most welcome.

Over to you.....

AR.

Yours Aye

Sec

Could the following please notify the Membership Secretary (eastleigh@lineone.net) of their new or correct

e-mail addresses:-

852 Kenneth Williams 934 Michael Wilde

942 Peter Wooldridge 1508 Ernie Gent

1525 Campbell Burnett 1629 William Taylor

1690 Peter Yearsley 1754 Howard James

1755 Donald Orr

'HISTORIANS CORNER'

As part of my ongoing research, I am keen to get hold of copies of as many of the Commissioning Books of our three ships to hold in the archives. I appreciate that those of you who may have these in your possession will not want to give them away for obvious reasons. What I would like to do, is borrow any editions in order that I can make copies, then return the originals to the members good enough to assist me in this project. In order that there is no duplication, I already hold the following books or copies:

HMS Bulwark: 1957-1958, 1960-1961, 1963-1965

HMS Albion: 1958-1959 (World Cruise)
HMS Centaur: 1963-1965

If you are in possession of other books and would be prepared to let me borrow them for a short while, please first contact me by E-mail or post at: Mike Bridges, 12 Froxfield Gardens, Portchester, Fareham, Hants. PO16 8DN Tel: 02392 386866.

Should you then be kind enough to forward a book, please ensure that your full name and address is clearly printed inside the cover. I look forward to hearing from you,

Yours aye,
Mike Bridges (Association Historian)

AGM 2003

As you will read in the enclosed flyer, next years AGM will be in Portsmouth. This is as a result of a vote taken at this years AGM. Different venue though, all proceedings will be in the Royal Sailors Home Club. For those of you who like me were disappointed at not seeing Shep Wooley at the senior rates mess in HMS Nelson last year, I can assure you that apart from acts of God, Shep has definitely been booked for the AGM social which means he will be appearing on his home ground, he works there so often. So come on down and make your voice heard at the AGM and enjoy what promises to be an excellent social in the evening.
See you there.

SUBS

Quite a few members are in arrears with their subs.

Although it is spelled out in the Constitution and reminders often appear in the R08 there still appears to be some confusion over when subs are due.

**To clarify: Subs currently £8 are due to be paid annually by 1st May. Many members have found it convenient to pay by standing order. If anyone is interested in this scheme and no longer has the S/O form which was sent out with last Xmas R08, or if you have any queries regarding your subs please contact our treasurer Bob Cowan. Bobs details are:
10 Hereford Road Southsea PO5 2DR. 02392 833687**

Monthly Meetings

Please note that our monthly meetings are changing from the second Tuesday in the month to the second Wednesday. The venue is still the same – Kingston Prison Officers club – come along and join us if you are in the Portsmouth area at the time. Please contact the sec if possible he will provide you with the details.

Can You Help

“My Father William Patrick Burton served as a CPO on HMS Bulwark and Albion and with him being ill recently it would cheer him up to hear from some old crew mates.

There is one person Snowie Clingham, I know he had a nasty accident in a seaboat and lost the use of his legs. I know my Father would love to get in touch with him again. My address details are : John Burton 33 Lakewood Road, Henleaze Bristol BS10 5HJ or John.Burton@gecapital.com *This sounds like the chap injured in an accident involving HMS Bristols’ seaboat in the 1970s....ed*

The new HMS Albion would like to hear details of all pubs named Albion. I knew of a pub named Albion at Willington Quay on Tyneside but this was many years ago. Can anyone help ? Whilst checking this one out does anyone know of any pubs named Bulwark or Centaur?. Details to Mike Bridges please at 12 Froxfield Gardens Portchester PO16 8DN, 02392 386866
Or email at MikeB6024@aol.com

Your Letters

From Ron(Happy)Day 1394

*The following poem was passed on by a friend of Sugeon Lt.Cdr Collinson RNR Rtd.
Dr. Collinson was the surgeon on HMS Hurricane when she went to the rescue of the City of Benares, loaded with refugee children bound for Canada and was torpedoed during WWII.*

Old sailors dream about their past
Memories that will always last
Of happy days, long ago
Of shipmates who were good and true
Proud to wear their Navy blue.

We may be old and past our prime
At least we know we served our time
On fearless ships of wood and steel
The Royal Navy was our life
Our home through peace and strife

And we can talk about the Med
Of battleships in line ahead
And submarines down in the deep
Of cruisers with their six inch guns
Destroyers on torpedo runs

Of sloops and frigates, smaller ships
With canteen messing, untold trips
Through angry seas that raged and boiled
The ice, the snow, the red hot sun
Tombola and a tot of rum.

And so I think about those days
Of youth and manhood, and the ways
I spent my time onboard those ships
Great ships they were, I loved them dear
And in dreams they still appear

I see them now, my ships of war
Riding of waves far from shore
Shiny Sheffield, Dido and Strule
Ramillies, Crossbow and Delhi,
Haunting grey ghosts of years gone by.

*Frank Collett
HMS Glenarm*

From Ted Postin (1549)

”As an ex-Centaur shipmate I respond to your note in the summer R08. I was lucky enough to serve as a Corporal RM on the Centaur for the 1959-60 commission. My duties included being ships postman, coxswain of the Officers motorboat and also Captain of the very successful ships soccer team. I remember many humorous happenings in all the roles but the most hair raising was during my spell as coxn of the Officers motor boat.

It was a wet and windy night, in I think Trinco when we were called out to pick up Officers from shore A gale was blowing and our boat was being pushed away from the boom by the wind and tide. The painter and ladder were stretched out at 45 degrees. The boom out to the ladder was wet and juddering. Initially the boom was about a foot wide with a flat piece on top of about six inches. A painter stretched out from the ships side descending to meet the boom after about 25 feet. Our ladder to the boat was about 30 feet.

As no volunteers leapt forward to undertake this perilous venture, who better than the coxswain. I pulled my beret firmly over my head, stepped over the guardrails and took a very firm grip on the painter leading out into oblivion. I walked slowly out along the juddering boom, watching the boat almost leaving the water due to the wind and tide. I was also conscious that almost all the ships company were gathered on the upper decks to watch the evening entertainment. Many things flashed through my mind - my impending marriage, if I got home – how quick could another boat be launched to fish me out – could I grab the motorboat if I surfaced ? Besides these thoughts I was mindful of the fact that the majority of the ships company wanted me to fall in, not that they wished me any harm but it was more interesting than the evening cocoa.

Eventually I got to the end of the painter and was left with a few exposed feet to the ladder. Contrary to the image of a big “bootneck” Corporal I straddled the thinning boom and edged my way to the ladder. On reaching the ladder I had to anchor myself to the boom and pull the boat towards the boom via the ladder, At this point my worthy crew of two Marines and a Stoker had made their way out along the boom and all three descended on to the boat via the substitute ladder and the real one. The substitute ladder suffered badly from misplaced hand and foot holds – luckily the feet were plimsoled. I eventually reached the boat and on looking at the ship – noticed the ships company dispersing without even a round of applause.

Was this my fifteen minutes of fame – or would I have been better remembered if I had fallen in and been swept away. I have many fond memories of that commission and I would be grateful to hear of others recollections”

From Derek Poulton (1655)

“ Firstly thanks for my first copy of R08. It makes good reading and it was good to see straight away that there was something I could reply to, namely a request from Harry Rideau in regards to Centaur. So here goes with an answer. Firstly to set the scene and were I fit in. I joined Centaur with 810 sqn Gannets, replacing 845 sqn Whirlwinds, I was originally due to join 845. The Whirlwinds were having hydraulic clutch failures and dropping out of the sky like made.

810 did not actually fly onto Centaur until she arrived at Gib. However a small advance joined at Plymouth and were involved in the filming. The two Swordfish that came onboard were 5A and 5B only one of which could actually fly. The other was pushed around the deck to look good. The filming was carried out in the channel in not very good weather, and with some quite nasty winds. The flying was quite hairy for Peter Twiss. Some ratings were dressed in the rig of the day

for the period and appeared on film. Other just hung around in the catwalks and had to catch hold of the wings to keep the aircraft down. The film crew and A/C left after a few days and promised us we would have a copy of the film to see before its premier in the Odeon Leicester Square. I cannot remember what the “extras” got in pay, only those appearing in the film. It was something to see in the film a sqn of Swordfish flying off the old Ark, off Gib, in nice weather. Very clever even that far back these film people.

We carried on with the cruise, arriving in Yokosuka Japan in October. There for us was a copy of “Sink the Bismarck”. I invited a couple of American sailors onboard for a meal and to see the film. They really enjoyed the meal – Pussers stew - a fine change from their steaks. Before going to Japan we had stopped at Hong Kong where we also appeared in another film “The World of Susie Wong”. People enjoyed that one more as the film crew took over a bar and we had free drinks etc. There was a multi – national fleet in Hong Kong and a selection of matelots were used and entertained, resulting in some very realistic scenes in the films. (Lots of Aussies – need I say more).”

From William Crook P.O. SCC

“I am keeping my promise by keeping you up to date with the latest news from TS BULWARK (Buxton Sea Cadet Corps) The ships company (who now number around 50) enjoyed their annual summer camp at HMS Caledonia at the Rosyth Naval Base. The weather was fantastic and a lot of sailing qualifications were gained thanks to the RNAS at Port Edgar. A few cadets have been picked to represent the North West area at the Sea Cadet National Sailing Regatta in September, in which we were very successful last year !

The unit has enjoyed a very healthy summer with attendance rising by the week, as winter approaches and the sailing season ends, the unit will be turning more to indoor activities (shooting etc) in an effort to keep the numbers up. Personally I have never seen the ships company with such a high level of morale in the unit (Cadets AND Staff) TS BULWARK is definitely heading in the right direction ! With extra staff we are now delivering better training for the cadets and the unit as a whole is benefiting immensely. One a personal note I am now a senior rate, being 18 I am too old to be a cadet and have been moved onto the staff, I am now a Petty Officer . I hope your association and its many members are well and healthy”
Thanks William and congratulations on your promotion....ed

Westland Dragonfly

One of our members Ray “Mac” McElwain who served as an Air Mechanic with 806(Ace of Diamonds) Sqn on Centaur 1955 has rebuilt a Westland Dragonfly Helicopter – WH991, which was one of the two plane guard helicopters onboard at the time.

The reason that it happened was that about 10 years ago he suffered a series of lung infections and was close to crossing the bar with the last one. In delirium all that kept going through his brain was “ when I die there is nothing to show that I have been on the planet”. Thankfully he recovered but the dream stayed with him. Sometime later he was told of two Dragonfly “wrecks” just a few miles down the road . Five weeks and a clever presentation later he persuaded the scrap man to sell them to him. He later obtained a third which was lying derelict at an airfield near Stratford on Avon. After four years and a couple of thousand hours it was rolled out at the Yorkshire Air Museum near York and has been on display ever since.

The spare parts left over were donated to other projects and so far four more ex RN Dragonflies have been completed. Mac has also been responsible for organising and setting the pattern for the annual Northern Royal Naval Reunion to which approx 2000 attended in 2001. Anyone wishing to visit the museum (and WH991) the location is Elvington nr York, admission is £4. Mac is usually there Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays working as a volunteer on other projects.

Overheard at this years International Air Tattoo by an enthusiast with a radio scanner. A US aircraft was approaching following a ten hour flight from the States.

“Good morning this is RAF Fairford, we have you on radar, please maintain your present course”

“Say again Fairford, we thought you said you have us on radar”

“Affirmative”

“You can’t have us on radar we are a stealth bomber”

“Yes and we are a stealth air show”

OPERATION MUSKETEER PART III

By

Mike Bridges

My own squadron, 802, had their fair share of near misses on day 2, the Senior Pilot, Paddy McKeown’s aircraft had flak damage with a hole in the tail of his aircraft, Lieutenant John Ford had half of his starboard drop tank shot away, another aircraft had a hit on its port wing whilst another also had a damaged drop tank and Flt Lt Black’s cockpit canopy was shattered. A bit more overtime for the squadron mechanics, but all aircraft were back in service within a very short time.

November 3rd commenced with further strikes against airfields and ground installations, the flak was getting heavier all the time and a Wyvern aircraft from 830 NAS from Eagle was hit during a bombing run on Gamil Bridge. Lieutenant Dennis McCarthy struggled with the aircraft and managed to fly out to sea before smoke started entering the cockpit. He decided to eject and dropped into the sea about three miles offshore with other aircraft of his flight circling above marking his position. Shore batteries opened up firing in his area and these gun emplacements were in turn attacked by seahawk aircraft which also were in the vicinity.

In the same area, HMS Decoy had been previously shelling shore batteries. She had moved further out to sea once the exchange of fire had ceased. Able Seaman Joe McWilliams from X Turret onboard Decoy was having a quick smoke on the upper deck and recalls watching the aircraft overhead when he saw a puff of smoke come from one of the aircraft. It quickly became apparent that the aircraft was in trouble and that the puff of smoke was caused by the pilot ejecting. He watched the pilot parachuting down towards the sea and other aircraft circling above. The Egyptian shore batteries started firing and Captain Hill-Norton of the Decoy ordered his men to return to action stations and resume the shelling of the batteries. That was the last Joe saw of the pilot.

Between the attacking aircraft and shelling from the Decoy, the shore batteries were soon silenced. By this time, a Whirlwind helicopter from Eagle had picked up the pilot, Lieutenant McCarthy, and returned him safely to Eagle. Meanwhile aircraft from the three carriers continued to fly strikes throughout the remainder of that day. During that evening, Albion pulled off station to refuel. She returned early the following morning Eagle and the two French Carriers then took their turn to also pull back for refuelling.

Early on the 4th November, squadron aircraft were scrambled to look for Egyptian Naval MTB’s that had attempted to attack the main British force. Sea Venoms from Albion’s 809 Squadron soon picked up three contacts on their radar then made visual sightings of the MTB’s. Joined by other

aircraft from Bulwark the targets were attacked. Two of the craft were sunk, and the third, which had been damaged, left to pick up survivors and return to harbour.

Again, throughout the day, Naval and R.A.F. aircraft continued to attack shore installations and airfields in order to soften up the opposition that might be encountered by the Airborne Troops who were scheduled to drop by parachute into the zone on the following day.. Whilst we were not told at the time about the airborne assault being scheduled, we all expected that some kind of airborne or seaborne invasion would inevitably be mounted, but at the time the primary function was to keep sending in the strike aircraft and effectively wipe out the Egyptian Air Force in order to protect such invasion forces from possible air attacks. This has become an operational requirement we have seen in modern times repeated in the Gulf War and more recently by the Americans in Afghanistan.

Some of our more troublesome problems at that time, were created by the Americans, who were very anti our joint operations. The giant US 6th Fleet were positioned constantly 60 miles or so to the west of our forces and were constantly sending reconnaissance flights from their carriers into the battle zone. This meant that every time an unidentified aircraft approached, we went to action stations. My station was in the aircraft hangar squadron issue centre that I shared with my opposite number from 800 NAS. It was a busy place at any time, with aircraft being serviced, repaired and readied for further strikes. In the end, I seem to remember that we moved campbeds into the issue centre and virtually lived there for the best part of a week, taking it in turns to nip back to the mess only for a change of kit and a shower.

I recall hearing the pilots discussing about being 'buzzed' by the Americans. Apparently one of our pilots had asked the American pilot who had positioned his aircraft alongside, 'whose side are you on'. On receiving no reply the American was advised 'To go forth and multiply' – or words to that effect.

The Airborne Invasion began early on November 5th and this time the fireworks were real. Covered by fighter aircraft from all three carriers, the RAF dropped the paratroops on Gamil Airfield and at Port Said. There were bursts of mortar fire coming from near the airfield but this was quickly dealt with by naval aircraft. During the day repeated strikes were made on gun emplacements, troop convoys, whilst aircraft from the French Carriers searched for small craft off the coast. They came across a number of Egyptian Frigates and mounted an attack on them which caused several hits. During the ground fighting, a number of paratroopers had been injured and were ferried by helicopters to the carriers for treatment. Onboard Albion, several of the wounded were taken to the sick bay and were later showered with books and sweets by members of the ship's company. One generous matelot went up to a patient to offer such a gift and was told sharply by the patient to – 'push off, I'm ship's company and I've got laryngitis'.

The British advance was being slowed up by extensive fire from the Coastguard Barracks. The Wyverns from 830 squadron from Eagle were called in to bomb this target. This proved quite successful, but unfortunately the Squadron CO, Lt.Cdr Cowling's aircraft received several hits and he was forced to eject into the sea. Luckily there was a helicopter in the area and he was picked up and returned to his ship. It was later reported that the Coastguard Barracks was virtually destroyed and had been left deserted.

The French Paratroopers had been dropped near the al-Raswa bridges. The capture of this vital area would allow ground forces a more direct route to Suez. The French encountered heavy opposition and called for an air strike to relieve the opposition and this was immediately provided from the

French carrier, Arromanches and one of the bridges was taken. The eastern bridge was destroyed by the Egyptian forces as they retreated.

At the end of the day, four British paratroopers were dead, with a number of others wounded or missing. The French had five dead and several injured. Egyptian casualties were estimated to have been much higher. It had been a long hard day and with the seaborne landing due to take place the next day, there was still a way to go.
to be concluded in next issue

Royal Naval Officers

All Naval and Royal Marines Officers are invited to join The Britannia Association. The Britannia Association was formed in May 2001 under the patronage of The Prince of Wales. The Association has been formed for the old boys and girls who have served either as members of the wardroom status staff or undergone training at the Britannia Royal Naval College. In effect it will represent the provision of a network of the 'alumni' of the College over the last 80 years and will extend onwards into the future.

Membership of the Association is available to any serving or retired officer or civilian officer equivalent of wardroom status of any nationality who has undergone training at BRNC or served on the staff. Also the whole Officer Corps of the Royal Navy and Royal Marines. You can join now via our web site www.britanniaassociation.org.uk Or Write or Telephone and we will send an application form: Charles Howeson Honorary Secretary PO Box 500. West Park. Plymouth Devon PL6 5FA. Tel: 07000 000 007 Fax: 01752 770033 Email: joinus@rnc.org.uk Land: 01794 511192 Mobile: 07884 188991 baebiz@eurossurf.com

Black Bob

By

Pete Childe (72)

I joined up with the rest of Albions' stokers in Pompey Barracks in late 1959. It soon became apparent that one of our messmates wasn't very hygienic. I couldn't say he was very crabby, he just seemed to walk sideways. He had a mortal fear of hot water, soap and Dhobi dust. If he ever did venture into the bathroom the stokers choir would burst forth into that well known song "Hold my hand I'm a stranger in paradise."

He was given the nickname "Black Bob".

Bob informed us he was an ex submariner, I think he was keeping up the motto of the silent service "We come unclean". Black Bob was also a teller of tall stories, one of his stories went as thus.

He was fishing off the south coast unknown to Bob it was a Restricted area where submarines fired live torpedoes. Bob had just cast in when he hooked on to a torpedo and had a hell of a fight to land it (I kid you not). The morning after his story, I and the rest of the stokers fell in to march to the Albion in the dockyard. In Pompey barracks at that time was a huge shell casing painted black, it stood on a large stone plinth. As our group came up to the casing the killick in charge gave the order "eyes right" our eyes focused on the plinth. Written on the casing in white chalk were the words "Black Bob caught this 19-6-1959".

CAPTAIN FRANKS story cont'd

In a borrowed jeep the two Naval Officers set out on a recce down the coast to find a suitable creek as a base from which they could operate. The next problem was to find out if the craft could navigate the rocks and shallows around Foul Point at the river entrance. Robert now set off in the "Yengua" towing the LCS. Near the river entrance they cast off in a landing craft and using sounding poles found their way into the river and back again to the r/v with "Yengua". All was now set for three months of high adventure, Robert formed his landing craft into two divisions of three.

The first two night patrols entered the river but found no enemy shipping. On the third night and last possible for ten days (because of tides) at 0230 as he was about to withdraw he saw what appeared to be a pile of floating branches, and realised it was a camouflaged vessel.

Passing whispered orders to the other two LCS to follow and hold their fire until he opened up, he led the way towards the enemy craft, by now he realised there were three of them. Breaking through the enemy line he isolated the rearmost one and opened fire at 80 yards. The craft was quickly a shambles, she was a large vessel with a gun in the bows and a hold piled high with boxes. There seemed to be a lot of men onboard. The other two craft made off in the dark. No attempt was made to board but a line was made fast and they started to tow. After a while the tow sank, probably scuttled.

Six badly wounded Japanese and a few boxes of provisions and dried fish were picked up. They were the first prisoners to be taken on this front. At dawn they crossed the bar and rejoined the rest of the flotilla in triumph. The Army shelved the attack on Akyab but because of the successful river action the Navy was asked to establish a permanent force in the Mayu river with Robert as SNO Mayu. The flotilla consisted of three LCS with oerlikons and machine guns, and two Burma RNVR motor launches.

With the force patrolling by night and laying up by day they intercepted and interrupted Japanese supplies, they fought their way out of ambushes, one of which resulted in two men killed, one wounded and the loss of one of the LCS. As the Army pulled back they were ordered to lay up their craft and return overland to Chittagong. After the Burmese interlude for which he was awarded a DSO Robert was delighted to be posted to command the destroyer Paladin back in the Med. Crossing India by train in May 1943 just before the monsoon broke conditions were appallingly hot. Robert had bad jungle sores on his legs and felt so ill that he thought he was coming down with Malaria.

In spite of this he managed to get to Karachi, then by flying boat to Cairo and lastly Alexandria, where he crawled onboard Paladin and was immediately put to bed. He felt a little better by the time they arrived in Malta, assumed command and went for a briefing at the Admirals' office. However the doctor put his foot down and sent him to the Military Hospital. He remained there for two months suffering from blood poisoning. He reckons it was only through the Army doctor giving pints of his own blood that he survived. Air raids were less severe on Malta by this time but there was still a shortage of food on the island. He was invalided home by flying boat to Tunis then onto Algiers, where he hitched a lifted in a destroyer to Gib and finally home to UK on the Arundel Castle.

Pronounced fit in August 1943 he was ordered to take some courses, whilst he was impatient to obtain another destroyer command. Instead of a destroyer he was appointed Staff Officer

Operations of Force "S" which was unknown to him at the time. He joined Force "S" in London and in November they moved to Scotland where they were to train for the forthcoming Normandy invasion. Robert was excited at the thought of an opportunity to avenge Dunkirk. He was impressed with the troops of the 3rd Division, mainly regulars from the Home Counties. By April 1944 they were ready to disperse to their jumping off places which was Portsmouth for Force "S". Roberts job was mustering sufficient craft for D Day.

The three forces, "S", "H" and "G" were under Admiral Vians command. They had one full scale exercise which went alright but not for the Americans who as is now well known lost two LSTs and a lot of men to an E boat attack in Start Bay. After a few days home leave he embarked on the HQ ship "Largs" anchored in Spithead. During D minus one they watched the various groups of vessels sailing on the great adventure. They sailed later on that evening with the large troopships and enjoyed an uneventful passage. Come the dawn they expected heavy bombardments and bombing but instead it broke quiet until suddenly the nearby destroyer "Svenner" was torpedoed and sank.

On reaching position the troopships lowered their assault craft which soon filled with troops and steamed past Largs on their way to Sword beach (Ouistreham) some 8 miles away. The soldiers morale seemed high although many were seasick in the rough sea running. Reports came in that the swimming tanks had mostly arrived ashore just ahead of the infantry, their main task was to silence the strong point in the middle of the beach. This they did by shooting up the gun slits.

From Largs they saw one landing craft disappear with a bang and a sheet of flame, presumably having hit a mine. A great number of craft were wrecked or failed to get off the beach owing to the rough weather. Meanwhile signals were pouring in and it was Roberts task to deal with them. The assault continued over two or three days without let up. The defence of the anchorage at night was the responsibility of Largs, sometimes to covering it with smoke against air attack.... *To be cont'd*

One of Us

Leigh Eastons' memories con'td

"Right Leigh"

I knew Bdr McNaughton was up to something.

"Captain Morris needs a batman and its you"

It could have been worse.

Apparently all the marine captains had batmen and it looked bad if our man did not have one.

"Its all right though - you get tips"

"Gee whiz"

24 hours in Karachi. Not too bad but the dock area was abysmal. And so off to Sharjah in the Persian Gulf for exercises.

Suddenly the entire rear end of HMS Bulwark began to vibrate, she was shaking her tail - no doubt about it, we were going flat out. This was unusual. We were heading for Kuwait.

The skipper came over the blower. "42 Commando will land at 0600 hours tomorrow. It is not known whether landings will be opposed or not". I'm not particularly religious but I did pray. I prayed that if I did get back I would all be in one piece. I didn't fancy loosing an arm or a leg. Strange now, looking back on it.

Later on I had teamed up with a bootneck in their Intelligence section of HQ company. Apparently Kassem in Iraq had 200 aircraft roughly 40% of which were serviceable. Unfortunately some of them

were Hawker Hunters - the same as ours. He also seemed to have 2 Tank Divisions in Basra. We had a Loch Class Frigate - Loch Alvie with one 4" gun on it. The Kuwaiti strength was a battalion of infantry and six 25 pounders. However we did have 42 and 45 Commando, and a battalion of the parachute regiment were on their way.

We descended into the landing craft, down the scrambling nets, and headed for the shore. The sea was not particularly rough but it gave the vessel a most peculiar motion. I sure felt seasick, but, surrounded by bootnecks, there was no way that was going to happen and it didn't. "Start the engine" and of course it wouldn't. Plugs out and dried - it started. There was no opposition, the beachhead had been secured.

We moved up and occupied Al Mutla - a diminutive ridge, the only bit of "high" ground in the area - it crossed the main road to Basra. Communications established. The only thing I particularly remember were the dusk and dawn stand-to.

We donned Arab headgear and slept during the heat of the midday sun. It was 135 degrees in the shade. The helicopters could not generate sufficient lift to take off. We slung our goatskin bags from the Land Rover wing mirrors - evaporation kept the water fairly cool. One highlight was the free Japanese cans of fruit juice in endless varieties. Apparently some devious marketing ploy, but very welcome, nevertheless.

We occupied the ridge for a week or so and then were withdrawn to Kuwaiti Army barracks. The Daily Mirror arrived three days late - the main news seemed to be that the paras were flaking out, digging in during the day. Brigadier Horsford addressed the assembled Commando.

"Jolly good show, chaps, well done". He continued -

"In actual fact, I refused to put you in, but I was overruled from Whitehall".

At the crucial moment we had had no air support. It did arrive the next day, however, from East Africa. For many years I held this against Harold MacMillan, the then Prime Minister, but then it suddenly dawned - he knew what he was doing - he had after all been a soldier in the First World War. I hadn't reckoned with our propaganda which had had us flying fighter aircraft and unloading squadrons of tanks, all from Bulwark.

"Hello, Leighton, How are You"

It was Pullar Barr, last seen in the sixth year at school. Good grief, he was a Lieutenant in the Royal Engineers. He continued - "We're looking for water - every time we drill down we hit oil"

" Any ideas?" This really was outside my scope. I think its fair to say that I was totally "dumfounded". Many years later I met him at the foot of the Arcade in Stirling. He seemed quite upset - "You, you bugger - you never saluted me" I believe Pullar ended up as Brigadier.

One peculiar incident was a film show put on by the Kuwaitis. In Arabic, but the plot was quite clear. It was a restaging of the invasion of Suez - complete with American sounding actors playing the British parts. We started getting funny looks from the Kuwaitis and we beat a hasty retreat.

We were soon digging in, the desert this time though, as NGS to 45 Commando who had arrived with HMS Centaur. One high spot was meeting the NGSFO Pty from Centaur - swapping stories was really great.

After three weeks though it was time to go (we were replaced by regular infantry) and we were on our way back to Singapore on Bulwark. "What happened to the hand grenades" this was one of the bootnecks speaking "CQMS forgot to issue them" Just as well I thought : we didn't cover that at

Shake My Relief

By

Pete Childes (72)

It was a quiet Sunday afternoon, the Albion was alongside in Pompey. I as a young stoker went down to the mess to shake my relief. Sat around the mess table were two young stokers entertaining their girlfriends. The two girls were sat on a bottom bunk, above them in the top bunk my oppo was crashed out. I went over, reached up and gave him a good shake, then stood back to talk to the two stokers. My oppo still half asleep, grabbed the pipe that ran alongside his bunk and slowly lowered himself downwards. Unfortunately he was in the buff, also the expression chocolate frog and hard as came into play. A Maltese donkey also sprang to mind. As my oppo slowly lowered himself down the eyes of the two girls were like organ stops. They could'nt take their eyes off a certain part of my oppos anatomy as it passed by. As his feet touched the deck he looked down at the girls, gave a sheepish grin and slowly hoisted himself back into his bunk. The look on those girls faces will live with me forever.

STOP PRESS !!!!!

“AWAYDAY” COMMITTEE BIRMINGHAM

The committee held our second “Awayday” meeting at the Nautical Club in Birmingham on Saturday 5th October 2002. The meeting commenced at 1230.

A wide range of topics was discussed which will be reflected in the minutes. The number of members attending was rather disappointing, in addition to the Chairman, Vice Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer and Membership Secretary, only five members could make it. There were some apologies for absence. The members attending were Walley Eley, Jim Ure, Gordon Green, Roger Billingham and John Besant. Our thanks go to those members. Our hosts the Nautical club gave us an excellent welcome and old and new friendships were set up and we were invited to attend a function in the club on the Saturday evening. Our secretary John Truscott is writing a letter to the club thanking them for their hospitality.

MB

GOLDEN JUBILEE/TRAFALGAR NIGHT DINNER

This Major event of our Associations year was held on Saturday 19th October in the Victory club HMS Nelson. We were delighted to welcome over sixty members and guests including Captain Keith Winslanley Captain of the new Bulwark and one of our Honorary Vice Presidents, Commander Mike Richardson Cmmander of the new Albion representing Captain Hudson, and also Commander Mike McCartain and Lt Cdr Duncan Fogg from HMS Bulwark together with CPOMA Barker and POSA Buckley from HMS Albion.

Our President ViceAdmiral Sir Patrick and Lady Symons were guests of honour. Following a fine speech Sir Patrick offered the toast The Immortal Memory.

Our Chairman, Mike Noonan welcomed members and guests to the dinner and offered the Loyal Toast. Mike Bridges, Vice Chairman gave the toast to the association.

The sec John Truscott then said a few words before making a presentation to Christine Silverthorne designer of our new combined association badge.

Jackie Truscott presented Lady Symons with flowers followed by Mike Noonan presenting Captain Winstanley and Mike Bridges simultaneously presenting Cdr Richardson with mounted association badges.

Our trusty photographer Clare Pollard was kept busy clicking away to record it all. Hopefully a photo will be included in the December edition of Navy News. During an excellent dinner we were entertained by a harpist and following the official part of the evening a disco gave everyone a chance to expend some energy on the dance floor, Earlier some of the members enjoyed a tour of HMS Victory, which seemed entirely appropriate on this occasion.

Finally make a note in your diaries for April 5th 2003 our AGM and social. The booking form is enclosed with this issue of the R08. It would be nice to see some of the large number of members living locally in the Portsmouth area come along, make your voice heard at the AGM and be entertained by Shep Wooley. It promises to be a very good day.

mb/mn

**Your Committee wish you all
A Merry Christmas & Happy New Year**