

H.M.S.OPOSSUM ASSOCIATION



Spring Newsletter 2008

1945 - 1958

Welcome to our Spring Newsletter. Many thanks to all who have been in touch recently :- Tom Quirk, Jim Finch, Ken Carson, John Jones, Graham Elford, Ken Heap, Alan Percival, Tom Tolson, Ian Janes, John Owen, Nick Whytock, Ken Hodgkin, Sam Short, Peter Davies, Lewis Trinder, Stewart Coltherd, Sam Edgar, Tony Blackler, Dick Jay, Charles Parker, Dick Wright, Tony Harris and Kathie Hare. Here is another bumper issue of sixteen pages, grateful thanks to each of the contributors and a big welcome to new member Peter Davies who got in touch through our website. As usual this issue contains:- Chairman's comments, Statement of our accounts, Roll of Honour, Robinson Crusoe, Opossum website, Part three of Bill Thomas reflections, Winter fishing- running repairs at sea, Shipmates humour, The RCNC - Who? By new member Peter Davies, in addition he kindly made available photographs not seen before included in this edition, as well as tales from a Jeweller by Ben Berger. In addition a new updated membership list is enclosed. Our next reunion, will soon be here, featured in the February issue of Navy News, 16th-19th May at the Lindum Hotel, Lytham St. Annes Lancashire Tel. 01253-721534. In Chairman's Comments Tom Tolson asks for an immediate response to his request for those re-union attenders wishing to take Sunday lunch to make themselves known. Tom mentions shipmates who attended the funeral of Ron Hare, here is a letter received from Ron's wife Kathie.

Dear Gentlemen,

Thank you so much for the marvellous send off for Ron yesterday. It was good of you all to come. Also to Eddie for visiting us three times in recent months which Ron enjoyed the company so much. Ron began to get bad from September 2006 when his illness started; he never lost his temper though he must have been so frustrated during the last three months. Thanks for the support from HMS Opossum Association along with the family, nurses and friends.

God Bless, With Love

Kathie and Family.

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
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CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS

The funeral of shipmate Ron Hare took place at St. Cuthbert's church, Croxteth Park, Liverpool on Friday 18th January. Our Guard of Honour again consisted of Sam Edgar our Standard Bearer, Stan Oldfield, Charles Parker, Eddie Summerfold and myself. Ron's grand children carried the coffin into and out of the church and again at the crematorium. Very moving to see standing in the wind and rain a young woman dressed in black skirt and white blouse waiting with five other grand children for the coffin to emerge from the hearse. Thursday's weather was horrendous and Sam Edgar had travelled from Fareham to Sheffield to the home of Charles Parker, then on to Bury to pick up Eddie. Once at Liverpool they were put up for the night. Stan Oldfield had come down from Newcastle and also spent the night at the Hare family home. I travelled over the Pennines to my daughter's in Widnes and onto Liverpool next morning for the early church service at 9.30 which meant an early start. The journey home was worst travelling the entire Manchester ring road at THREE mph! I mention all this to emphasis the effort required in honouring our Shipmates who have "Crossed the Bar." Who knows when we will be on duty again. Now to a request for your assistance. At our reunion in May I have arranged a Sunday lunchtime visit to the Royal British Legion in St. Anne's from 1200 to 1400. The Steward has kindly agreed to lay on a buffet at £2.00 per head. So that catering arrangements can be made PLEASE write- phone- e-mail me on receipt of this Newsletter if you would like to attend.

Yours Aye

Tom Tolson

STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS

| | |
|--------------------|------------------|
| Income | £1,622.95 |
| Expenditure | £ 475.83 |
| Balance | £1,147.12 |

ROLL OF HONOUR

| | | |
|------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| John C Cartwright | John Earley Willmot | Ronald Bradley |
| Albert Corless | Les Wood | Harry (Scouse Barlow |
| Bob Gray | David Javis | Ken Harris |
| John Williams | George Scott | Harry Roach |
| Reg Parker | Pat Norman | Fred Thornton |
| Gordon Fletcher | Ivan C Haskell | Fred (Mick) Bodel |
| George H Richards | Fred King | John Davison |
| George Curry | Sid Pemberton | Stephen Hart |
| George Brown | Cliff Harthill | Jack Marshall |
| Arthur Pope | Stewart Porter | Dick (Ginger) Bird |
| Jackie Scholes | Les Dimmock | Bert Bray |
| Cornelius(Scouse)Canon | Jim Tribe | Doug Bank |
| Harry Wollams | Pete Maddox | John Fraser |
| Doug Goulding | John Hardman | Cyril Mason |
| Bill Bolton | Mike Swayne | Joe Gornall |
| Bill Bovey | Bill Price | Harry Catterson |
| Jack(Yorkie)Richards | George(Jan) Lobb | William(Bill)Windler |
| Ron Hare | | |

**ALEXANDER SELKIRK - ROBINSON CRUSOE
and DANIEL DEFOE**



Alexander Selkirk

"Sailor survives four years on a desert island," might have been a tabloid headline of 1711 when the News quickly spread, interviewed by Richard Steele editor of The Englishman who published Selkirk's story. This came to the notice of Daniel Defoe. A larger than life character, who at one time or another had been a failed entrepreneur, known bankruptcy and imprisonment for debt, been a government spy, writer of poetry, political pamphleteer and jack-of-all-trades journalist who had a wife and seven children to support, always on the look out to make money from his writings. He knew there was a large audience hungry for printed material. Taking Selkirk's story as a basis, Defoe added plenty of danger and excitement to make his tale more appealing to the reading public of the day

On the 25th April 1719 the first edition of Robinson Crusoe (one thousand copies) came off the printing press and quickly sold out. At least five more editions followed that year each making corrections on previous issues. After nearly 300 years the book has never been out of print. Alexander Selkirk (Selcraig) was born at Largo, Fife, Scotland in 1676, the seventh son of John Selcraig, a shoemaker and tanner. He developed into a quarrelsome lad, especially with his father and eventually ran away to sea. By the time he joined the ship Cinque Ports employed on buccaneering enterprises to the South Seas his rank was sailing master under the captain Thomas Stradling. They were part of an expedition under William Dampier famed privateer and explorer. By October 1704 Cinque Ports had dropped anchor to re-provision and obtain fresh water at Isla Masatierra the largest island in the Juan Fernandez Archipelago, 416 miles into the Pacific Ocean from the coast of Chile. Selkirk had concerns about Cinque Port's seaworthiness, (she sank some months later with all hands) he quarrelled with Captain Stradling and tried without success to convince his shipmates that their best course of action was to go ashore and wait for a passing ship. Tired of Selkirk's trouble making Stradling ordered the boat away and had his sailing master put ashore - alone. He had taken his sea chest, a musket and gunpowder, some carpenters tools, a knife, a bible and some extra clothing. Almost immediately Selkirk regretted his position, chased and called after the boat, to no avail. That evening Cinque Port sailed. Initially he stayed on the beach camping in a small cave. He survived on shell fish but became paranoid about most aspects, fearing strange island sounds which he assumed to be dangerous beasts. Suffered from deep loneliness, depression and regret. Noisy sea lions that had collected on the beach for their mating season drove Selkirk into the islands interior. Here he found wild goats that provided meat and milk, uncultivated turnips, cabbage and pepper berries added to his diet. His new home had a Mediterranean climate, dry summers and cooler wet winters. About 50 miles square, 13 and a half miles long by 4 and a half wide, with a steep mountain range reaching over 3,000 feet, below lots of lush wooded areas. Each day he would climb up the steep mountain looking out for a ship, each day he was disappointed. Selkirk developed his skills, as a hut builder, tailor of clothes made from goatskin, forged a knife from iron barrel rings left on the beach, frequently read from his bible finding it beneficial to his emotional state. When his gunpowder dwindled he chased the goats on foot, soon his feet became toughened and callused that shoes were no longer usable, nor necessary.

One day two ships appeared both flew the Spanish flag. As a Scotsman and privateer he could face a fate worse than death if caught, so he went into hiding until they had gone. On 2nd February 1709, after four years four months, the long awaited rescue eventually came when the privateer ship Duke anchored in the bay. The castaway was completely incoherent with joy, but his local knowledge and agility in catching goats soon made him an asset to replenish the ships larder. The Captain Woodes Rogers promoted him Mate and gave him command of one of his prize ships. On his return to Britain Selkirk became a celebrity. In his interview with Steele he confessed that he frequently bewailed his return to the real world which could not with all its enjoyment's restore him to the tranquillity of his island solitude. He never had a moment heavy on his hands, his nights were untroubled, his days joyous from the practice of temperance and exercise. He used set times for exercises of devotion which he performed aloud to keep up the facilities of speech and to urge himself to greater energy.

Selkirk returned to Largo but stayed only a few months eloping to London with a sixteen year old dairymaid, they did not marry. By 1717 he had gone back to sea and on a visit to Plymouth met and married a widowed innkeeper. Gained promotion as a Lieutenant on board the Royal ship Weymouth. Off the West coast of Africa on 13th December 1721 Selkirk, in his forty-fifth year, succumbed to yellow fever and was buried at sea.

In 1966 with an eye on future tourism the Chilean government renamed Isla Masatierra, Isla Robinson Crusoe in honour of literatures most renowned castaway.
(Your Secretary/Editor made a visit there in December 2007.)

From Sam Short's joke book

A visitor to a mental asylum asked the Director how he determined whether a person should be kept an inmate or not. "We fill up a bath tub, then offer a teaspoon, a cup and a bucket to the patient and ask him to empty the tub."

"Oh I understand, said the visitor, a normal person would use the bucket because it's bigger than the cup or spoon."

"No, said the Director, a normal person would pull the plug. Do you want a bed by the window?"

A teacher at college reminded her pupils of the next day's final exam.

"I won't tolerate any excuses for none attendance tomorrow. I might consider a nuclear attack or sudden death but no other excuses whatsoever."

A smart Alec raises his hand.

"What if I'm suffering from complete and utter sexual exhaustion?"

"Well in that case, said the teacher smiling sweetly, then you will just have to write using your other hand.

Jack and Bob went on a Swiss skiing holiday. Late one day a blizzard came on and they sought Shelter at a small farmhouse, owned by an attractive young woman. Because of the neighbours She said they couldn't come into the house but were welcome to shelter for the night in the barn. Next morning the storm had passed and eventually the pair returned home from their holiday. However, nine months later one of them got a letter from this woman's lawyer to ask if he was the same Jack that had slept with her during a blizzard? Jack asked his mate Bob if, during the night, he had left the barn and gone into the farmhouse. Very embarrassed and red faced, Bob had to admit that he did go over to the farm and slept with the young woman. And did he call himself Jack Bob had to admit this further guilt. "Well, said Jack, the attractive young woman has died and left me the farm, the small holding and livestock."

Somewhere there's a moral to this story.....

HMS OPOSSUM ASSOCIATION WEBSITE

www.hmsopossum.org.uk



At work Charles Parker HMS Opossum Association Website Administrator

The new website has now been up and running since the middle of 2007 is constantly being updated with a lot more information and pictures than was previously available, the site now also has all the old newsletters issued since 1996. The newsletters have been scanned in pdf format, they can be viewed using Adobe Acrobat Reader (currently version 8) which can be downloaded and is freely available to everyone

We now have a new message board available to anyone whether an association member or not and can be used to contact members, pass information of interest or seek help on association matters. All messages from the old message board dating from May 2000 are still available to be read on a separate page on this site.

It should be noted that to prevent and control any messages of an unsavoury nature put on our message board the e-mail address of the sender is visible and immediately available to the site administrator, the message can be removed as well as sender being traced.

There have been six Royal Navy warships that have carried the name OPOSSUM. The first dating from 1809-1819, the second 1821-1841, the third 1856-1895, the fourth 1895-1920 the fifth being the one most of us served on, the sixth being the submarine. If anyone has any information or pictures on any of these please make them available for the association to use on the site, contact the administrator as how best to arrange this.

Remember the association website is our very own window to the whole world to tell them about us, what we are about and what we did, our part in the history of the Royal Navy and of Great Britain, please use it and help develop to the benefit of all.

Charles Parker
Website Administrator

Boy: "I'll come straight to the point; I'm only in town for a few hours so do you want to come to bed with me or not?"

Girl: "Well, I wouldn't normally, but you've talked me into it."

PART THREE of NAVAL REFLECTIONS
by **BILL THOMAS Archdeacon Emeritus**

As Bridge Messenger on the cruiser HMS Belfast I have vivid memories of the ship coming to a buoy in Hong Kong harbour. We arrived dead on the hour, a bugle sounded, flags run up, booms swung out, boats away and in a flash the ship was brought up all ship-shape and Bristol fashion. I and many on-lookers were impressed. Clearly Admirals were men of authority whose word was to be obeyed.

Move on a bit to Remembrance Sunday 1947, by then I was in Tamar barracks and landed myself a cushy number as assistant to the Chaplain. The service began at 1045, so that the Two minute Silence could take place promptly at 1100. At 1050 were Admiral and his party going to attend? The Chaplain began to sweat, looking at his watch frequently. Five minutes later up spoke Ordinary seaman Thomas, with all the experience of fourteen months in the Navy. "Look here the Admiral would insist on his ship keeping time. I have seen his own Flagship perform to perfection. God deserves the same respect as the Admiral." The Chaplain announced the first hymn during the penultimate verse a small procession entered the chapel and proceeded to the front row, the Admiral and his Lady, the Flag Lieutenant, the Captain of HMS Tamar and his wife to name but a few. A bugler sounded the Last Post and the Two minute silence was kept dead on time. The Chaplain was vindicated, but I sometimes wonder why it was that Ordinary seaman Thomas never rose to be Bishop.

I left Hong Kong for the voyage home and de-mob in HMS Adamant. School boys used to be brought up on sea stories and in later days films. What price Treasure Island and Captain Blood. Perhaps nowadays it is space adventures. But nothing can stir the imagination like the masthead cry of Sail Ho. What was the equivalent of that in Starship Enterprise? A reason why I enjoyed my turn as mast head lookout of Adamant. It was a scary climb up and through the hole to the platform whilst the man you replaced climbed out, but it was worth it for the view. There was not a lot to occupy the mind and I calculated that in normal circumstances as lookout I had about twenty minutes headway on the bridge people down below so I used to take a pad with me and write letters home, casting an eye around the horizon every few minutes or so. On this occasion I must have been engrossed, perhaps it was not a letter to mother but to Dorothy who featured in my diary quite a lot at the time, I have forgotten her surname. Suddenly a whistle came up the voice pipe. "Masthead lookout Sir." "Lookout can you see anything?" I put the binoculars to my eye, indeed I could, there were trees, houses and roads with vehicles travelling on them. "Land ahead Sir!" "That lookout is Singapore."

So ended my masthead career. Suppose I was lucky not to be hung from the yardarm nor even put on report, but my mother missed her letters and so did Dorothy.

This six week voyage was little more than a pleasure cruise, home to be de-mobbed. Strangely it was the only time when we even felt war-like. Israel was fighting for independence and there were fears for the safety of the Suez Canal. we passed through safely enough at a heightened state of readiness. That apart as holiday makers we did a bit of fishing. Someone spotted a shark swimming close to the ship. He cadged a length of rope from the Bo'son, a joint of meat and a meat hook from the galley and recruited a gang of matelots. Baiting the hook he threw the line over the side and almost immediately the shark took the bait. There was little skill in this type of fishing. Once the bait was taken the matelots heaved on the line and the great fish began to mount up the ships side. As the great snout made it's appearance over the side with great rows of razor sharp teeth the sailor whose feet were nearest the snapping jaws let go the line. The man behind was now too close for comfort and he followed suit, in a trice all the others let go too and the shark fell back into the sea. Perhaps not up to Stephen Spielberg standards but I've dined out on the tale for years, even have photographs of the event. In all my adult life it is the only fish I ever hooked and it got away, you can imagine it gets bigger with every telling.

Here are a few words about later years. After de-mob in March 1948 I worked for a few months for a builders merchant delivering loos and urinals, so my experience of being Heads sweeper on Opossum stood me in good stead. In the summer I went up to Kings College, Cambridge where I met up with a friend from HMS Belfast. Subsequently, like me, he attended Theological College Oxford he ended up as Bishop of Winchester. I was ordained in the Cathedral church of St. Nicholas Newcastle-upon-Tyne two days before the Coronation. (St. Nicholas is the patron Saint of sailors and is also the patron of King's College Cambridge, think he is following me around. I served at my Ministry in Newcastle and Northumberland until retirement in 1992. Apart from my episcopal chum I exchange Christmas cards and occasional letters with the friend from Belfast and John Clark from Opossum. I still have my Opossum watch card and Belfast cap band, I might be able to find my Opossum cap band too. But my best souvenir of service days is the Life Membership of the Victory Services Club which I bought for Five Pounds in 1953, a weeks wage for a junior curate in those days. Over the years I have stayed there many times. What is so good is being able to chat with anyone from youngsters in their teens to Old Salts in their nineties, we all have one thing in common know what it is like to be sworn at by a Petty officer or equivalent that was the real education.

IF MUSIC BE THE FOOD OF LOVE PLAY ON

A highbrow music lover is one while listening to the William Tell Overture cannot stop thinking about the Lone Ranger.

Bagpipes are the missing link between music and noise.

Please do not shoot the pianist - he's doing his best.

Sleep is an excellent way of listening to an opera.

Opera is when a guy gets stabbed in the back and instead of bleeding he sings.

When Phyllis Diller started to play, Steinway came down personally and rubbed his name off the piano.

The third movement of Bartok's Fourth Quartet began with a dog howling at midnight, proceeding to imitate the regurgitations of the less refined type of water-closet and concluded with the cello reproducing the screech of an ungreased wheelbarrow.

He loves music so much that one day he heard Dolly Parton singing in the bath and put his ear to The keyhole!

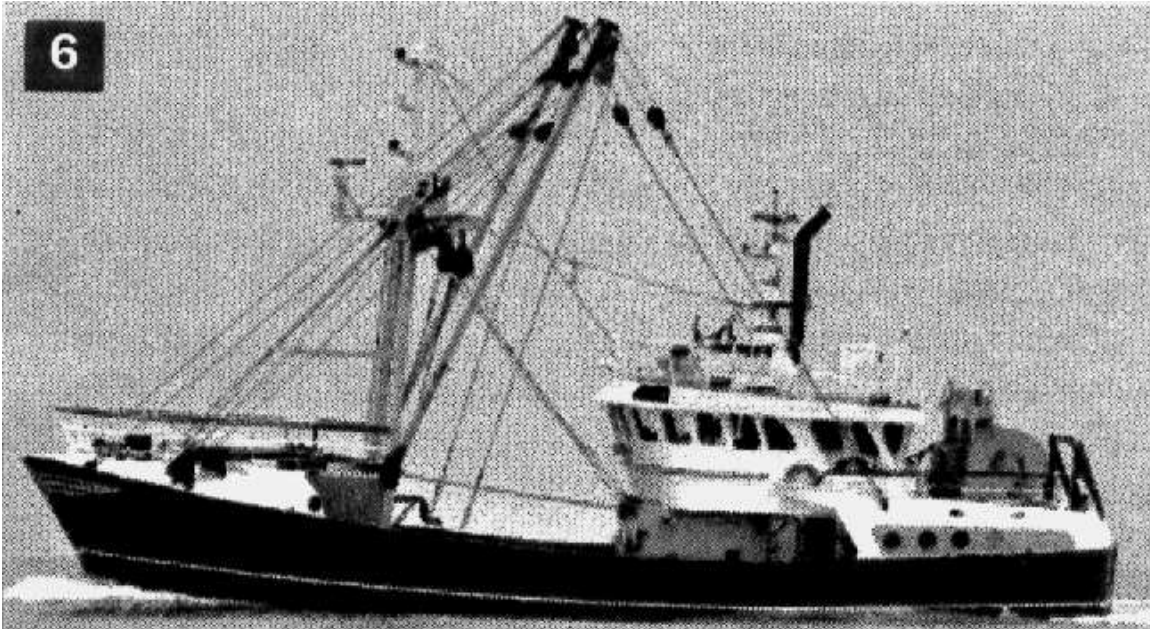
I'm trying to write this drinking song, but I can't get past the first few bars.

Classical music is music written by famous dead foreigners.

There are three types of harmony: polyphonus, contrapuntal and lousy.

I was a musical prodigy. At three I composed an opera. At four I wrote a minuet, at five I wrote A complete symphony. At five thirty I went down stairs for a hot drink and a cake.

WINTER FISHING - RUNNING REPAIRS AT SEA
by John Owen



The Dutch built Beam Trawler JEERD JACOBA - Skipped by John

Usually winter was our best time of the year, more money from our landings. On the down side the weather would be just on the limits for us to fish, day light periods would be short, we were often wet and cold nearly all the trip, turn in on our watches off in wet clothes just to dry them.

Yet the biggest hazard would occur when we had a gear failure. What might take an hour or so during summer months would take 4-5 hours in winter. For some inexplicable reason this would happen in the middle of the night with a near gale blowing and pouring with rain. A big danger for beam trawlers was the gear snagging on an underwater obstruction while running down wind and tide that could put the vessel in danger of capsizing.

The first thing to do would be to try and free the gear by increasing the engine revs slowly, while holding the vessel on course. If this didn't work then it would be all hands on deck and start the well known procedure of slowly hauling-in both sets of gear, reducing engine speed so that there was just enough way-on to keep us headed down tide. Eventually if we hauled any more we would put ourselves in great danger. On the derrick with the fouled warp, one of the crew would knock out the quick release wire attached to the towing block at the derricks top. As quick as possible the free warp would be hauled and the gear lifted onto the gunwale. Then the fouled warp would be hauled until it was up and down usually enough to clear the gear from obstruction. If not the engine would be used by going ahead and then astern letting out the warp to jerk the gear free. Once I had to wait for low water and eventually got the gear clear on the flood tide.

Fouled gear always required some repair, dredges would need replacing, on one occasion it took over three hours to replace the tow bar. Repairs would only be attempted with the prospect of continuing the trip and a favourable weather forecast otherwise we'd head for home and get repairs done when along side the quay. One cold wet February night we had fished all the previous day with good results. The wind from the SW had been blowing a steady force five and moderating. However, the forecast for the next few days gave a further low pressure system approaching bringing fresh to strong gales. I had gone below at half past midnight and was soon snug and

warm in my bunk with the prospect of a kip until 0630. Instantly I dropped off to sleep, but my dreams were short lived as awoke to find the vessel do a lurch one way then the other as we hit a fastener. Heard the Mate put the winch in gear shortening the warps. The extra deckie was called from his bunk. I stayed where I was, I'd only be called if they couldn't clear the gear from the fastener. If the Mate decided that the quick release would be implemented then all hands would be called. I lay there hoping to hear the engine rev up and the winch to stop creaking and the gear cleared. It was not to be, a deckie came to say they couldn't clear the fastener! One of the joys of being Skipper, never any guarantee of uninterrupted sleep until I was home.

In the wheelhouse, dressed in my oilies it would be necessary to go out on deck with the boys ready to get the gear ready to shoot away once we have cleared it from the fastener. While the wind had eased the rain was coming down like a Malaysian monsoon. I decided to slip the quick release immediately so that we were not in danger and we proceeded on the routine of getting the dredges back onboard. It took the next two hours to get the gear hauled, emptied and repaired ready to shoot away. A new problem emerged the quick release gear required replacing before this could happen. The derricks were 38feet long and someone had to get to the top to reeve the wire strop that held the towing block. The rain had eased the weather was still a bit fresh now the wind was against the tide creating quite a big swell. To stabilize the rolling we lifted the starboard side gear over the gunwhale, lowered the derrick this gave a slower rolling motion, it was my job to volunteer for all dangerous jobs. I was lifted in the bosuns chair up the derrick head on to the gilson wire. Tied to my chair was the messenger rope and with some difficulty managed to reeve this through the derrick head roller and pass it down to the boys on deck. They lead it to the winch that now took the weight and lifted it to the top of the derrick. Try as I might I was unable to lift the block high enough to lift the eye of the wire and fit it onto the quick release clip. It became obvious that the job required two men to lift the block. The Mate, my eldest son, came up with a solution. If he climbed up the goal posts he could sit astride the derrick. With the derrick lowered to the horizontal he could lift the block and I could push from underneath, hopefully this would succeed. By now we were all wet through and cold. At long last the release wire was fitted and we were ready to come down. Suddenly my son shouted, "Hang on Dad" he put his arms around me as we both disappeared under a wave as the vessel rolled, the sea was freezing cold, for a moment I thought I would drown. She righted herself and the derrick was topped, my son climbed onto the goal posts and I was lowered onto the deck after swinging around in the bosuns chair for the best part of an hour. My son came down and the boys got the gear ready to shoot away as I steamed the vessel back to the fishing ground and resumed the trawl. I went below, dried off and put on dry clothes. Now realised it was my watch, so up into the wheelhouse with the prospect of another six hours before I'd see my bunk again. Thankfully we were able to get in a full trip and land a bigger than usual catch, some compensation for previous happenings. Happy days.

My barber is an authority on every subject except how to cut hair properly!

SHIPMATES HUMOUR

A sailor serving on a Far East ship received a letter from his girl friend to say that she no longer loved him as she had found someone else - The Dear John - would he please return her photograph. Despite being "very cut up" at this revelation being the good chap that he was he decided to do the right thing and agree to her request and return her photo. He went around the ship and gathered up all the unwanted photographs of girls. He sent her twenty-five pictures along with a note, "I can't remember which one you are, please take yours and return the rest."

In a private club men were sitting around in the locker room after exercising. Suddenly a mobile phone rings and one man answers it.

"Hello honey it's me, are you at the club?"

"Well yes."

"I've just seen a beautiful mink coat, it's absolutely gorgeous and only £1,500 - can I buy it?"

"Well go ahead if you really want it."

And I stopped by the Mercedes dealership and saw the 2008 models, saw one I really liked and the salesman said it was only £50,000."

"Okay go ahead and buy it but only with all the options."

Before you hang up, I stopped by the Estate Agent this morning and saw the house we looked at last year it's on the market again, remember the one with the six bedrooms, swimming pool, stables and the three acres of land, they are only asking for £850,000 - a magnificent price."

"Well go ahead and buy the place but offer £650,000."

"Thanks sweetie, I love you."

"Me too, bye,"

The man hangs up, closes the phone's flap and raises his hand while holding the phone and asks those present - anyone know whose phone this is?"

1. Bob Smith, my assistant programmer, can always be found
2. hard at work at his desk. He works independently without,
3. wasting company time talking to colleagues. Bob never
4. thinks twice about assisting fellow employees and always
5. finishes given assignments on time, often he takes extended
6. measures to complete his work, sometimes skipping coffee
7. breaks. Bob is a dedicated individual who has absolutely no
8. vanity in spite of his high accomplishments and profound
9. knowledge in his field. I firmly believe that Bob can be
10. classed as an asset employee, the type which cannot be
11. dispensed with. Consequently, I recommend that Bob be
12. promoted to executive management and a proposal will be
13. executed as soon as possible.

Addendum: The idiot was standing over my shoulder while I wrote the report sent to you earlier today. Kindly re-read only odd numbered lines

Three sons went off into the world and prospered. Together for a family reunion they discussed what they had given their mother for a present. The first said he had built a large house for her, the second said he had bought her a limousine with a chauffeur on call. The third said he had remembered how his mother liked to read the bible but her eyesight was failing. He searched the world and at great cost found a parrot who could recite the bible. Soon after their mother wrote to each of them. "To my first son, she said thank you for the house, but it is too big and too much for me to clean." "To my second son thanks for the car, but I am too old to travel far and the driver is so rude." To my third son you have the good sense to know what a mother likes – the chicken was delicious.

THE R.C.N.C. -----WHO?

by **Peter Davies** our new member



Peter Davies

If you look up a list of abbreviations in common use you probably won't find RCNC. In your thicker tome you'll probably get to R.C.N. (Royal Canadian Navy) and then ROYAL CORPS of NAVAL CONSTRUCTORS. The RCNC was founded in 1883 to educate and train a professional body of Naval Architects to design and build warships to the requirement of the Admiralty Board and the Royal Navy. After a three year academic training, Assistant Constructors went to sea to serve in a variety of warships to observe and take part in how the navy used its ships. In this context I served in OPOSSUM/MOUNTS BAY, NEWFOUNDLAND and BULWARK with the rank of Constructor Lieutenant during 1957-58.

Undertaking a variety of jobs, observing ship motion in various sea states, the performance of ship structure etc. and was put into bridge and engine room watch keeping rosters. I also got involved in ship administration. All very informative.

From Tudor times warships were usually built in the Royal Dockyards under the supervision of the Master Shipwright to the design of the Surveyor of the Navy an ex-Master Shipwright. A first school of naval architecture was set up in Portsmouth in 1811. A seven year course concluded with no formal qualification and little hope of career development. After some years closed down by the Admiralty.

The need for a highly professional body of naval architects within the Admiralty was demonstrated tragically with the loss of the battleship HMS CAPTAIN, a privately submitted design, built against the advice of the then Chief Constructor, her freeboard being inadequate and vulnerable to high seas. Sometime later the Royal Naval College Greenwich was opened and courses in naval architecture and marine engineering were established. The RCNC was created by Order in Council dated 1883. Annual recruitment of Probationers then continued, taking candidates from the Dockyard schools and University engineering graduates.

In 1889 the Naval Defence Act provided £21 million to build 70 warships in 5 years to counteract the growing obsolescence of the current Fleet. One recalls old Pathe newsreels showing line after line of warships at sea! the design of these Navy ships was in advance of those built in any other country. This was ably demonstrated in May 1905 when the Japanese Fleet, whose warships were British built similar to RN ships annihilated the Russian Fleet at Tsushima. By 1901 the RCNC had 91 members WW1 led to an enormous building programme with everyone at full stretch. The first aircraft carrying warship was Ark Royal in 1913.

Her seaplanes were lowered onto and retrieved from the water by crane. Her design gave credence to safe petrol stowage and arrangements for hangers and workshops. The first flush deck carrier was the original HERMES.

Underwater submarine design progressed apace in parallel with surface ships after the proven design of the Holland design in 1901

Post 1918 the industrial slumps of the 1920's and 1930's caused the grievous damage to the industrial base of the Navy. However, the RCNC remained a strong design team and was ready for re-armament ahead of WW2. Revival came with the ARK ROYAL in 1934. Welding of structure instead of riveting was encouraged. Money was invested in research facilities, manned by Corps members and scientists to observe model ship behaviour in still water and waves, hull shape, speed criteria and power. Such knowledge optimised warship design. Underwater protection systems against mines and torpedoes were developed. The greatly enlarged warship building programme of WW2 had the Corps officers working on numerous designs, building in the Dockyards and

overseeing construction in private yards. To meet the demands of the Battle of the Atlantic a very large number of escort vessels were designed and built. Also some 1,700 commercial vessels were converted to wartime tasks. The vast fleet of landing ships and craft created for D-Day was designed by the RCNC with the United States navy expanding the core design of specific tasks. Many Constructors went into Naval uniform attached to Commanders in Chief staffs and warship squadrons. Constructors were on the Normandy beaches to command 1,000 repair craftsmen, three repair ships and 50 barges. Several Constructors are serving in uniform today. Post WW2 the age of the battleship was over with VANGUARD being our last built. The aircraft carrier was viewed as the next capital ship. Submarine design prospered with the Porpoise and Oberon classes. In 1956 the nuclear age dawned for the RN with the design and build of the submarine DREADNOUGHT. The Polaris deterrent was built to time and cost. In 1975 the Admiralty professional mechanical and electrical engineers were merged with the naval architects. The RCNC now number 600 persons. In the last 20 years the Corps personnel have diverged into managing various designs, build and overseeing activities within the Army and Royal Air Force divisions of the Ministry of Defence as well as continuing their core warship tasks. Annual recruitment continues followed by rigorous academic and hands-on training now centred at the University of London. My time at sea was an experience that stayed with me throughout my 38 year career within the Ministry of Defence. I retired in 1993 as Director of naval Architecture (Submarines)⁵

SOME PEOPLE

Some people never participate, content to watch others doing the work - are "Speck Tators." Some never do anything but are gifted at finding fault with others doing the work - are "Comment Tators." Some are very bossy and like to tell others what to do, but don't want to soil their own hands - are "Dick Tators." Some are always looking to cause problems by asking others to agree with them - it is too hot or too cold too sour or too sweet - are "Agie Tators." There are some who say they will help, but somehow never get around to actually doing the promised help - are "Hezzie Tators." Some put up a front and pretend to be someone they are not - are "Emma Tators." Then there are those who love others and do what they say they will do. They are always prepared to stop whatever they are doing and lend a helping hand, they are called "Sweet pTators."

I was married by a Judge. I should have asked for a jury. Groucho Marx
Don't worry about avoiding temptation as you grow older it avoids you. WSC

Paddy and Trev both worked at the factory and were laid off. At the Job Centre, Paddy was asked his occupation- panty stitcher.

"I stitch the elastic in ladies panties." Being unskilled labour Paddy was given £50. Trev, being a diesel fitter was given £100. When Paddy found out his mate was being paid twice as much he stormed back to the Job Centre demanding to know why his mate was getting more money. Patiently the clerk explained that panty stitching was unskilled work whereas a diesel fitter was skilled work. "Look I sew the elastic on the panties; Trev puts them over his head and says "Yep diesel fitter."

THE JEWELLER

by Ben Berger



Our shop in Coventry

what have you and back to Coventry, after a few trips we were in business. We also bought bits of jewellery and antiques, things just mushroomed from then onwards, Petticoat Lane is just a memory but it was our start. Then we changed from second hand stuff to jewellery on a full time basis. Over the past thirty years we have been buying from the public and are by now probably the foremost buyer of jewellery in Coventry, dealing in all sorts of jewellery from watches to gold chains and so many different items. Of course the public keep us on our toes. We've seen it all from fake jewellery to the old chestnut, "It belonged to my Granny." On close observation the Hall Mark made in Birmingham 2007, tells a different story!

The knowledge we have gained over the past thirty years allows us to do valuations, probate, and even assisting the Police in cases that are complicated for them regarding Jewellery. At the present it is not a good time to buy gold the price is at an all time high. Whereas the price of silver is the more attractive, buy from second hand dealers whilst the going rate is low and you should double your investment in a year or so. Should you want a valuation give me a ring or Fax the number is the same 02476 - 224723. Good hunting shipmates.

QUOTES

Sometimes when I look at my children, I say to myself "Lillian you should have remained a virgin."

Mother of former US President Jimmy Carter

Last week I stated this woman was the ugliest woman I had ever seen. I have since been visited by her sister and I wish to withdraw that statement.

Mark Twain

By all means marry. If you get a good wife you'll be happy, if you get a bad one you'll become a philosopher.

Socrates

When people ask me the secret of our long marriage, I tell them. Twice a week we take time off And go to this romantic little restaurant we know. There's dinner by candlelight, soft music and dancing under the stars.

She goes Mondays, I go Thursdays.



**Jackstay transfer between HMS Opossum
destroyer HMS Concord**



**Seaman's tug of war team, and the
starboard side of Opossum's upper deck**



Christmas 1955.

**L to R back row :-
A/B Hyde, Lieut-Commander Davis, O.A. Graham Elford, Lieut. Perkins,
Commander Porter, Engineer Drake and A/B Hughes.**

Bottom row :- L/ME Ovenden, M.E Mick Fyffe and L/ME Mick Cunningham

Photographs on the following two pages supplied by Peter Davies



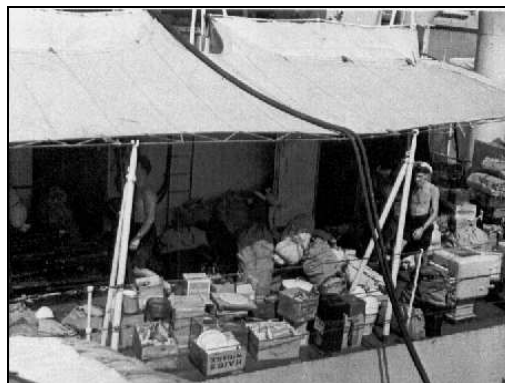
**Commander Powel CO, Frank Craig S/Lt,
Ken Munro L.O. & Jim Dockree E.O.**



Re-fuelling at sea, astern method

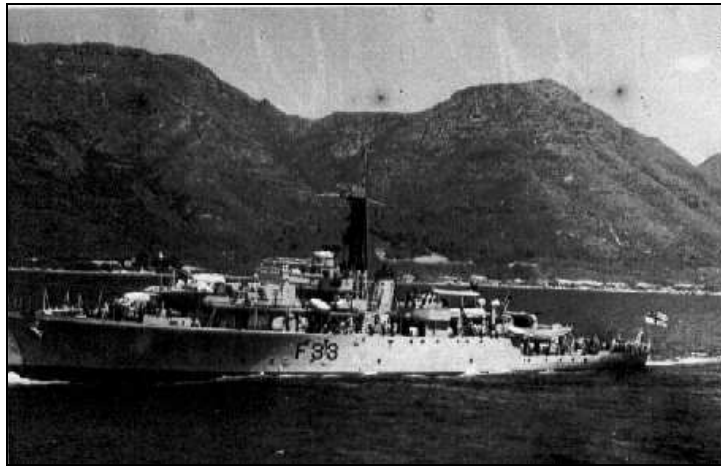


**B Brown T.A.S.O, Mid. Hardie,
Dick Green G.O. Frank Craig Sub/Lieut**

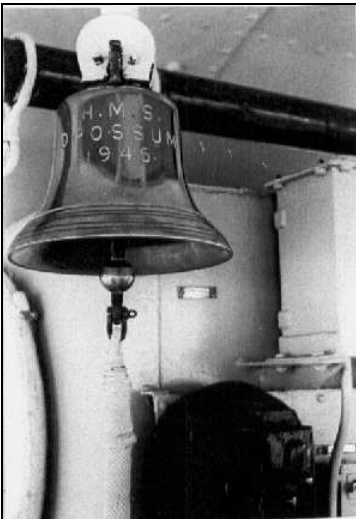


Changing from Opossum to Mounts Bay

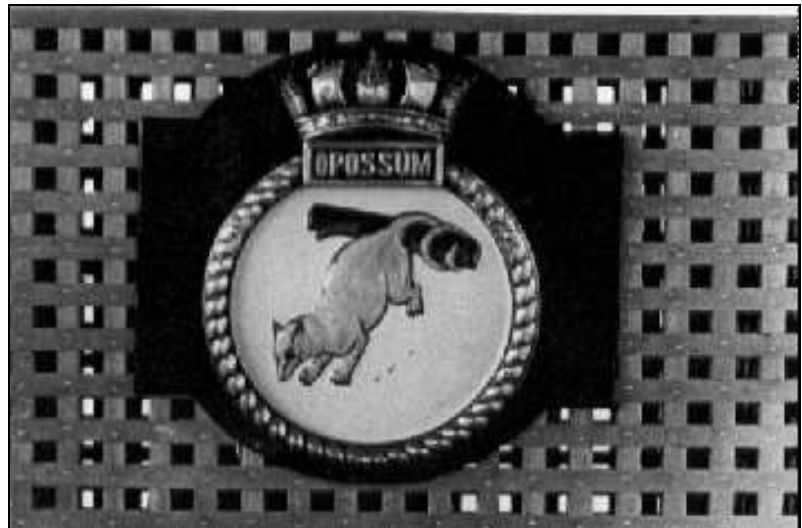
In December 1957 the officers and ships company of HMS Opossum changed ships to HMS Mounts Bay at Simonstown, South Africa. Then the Mounts Bay went to the Far East to resume her commission, Opossum returned to the United Kingdom for disposal.



Opossum leaves Simonstown for home



Ships bell of HMS Opossum



HMS Opossum ships crest



Opossum on her way to Devonport