

HMS OPOSSUM ASSOCIATION



NEWSLETTER CHRISTMAS 2020

1945-1958

Welcome to our Christmas Newsletter, 2020.

What a year it's been, dominated by the Corona-virus pandemic, nothing like it in our lifetime. Sadly since our Spring Newsletter three members have crossed the bar, they are Bill Thomas of Northumberland, Ron Brookes [our oldest member] of Worcestershire and Graham Elford of Devon. We miss them all and wish them a safe anchorage.

Our next reunion is scheduled for the weekend of 16th -19th April 2021 at The Suncliff Hotel, East Overcliff Drive, Bournemouth BH1 3AG 01202-298- 350. Again sharing with shipmates from HM ships Ceylon, Kenya, Gambia and Newfoundland. Booking through the Isle of Wight Tour company [01983-405116] or email – enquiries@iowtours.com

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TREASURER'S REPORT

Brought forward £2,463.43

ROLL of HONOUR

Ronald Bradley	John Eardly Wilmot	John Cartwright
J W Powell	Albert Corless	Harry Barlow
David Jarvis	Bob Gray	Les Wood
George Scott	John Williams	Ken Harris
Pat Norman	Reg Parker	Harry Roach
Ivan C Haskell	George Fletcher	Fred Thornton
George H Richards	Fred[Mick]Bodel	Fred King
George Curry	Sid Pemberton	John Davison
Cliff Harthill	George Brown	Steven Hart
Stewart A Porter	Arthur Pope	Jack Marshall
Les Dimmock	John Bray	Joe Gornall
Doug Banks	Dick[Ginger]Bird	Jackie Scholes
Harry Woolhams	Cornelious Canon	Jim Tribe
Doug Goulding	John Fraser	Pete Maddox
Bill Bolton	Cyril Mason	John Hardman
Ken Philipps	Mike Swayne	Harry Catterson
Ron Hare	Bill Bovey	Jack Richards
William Wilder	George[Jan]Lobb	Bill Price
Martin George	Ken Slater	Mike Cole
Jim Payne	Peter Lockwood	Edward[Ted]Longstaff
Roy Cope	Ron Blundy	Bert Rimmer
John Blair	John W C Clark	Ken Carson
Charles Parker	Tony Harris	Willy Mitchell
Brian Healey	Alan Percival	Alister Hunter Blair
Stan Oldfield	John Jones	Roy Wood
John MacKenzie	Tom Tolson	Ian Janes
John Owen	Ken Hodgkin	Bill Thomas
Ron Brookes	Graham Elford	

THE HMS GLORIOUS CONTROVERSEY

Why did the Admiralty and Premier Winston Churchill exercise a cover up?



The aircraft carrier HMS Glorious [1916-1940]

On 8th June 1940 German battleships sank the aircraft carrier HMS Glorious and her two destroyer escorts HMS Acasta and HMS Ardent who together lost a total of 1,519 officers and men killed or missing.

At the time, the exact circumstances of this tragedy were shrouded in wartime secrecy . Even after the War the official explanation left questions unanswered for years that puzzled families, who lost loved ones, politicians and historians. Why had Glorious left the main troop convoy to proceed independently? Why was she not flying a reconnaissance patrol for her own safety? Why did she not have an all round lookout to warn her of danger? Why did she not increase speed when she was under threat? Why did British Intelligence not give warning that German battleships were at sea in her area? Why were survivors not found for three days?

HMS Glorious was launched as a battle cruiser in 1916 and converted to an aircraft carrier during the 1920's. For the next twelve years she was know through out the fleet as a happy ship that was until a new commanding officer arrived, a former submariner and former commanding officer of the carrier HMS Furious, Captain Guy D'Oyly-Hughes.

D'Oyly-Hughes was born 8th August 1891 in Salt Lake City, Utah, USA the son of a British physician. He came to Britain aged ten years old to further his education. In 1904 he entered Osborne as a Naval cadet. By 1915, the 24 year old, was a Lieutenant, second in command under Lieutenant Commander Martin Nasmith in HM Submarine E11. During exploits of the Dardanelles Campaign his commanding officer won a Victoria Cross and he a Distinguished Service Order. Daringly he swam ashore climbed a cliff face and with a bag of explosives single-handedly blew up a section of the Constantinople-Baghdad railway, before swimming back to the submarine. Much later during Mediterranean service his party piece was to dive from the highest part of the ship into Grand Harbour. He taught Lord Louis Mountbatten to water ski. In full dress uniform he'd glided ashore, James Bond style and be bone dry for a beachside cocktail party. On Glorious he kept a loaded revolver on the bridge to use against or threaten any officer or rating who failed to do his duty. He also had a pet Chihuahua and a yellow canary in his cabin. Other than that D'Oyly-Hughes

was known to be a very headstrong and unfortunately had a habit of rubbing subordinates up the wrong way.

His wife wrote to one of his senior officers, ‘

‘Please be forbearing with Guy, won’t you, he sometimes says and does things which seem quite mad.’

After a previous operation in Norway he had landed his Commander [Air] J. B. Heath, under house arrest to face a court-marshal at Scapa Flow for cowardice in the face of the enemy: when he couldn’t comply with an impossible order to mount air attacks against Norwegian shore targets.

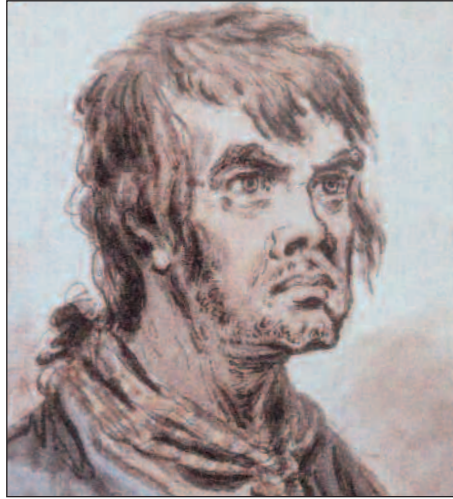
At 3am 8th June Glorious, though short of fuel, is sent on ahead of the assembling convoy back to Scapa Flow. In fact D’Oyly-Hughes had requested permission to return home not because of a lack of fuel, but in a hurry to have his ex-Command [Air] court-marshalled at Scapa Flow.

German battleships Scharnhorst and Gneisenau, with escort, sighted funnel smoke to the West and closed at full speed. Despite HMS Ardent being despatched to ascertain the newcomers identity she laid a smoke screen in their path. Glorious was totally unprepared for action, hadn’t even any aircraft on deck ready to take-on her adversaries. Why didn’t she engage with the one weapon capable of attacking the Germans, her aircraft? Scharnhorst opened fire at 4.32pm, six minutes later at extreme range of 26,399 yards shells from her 11inch guns hit Glorious. Thereafter her accurate gunnery made a smoking shambles of the carrier. While Gneisenau took care of the two destroyers. This action was the most costly in men lost for the Royal Navy throughout the Second World war. The only retaliation was a torpedo hit on Scharnhorst by the destroyer Acasta, that caused under water damage and killed around fifty men.

Winston Churchill had been Premier for only a month, Dunkirk evacuation had been and gone, France had fallen and The Battle of Britain was about to begin and he wanted to get back at Germany without delay. So came Operation Paul to mine the approaches to the Swedish port of Lulea in the Gulf of Bothnia, a main port for shipping iron ore direct to Germany. This required carrier borne aircraft, with extra fuel tanks fitted, carrying an outfit of mines, flying from some point in the Arctic Ocean over the Scandinavian mountain range between Norway and Sweden for the operation to be achieved. Nothing ever came of this attack. HMS Devonshire [heavy cruiser] carrying the Norwegian Royal family and government, was only 30 miles away from Glorious and did received a ‘Am under attack report. The Admiralty maintained this was only a garbled message, nor did they pass on the intelligence from Bletchley Park that heavy German ships where in the area of Glorious.

Of course there was an Official Enquiry into the debacle and many historians have wrote on the subject, including Captain Stephen Roskill [1903-1982] appointed by the Cabinet to write the official naval history of the W. W II ‘War at Sea’ published in 3 vol. 1954-1961. He laid the blame squarely on the shoulders of D’Oyly-Hughes for the loss of Glorious and the destroyers. Mr A J Beith MP [Berwick-on-Tweed] opened a 45 minute Government debate on the issue, 28th January 1999. This is the cover up, the Admiralty, now MoD, have closed their files on this topic of history at the National Archive at Kew until 2041! Also the Churchill Papers at Cambridge University have for some strange reason lost several pages from his papers covering this period! There is much that can be gleaned from ‘Google,’ on the internet, about the Glorious episode, definitely worth a look.

LIFE IN THE NELSONIC NAVY



MEMOIRS OF AN ENGLISH SEAMAN

William Robinson who called himself 'Jack Nastyface.'

William Robinson, whose pseudonym may well have been his lower-deck nickname. Jack Nastyface. Unlike many Pressed into service he actually volunteered in May 1805. This was in itself unusual, but more true to form he eventually deserted in 1811; at the time punishable by death.

In his six years in the Navy as an Ordinary seaman he saw much action, including fighting at Trafalgar in the 74-gun ship HMS Revenge, in Admiral Collingwood's column. Also involved with the celebrated rescue of Jeanette, the French woman plucked naked from the sea. Present at the attack on the French Fleet at Basque Roads, the ill-fated expedition to Walcheren and later his ship involved with carrying men and supplies to the Duke of Wellington's forces during the Peninsula campaign.

His fo'c'sle memories first published in 1836 was one of the first authentic accounts of life in the Nelsonic navy from the view point of the common sailor. He was an intelligent observer and wrote with insight.

On HMS Revenge, at the battle of Trafalgar, the wounded were brought down to the cockpit below decks and had their wounds dressed in rotation of first come first served be they officer or man, similarly after that, as in a queue, rank did not take precedence. Verbal wills made between mates that if one be killed his affects been taken by his mate, if he dies the reverse.

Approaching the enemy crescent like line between each Frenchman would be a Spanish ship all along the line and that the Don's fought as hard as the French. The 600 men on Revenge were told to withhold their fire, even though they were receiving shot and some had been wounded. Waiting for the Captain's signal from the Quarterdeck when he discharged the small cannonade, then every gun would have a point blank enemy target to aim at.

A Spanish three decker ran her bowsprit full of seaman armed with weapons over the Revenge's poop. Her Marines with muskets and carronades loaded with canister shot, at such close range, swept them off their feet to fall in the sea. The Spanish ship soon sheered off. While that was taking place a French two-decker came up on the starboard side but other British ships helped to drive her away. The noise of cannon fire made many deaf, smoke reduce visibility. Aloft the ship was unable to be worked for the yards, masts,

sails and rigging were shot away. All the time the carpenter and his crew went around the ship plugging holes in the ships side. As the rest of the seaman performed the hot, tiring work of firing their guns from all three decks. During a lull in the battle, orders were received to clear the upper deck of debris and save what material could be rescued and re-used of canvas, rigging and yards as the ship was jury-rigged to make her sailable. Also to bring up on deck the dead bodies from the cockpit to be cast in the sea. By five o'clock the main action was over. Up spirits was called when each and every man was given a gill of grog, Admiral Collingwood ordered that each ship, if she could, was to take in tow the badly damaged enemy ship. But a storm was beginning and mostly this was impossible in the high seas

In February 1806 the Revenge arrived back at Spithead in a day or two up anchor and on to Portsmouth harbour. Soon after arrival it was time for the ships company to be paid, less six months wages which is the rule of the government to be kept back from each man. Every seaman would hand-in his cap, to be filled with the amount of coinage earned according to entries in the ships accounts, the amount chalked on the rim. As a prevention from desertion the ships company were not allowed shore leave. Instead the Captain and his officers would invite some of the many bum-boat's people on board bringing their wears and services, such as jewellery, trinkets, ready-made clothes and tailoring. At the gangways would stand officers allowing only the pretty and dashingy dressed women to board, rejecting the too old and too ugly to return on shore. Robinson records, 'As long as this continues it truly cannot be said that slave trade has been abolished in Old England. My constant prayer to heaven would be that, if I marry and have children, my daughters would never set foot on a British man-of-war.'

Discipline and insubordination of the ships company are in the hands of the Captain and his officers. Sometimes for a trivial offence such as showing dissent, answering back, or pretending not to hear an order or carrying out the order slowly, means the culprit could be awarded a dozen or two dozen lashes with the cat-o'-nine-tails, in front of the whole ships company, mustered to witness punishment. For striking an officer, after a trial, almost always sentenced to be hung from the main lower yardarm, the rope tailed by the entire ships company, meaning they hung their fellow messmate on the order of the Captain. In Robinson's own words he remembers, 'A wicked mischievous, thirteen year old Midshipman whose sole delight was to insult the feelings of seaman, climb onto a gun carriage, call a seaman over then kick him about the body, beat his fists against the man's head. The poor seaman would suffer a prime case of abuse of power, dare not make a murmur for fear of reprisal, knowing the very young Midshipman would be supported by the Captain and his officers. Another punishment is known as 'Gagging' usually carried out at the time of the crime, when a seaman dares to make an offensive remark to his superior. The man is put in a sitting position, both legs put in irons, his hands secured behind; his mouth forced open and an iron bolt put across secured behind his head. A sentinel placed over him with a drawn bayonet. In this position he remains until the captain decides to release him or until he succumbs to exhaustion.

Many good Able seaman, including the fore, main and mizzen-top-men, who are skilled and attentive to their duties live in fear and dread of being found at fault not only flogged but their grog stopped. Such is the life of a British seaman in the service of his country.

This page is dedicated to Bill Thomas, Ron Brookes and Graham Elford, three members who crossed the bar this year, 2020.

BILL THOMAS [1927-2020] joined the Navy as a National Serviceman in summer of 1945. Sent out to the Far East by troopship and drafted to HMS Opossum, later to HMS Belfast. Returned after service to civilian life and took Holy orders eventually becoming an Archdeacon, as he put it [First Lieutenant to the Bishop] in the dioceses of North East of England at Alnwick, Northumberland. Mate of John W. C. Clark.



RON BROOKES[1923-2020] Joined the Navy aged 18 in 1940 Initially drafted into the Fleet Air Arm then to a George V battleship and then to another battleship HMS Nelson on Atlantic and Arctic Convoys. He was present at the D-D Landings. After War service he had many jobs, Dartford Power Station where he became a supervisor of a section, door to door salesman of fabrics and garments, work at Scrap metal dealers, supervisor at Uni parts [supplying car parts to the automotive industry] and Auto Sleepers, mobile home fitters. Ron had three loves in his life, his family, Freemasonry and the Navy. He was a member of The Royal British Legion the David Garrick Lodge, Saint Ecgwin Mark Lodge, Royal Ark Mariner Lodge and of course HMS Opossum Association.



GRAHAM ELFORD [1931-2020] He was advised by a relative, if his ambition was to be a 'Tiffie' not to be an E.R.A for they do watch-keeping, while Ordnance Artificers are only employed on day work. Joined the Navy, at fifteen and a half years in 1946, as an Ordnance apprentice, first at HMS Fisguard, Torpoint, Cornwall later at HMS Caledonian, Fife, Scotland. Gained his 'buttons' aged 23 as a O.A,1. His only small ship was HMS Opossum [1954-1956] Other ships HMS Vanguard [battleship]the carrier HMS Eagle [drafted twice] submarine depot ships HMS Adamant and HMS Forth an attachment to the destroyer HMS Zest in a married accompanied draft at Malta. After completed time for a naval pension he joined the Royal armament service eventually reaching the grade as a Professional Technical officer. Retired aged 62.

CHRISTMAS QUIZ

No prizes, just for fun – answers on the back page

- Who invented the bicycle?
- How many islands are in the Tristan da Cunha group?
- If its noon GMT what time is it in Vancouver?
- Who in the 1960's had a Number one hit with 'Silence is Golden'?
- In which prison was Dr. Crippen executed?
- From which language does the word 'tea' originate?
- Name the author of the novel 'The Razor's Edge'?
- Which motor car manufacturer won the Le Mans in 1928-1929-1930?
- Name the capital of Bhutan?
- What was the distress call before SOS?
- What does a pteridologist breed?
- Who developed the ambulance?
- In the French Republic calendar what did Vendemiaire mean?
- Who played Vincent Price's daughter in the movie 'Theatre of Blood'?
- In which country is the city of El Paso?
- In the phonetic alphabet give the name for 'H'?
- When is Lammas Day?
- What tune was the first British Top Ten hit for Kenny Ball?
- Who invented the swing-wing aeroplane?
- In which country can be found the San Agustin caves?
- What is the capital of the Canadian province of Saskatchewan?
- In which city was the composer Felix Mendelssohn born?
- Which England football player was born in Ironbridge, Shropshire?
- How old was the singer Buddy Holly when he died?
- Who delighted in the nickname 'Ambling Alp'?
- Which jockey rode Red Rum for the third Grand National triumph?
- Who wrote the classic play 'The Ghost Train'?
- Whose nickname was Tusitala the Samoan story teller?
- In which country is the city of Khartoum North?
- What word is given to the fear of bees?

ONE LINERS

- Light travels faster than sound, that's why some appear bright until you hear them speak.
- He who laughs last, thinks slowest.
- Change is inevitable except from a vending machine.
- Those who live by the sword are shot by those who don't.
- If the shoe fits, get another one just like it.
- Things come to those who wait, things left by those who got there first.
- God gave you toes to find furniture in the dark.

SHIPMATES HUMOUR

A man sees a sign outside a house 'Talking dog for sale.' He rings the bell. The owner appears and tells him the dog can be viewed in the back garden.

'Do you really talk?' he asks the dog. 'Sure do,' the Labrador dog replies.

After the shock, he asks the dog, 'So tell me your story?'

'Well I discovered I could talk when I was a young puppy. I wanted to help the government and enrolled into the SAS. In no time at all I was jetting from country to country sitting in rooms with spies and world leaders, no one imagined that a dog could eavesdrop. For eight years I was the most valuable agent. Jetting around really tired me out, so I decided to settle down and signed up as an undercover security officer at Heathrow Airport.

Discovered some incredible dealings, awarded many medals. Got married had a few pups and now I'm retired.' The man is amazed and goes to see the owner asking how much he wants for the dog. 'Ten quid,' he says.

'A tenner, but your dog is absolutely amazing. Why are you selling him so cheaply?'

'Because he's a lying bastard. He's never been out of the garden.'

An Italian grandfather wants to pass on the family heirloom, his point .38 revolver to his grandson – so it will always remind him of his grandfather.

'But granpa I don't like guns – why don't you leave me your Rolex watch instead?'

'You listen me. Someday you gonna be running the business, have lots of money, you gonna have a beautiful wife, live in a big house and maybe have a couple of bambinos. Some day you gonna come home finda your wife in bed with another man.

Whatta you going to do then? Pointa to your watch and say, 'Times up?'

The cardiologist and the car mechanic.

A cardiologist was waiting to have his car fixed and a mechanic called him over.

'Look at this engine – I opened its heart and took the valves out. Replaced any damaged parts – then put everything back together and the engine worked like new.

So how is it I only make £24,000 a year and you make £250,000 for doing basically the same job?'

The cardiologist whispered, 'Try doing the job with the engine running.'

SIGNS:-

Sign on a septic tank truck, Caution this truck is full of political promises.

Optometrists, If you don't see what your looking for, you've come to the right place.

In a Veterinary surgeon waiting room, Back in 5 minutes, 'Stay, sit.'

On a plumbers truck, Don't sleep with a drip – call your plumber,

In a Funeral yard, Drive carefully – we'll wait.

Over a Gynaecologist office, Dr. Jones at your cervix.

Outside a car silencer shop, No appointment necessary – we heard you coming.

In a podiatrist's office, Time wounds all heels.

Sign on a blinds and curtain truck, Blind man driving.

Sign on a septic tank truck, Yesterdays meals on wheels.

Sign in a shoe repair shop, We will heel you, we will save your sole, we will even dye for you.

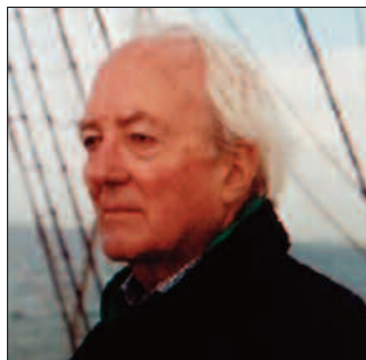
WRITERS ON THE FICTIONAL ROYAL NAVY

Alistair MacLean, Douglas Reeman, Alexander Kent, Patrick O'Brian,
Dudley Pope and C. S. Forester.



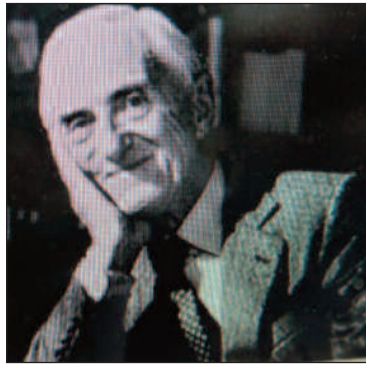
Alistair Maclean

Alistair MacLean [1922-1987] pseudonym Ian Stuart. Born Shettleston, Glasgow. Wrote popular thriller and adventure stories. His books sold 154 million copies. In 1942, aged 19, called up for service in the Royal Navy as an Ordinary seaman. First served in Bournemouth Queen, a converted excursion vessel, protecting East Coast convoys. A year later, as a Leading Torpedoman on the Dido-class cruiser HMS Royalist engaged on Atlantic, Arctic convoys also service in the Mediterranean and Far East. After demobilization studied English at Glasgow University, during his studies had several jobs, road sweeper, hospital porter, Post Officer worker and after graduation a school teacher. In 1954 won a writing competition with a maritime story 'Dilean' published in the Daily Mirror and Evening Standard. Invited to produce a novel, based on his wartime experiences, so came 'HMS Ulysses' [1955] paid \$50,000 by publishers Collins, the book sold half million copies, paid a further £30,000 for the film rights but the film never made. Moved to Switzerland to avoid UK income tax. Then came the 'Guns of Navarone,' 'Where Eagles Dare' 'Ice Station Zebra' all three made into successful films. Other novels followed – 'South by Java Head,' 'Last Frontier,' 'Night Without End,' 'Fear is the Key' and many more. Under Ian Stuart – 'The Dark Crusader' and 'The Satan Bug.' In an interview said he was not a novelist but a story teller. Claimed to finish a novel in 30 – 40 days, disliked writing so the sooner he finished a story the better. Only wrote to make money.



Douglas Reeman

Douglas Reeman [1924-2017] pseudonym Alexander Kent. Born Thames Ditton, Surrey, wrote many historical novels about the Royal Navy in World War Two also the Napoleonic Wars. Completed a total of 68 novels, selling 34 million copies published in twenty languages. Claimed to have joined the Royal Navy as a Midshipman during WW 2. Saw service in destroyers on convoy duty in the North Atlantic, later in M.T.B's, present at D-Day on a landing craft. After demobilization joined the Metropolitan police service as a Constable and afterwards in C.I.D. Later a Child Welfare officer with the L.C.C. As a Reservist re-called for service during the Korean War. Active writing years 50 years – 1958-2008. Hired as a technical consultant for warfare at sea movies also taught yachtsmen navigation.



Patrick O'Brian

Patrick O'Brian [1914-2000] Born Richard Patrick Russ in Chalfont St. Peter, Buckinghamshire was an English novelist and translator. Best known for his Aubrey-Maturin series of 20 sea novels set in the Royal Navy during the Napoleonic Wars. He was the 8th of 9 children. Had a grammar school education. Published several short stories before he was 15 years of age. Applied to enter R.N. College, Dartmouth later the R.A.F. declined both on health grounds. During the Second World War became an ambulance driver during the London blitz and later recruited for Intelligence work dealing with France. Liked to pretend to have been born and brought up in Ireland.

In 1945 changed his name by deed poll from Russ to O'Brian and dropped his first name Richard. Moved with his second wife to a remote village in North Wales, where he did much writing. Fiercely protected his privacy, reluctant to reveal any details of his past, letting his readers believe he was Irish. Described by his few friends as super-sensitive, cold and a bit of a snob. His naval novels were well received. In addition he wrote poetry, non-fiction and did much translating from the French language into English. All his writings brought him much fame and wealth. In the New years honours list of 1997 he was granted a CBE and the same year a honorary doctorate from Trinity College Dublin.



Dudley Pope

Dudley Pope [1925-1997] Born in Ashford Kent. As a young Merchant Navy cadet survived two weeks in an open boat after his ship was torpedoed in the North Atlantic. After recovery from his wounds discharged. Became a reporter for a provincial Kent newspaper, later transferring to Fleet Street. Inspired by C. S. Forester he wrote 24 novels about 19th century life in the Royal Navy and a further 12 books on naval non-fiction subjects. Achieved critical success. Lived most of his life living and writing from a small boat both in Europe and the West Indies.



C.S. Forester

Cecil Scott. Forester [1899-1966] Born in Cairo, Egypt. Real name Cecil Lewis Troughton Smith. Known by his pen name C.S. Forester was an English novelist of naval Napoleonic warfare stories of the very successful 10 book Hornblower series from the first book 'Ship of the Line' dated from 1938.

Initially studied medicine at Guy's Hospital but left without qualifying. Moved to the U.S.A. In World War II worked for British Ministry of Information, settled in Berkeley, California. His writing output was prodigious, over the years he wrote 13 non-fiction books mostly about the Royal Navy, 2 plays and 22 novels.

Several of his stories turned into successful movies,

Brown on Resolution [1935] starring a very youthful John Mills, later a remake Sailor of the King [1952]

The Gun, [1958] into the movie The Pride and the Passion starring Gary Grant, Frank Sinatra and Sophie Loren.

The Africa Queen [1952] starred Humphrey Bogart and Katharine Hepburn.

Inspired many of the above writers with their sea stories of fighting life under sail in the Royal Navy.

Pathetic nautical puns

Which sailors blow their noses most often? The Anchor Chiefs.

I'm not one for buoyancy but, whatever floats your boat.

Why are fast yachts like popular furniture stores? Both always seem to have sails on.

A SAILORS FAREWELL TO HIS HORSE
recited by Billy Bennett [Almost a Gentleman]

Billy Bennett [1887-1942] D.C.M, M.M. Belgian Croix da guerre. Born William Robertson Russell Bennett was a British comedian who specialised in parodies of dramatic monologues and was billed as – Almost a Gentleman. While in his career he appeared in films and on radio it was on stage in music halls where his fame rested. Dressed in an ill fitting dinner jacket, with light musical accompaniment he would stand centre stage and beguile his audiences with his many thought provoking monologues, such as.

A sailors farewell to his horse

Twas dirty night, twas a dirty trick when our ship turned over in the Atlantic. It was the good ship Hesperous – we all lay asleep in our bunks, bound for a cruise where they don't have reviews with a cargo of elephant's trunks.

The sea was as smooth as a baby's top lip – not even a policeman in sight, And the little sardines had got into their tins and pulled down the lid for the night.

We hadn't gone far down the Channel when a terrible storm arose the Captain stood on the bridge and I stood on the bridge of his nose.

We hoped for the best, for the mast had gone West and the rudder was lost on the swell And the anchor got caught in the back of my shirt and I lost the rudder as well.

SOS. SOS flashed through the air – from the wireless right down the jetty.
The steward brought SOS on a plate - sausages, onions and spaghetti.

Said old Bos'un Brown the ship's going down and I'm sure we'll never reach Blighty
'Women and children first cried the Mate, so I jumped in an old women's nighty.

I dived in the sea doing the side stroke and sun stroke with chattering teeth
I could see all the water on top of the waves and found a lot more beneath.

I swan out to Sydney on my floating kidney and back to Alsace Lorraine
When I stepped on the pier - the wife shouted I'm here – so I jumped in the water again.

I said to a girl you must swim for your life or hang onto a buoy if you can
She looked at me coy – said 'You're not a boy – get out you dirty old man.

RIDDLE:- You measure my life in hours, I'm quick when I'm thin and slow when I'm fat.
The wind or draught are my enemies. Answer to be found on the back page.

SPECIAL SHIPS



An Abdiel class minelayer

The Abdiel class fast minelayer was conceived in 1937 ordered in 1938. Four were laid down in 1939, H.M ships Abdiel, Latona, Welshman and Manxman. All in service by 1941.

Two others of the class followed later H.M ships Ariadne and Apollo

At 3,750 tons fully laden, they were smaller than a cruiser, bigger than a destroyer and faster than both. Designed to carry 160 Admiralty Mk.VII mines, in an enclosed deck space, on a two double rail layout, loaded at deck level by crane and discharged through two large doors at the stern. Classed as fast minelayers with 72,000 SHP on two shafts, With their high free board in moderate sea conditions and a clean bottom the ships could attain 38-plus knots, at 350 shaft revolutions per minute. The endurance of the class was 4,500 miles at 15 knots with a full load of 590tons of FFO and 58tons of diesel for the generators.

While the ships were very effective in their intended role their combination of high internal capacity and exceptional high speed were often employed as valuable fast transports used for the passage of military personnel, supplies and equipment: especially to isolated garrisons such as Tobruk and Malta.

Three ships were War losses, Latona in October 1941 by aerial bombing, Welshman in February 1943 succumbed to a torpedo from U-617 with heavy loss of life. Abdiel, ironically by mines, lade only hours before in Toranto harbour again with heavy loss of life to both the ships company and troops on passage. While Manxman survived a torpedo attack limped into Gibraltar for emergency repairs made more permanent at a Newcastle-on-Tyne shipyard.

Apollo, Ariadne and Manxman survived to serve after the War until the 1960's.

SAT-NAV

I have a little Satnav, it sits there in my car. A Satnav is a drivers friend it tells you were you are. I have a little Satnav, I've had it all my life it's better than the normal one, my Satnav is my wife. It gives me full instructions, especially how to drive, it says the speed limit is 30mph, you're doing 35. It tells me when to stop and start and when to use the brake and tells me that its never ever safe to overtake. Despite all these advantages and my tendency to scoff, I only wish that now and then I could turn the bugger off.

NOW FOR SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT

The ever popular hobby of collecting Cigarette Cards



Framed cigarette cards from your Editor's collection

The hobby started in America and soon spread to Britain. This began in the late 19th century when cigarette manufacturing companies put cardboard stiffening in their flimsy packets into a more interesting picture that boosted their sales. These displayed a picture on the front and text on the reverse. The American cigarette cards began with a series of Red Indian Chiefs, then baseball players followed., boxers, stage artists, national flags and wild animals. Some of these were printed on silk.

The first British cigarette company to produce trade cards was W.D. & H.O. Wills in 1887 with warships and famous sailors.

John Player & Son followed in 1893 depicting castles and abbeys.

Thomas Ogden perhaps the first to produce full colour sets, their first series was of individual football players in the club colours.

From then on until 1940 when Wartime austerity brought cigarette cards to an ultimate end, companies brought out many thousands of sets, usually 50 cards to a set. The hey-day of cigarette cars in Britain was the 1920's and 1930's. There would be two cards in a 20 packet and one card in a 10 packet.

Popular themes were stars of football, rugby, golf and cricket. Famous race horses, jockeys, military and navy heroes, heraldry, city views, flowers, butterflies, steam trains, racing cars, motor bikes, ships and aircraft, foreign cities, beauties of the stage, film and radio and many, many more subjects of interest.

Your editor has 18 sets of cigarette cards, ten of them in frames, turn the frame around and behind a sheet of glass the text can be read of each card. My earliest is from 1911 featuring the Visual Signalling branch of the Royal Navy. The most rare set is of French military vehicles, each card dated 21st September 1916.

After the Second World War there was a small revival by the firm of Carreras Co, with the 'Turf' brand of cigarettes, not in colour and no text on the reverse. The British Museum has the biggest collection with 2 million cigarette cards.

NOW FOR SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT II

The Manchester school children's choir [1929] singing 'Nymphs & Shepherds'



In a time of deep industrial depression of the 1920's The Manchester Education Committee wanted to bring some culture and a sense of pride to working class school children of the city. They put the idea to Sir Hamilton Harty, conductor of the Halle' orchestra and Miss Gertrude Riall choir mistress. The result was twice weekly sessions of choir practice for selected children, aged 9-14 from the city's 52 junior and senior schools. Grammar school pupils were exempt as practice would interfere with homework. Miss Riall improved breathing techniques and taught them to sing phonetically to erase local dialects. The chosen piece was 'Nymphs & Shepherds by Henry Purcell [1659-1695] On 19th June 1929 at Manchester's Free Trade Hall 250 children, 190 girls and 60 boys, were assembled together with the Halle' orchestra before the Columbia Record Company microphones. Two very poor nervous attempts were made. Then Miss Riall clapped her hands to draw attention, told the singers they were braying like donkeys and as soggy as yesterdays bread pudding. 'Come on children we can do better than this.' And on the third attempt they did. So successful was the choir that Columbia sold one million records at four shillings and sixpence each.

Comedian Victoria Wood made a TV programme about the event called, 'The day we sang.'

The record of the children singing 'Nymph's and Shepherds can be heard by anyone with access to the internet. Very worth while listening to the children.

Bare in mind 'Talking Pictures' had not begun so sound recording not at it's best. Most children's parents would be unemployed by the 'Depression.

Answers to the Christmas Quiz

1. Kirkpatrick MacMillan, 2. Five, 3. 4am, 4. The Tremoles, 5. Pentonville, 6. China, 7. Somerset Maugham, 8. Bentley, 9. Thimphu, 10. CQD [Come quickly danger]
11. Ferns, 12. Jean Dominique Larry [1766-1842] 13. Month of grapes, 14. Diana Rigg, 15. U.S.A., 16. Hotel, 17. 1st August, 18. Midnight in Moscow, 19. Grumman Aero Company, 20. Mexico, 21. Regina, 22. Hamburg, 23. Billy Wright, 24. 22 years old, 25. Boxer – Primo Carnera, 26. Tommy Stack, 27. Arnold Ridley, 28. Robert Louis Stevenson, 29. Sudan, 30. Apiphobia.

Answer to the riddle on page 14:- A candle.