

THE ROYAL NAVAL ASSOCIATION

INCORPORATED BY ROYAL CHARTER

PATRON OF THE ASSOCIATION: HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN

A Registered Charity - No. 1065290¹

TORBAY BRANCH Patron :- Admiral Sir David Williams, G.C.B.

UNITY

PATRIOTISM

LOYALTY

COMRADESHIP

"Do You Hear There"

24 June 1998

It's "Zero something whatever", the QM nods over a tattered copy of Lilliput, the ship lies silently alongside, well not quite silently - from the hammocks of the "Rough Upper Deck Chaps" and "Assorted Others" rises a tremendous roaring and snorting and noises, which delicacy prevents further description of, as they peacefully sleep off their Bacchalian¹ Revels in the flesh pots and wine shops of Bognor Regis, or some other salubrious spot!

Down below however, a different picture - "Gentlemen Stokers" quietly and efficiently preparing the mighty vessel for sea, occasionally murmuring one unto the other such technical things as "I say have you a match to light the starboard furnace?" or "Gosh isn't this bluebell wonderful on the bright work!" There might even be heard, "Isn't our Chief Stoker a kindly old fellow allowing us to come down here so early in the morning" - well, perhaps not!

Today of course, it could be said, 'Isn't Chairman George a kindly old fellow, for a "Rough Upper Deck Chap" that is, for allowing me to write this newsletter" - well, perhaps not!

So just what have we been doing since the AGM, how long ago? We've taken passage through the coastal waters of Torbay, above and below the waves, meandered through the highways and byways stopping off at a Toll House or two, prepared to engage the enemy in the company of "Dad's Army" and liberated Denmark, (by mistake), and all in the "splendiferous" comfort of the Trecarn, isn't science wonderful!

The branch, on Sunday 26 April supported the Royal Tank Regiment at the annual Exercise Tiger Commemoration at Torcross. This was as usual a windy affair with a "force tremendous" howling across the beach making life just a little stressful for the standard-bearers.

The branch was also represented, (only just!), at the annual Mayors Service in May, the service was somewhat extended and there was that much incense used Chairman George thought the bridge had ordered "Make Smoke!"

President John was impressed with the band, he wasn't sure whether we'd march or samba past!

June saw the Normandy Veterans D Day Commemoration on Beacon Quay, it was a dull day, however the rain stayed away and everything went well, the whole event rounded off with tea, wads and "messdeck rounds cake", (Chairman George had to attend mismusters for his cake), provided by the WRVS from a replica field kitchen, and we were well represented. Now I know if you've got the watch you can't be on divisions, however on the one or two occasions a year we do parade there seems to be an awful lot of people on watch!

Talking about parades, our Trafalgar Service will be held this year on the 18th of October in St Paul's Preston. This is our main service of the year support from other organisations with standards is hoped for and it would be good to see a "clear lower deck" turnout from the branch.

¹ A riotous, boisterous, or drunken festivity; a revel.

I know you are probably fed up hearing me drone on about it,

but what are we going to do to commemorate the Millennium? We are after all Torbay Branch, surely we must do something, must we? Of course we must, let's go for it!

Talking about going for things and succeeding, very special thanks are due to Pat Hayward for her grand efforts in obtaining funding for Shipmate David Cartwrights new chair. This is currently being fitted out and undergoing harbour trials and should shortly be fully operational. The Welfare Officers post is not an easy draft and we do appreciate all you do Pat.

We are now into balmy summer days, (are we?), and as you know we do not have a guest speaker for the July & August meetings however I'm sure Ted the Treasurer might just be persuaded to break out the tombola kit for an evening if that takes your fancy!

Our speaker for October, Frank Pearce, is a well known author and naval historian who survived the sinking of the Edinburgh he will I'm sure provide a very interesting presentation on the Arctic Convoys.

In October the 6th Destroyer Flotilla are holding a reunion weekend in the Trecarn with a service on Sunday the 4th. The service will be led by S/M Peter Haywood, S/M Steve Skingle will be leading the Sea Cadet band in support and we will be most welcome.

Of course, as always in October we have our Trafalgar events, service on Sunday the 18th, dinner and dance on the 23rd.

It's now "zero something next", the long watches of the night are all but over, "Call the Hands" has been piped, down in the gleaming palaces of machinery the acolytes of Tubal Cain sip from the finest Pussers crystal jam jars, a delicate infusion, brewed on the port fuel pump steam drain along with the Chief Tiffs Sunday overalls and the Buffers socks, (contract dhobey), while in the messdecks, the awakening! Bodies stumbling around, scrabbling in lockers, feet crashing down from hammocks into the remains of an oggie on the table, greasy bacon and solid eggs for breakfast, and "Jimmy" on the ships broadcast warning of heavy weather to look forward to on leaving harbour!

You remember it well! Still you could look forward to tot time, mind you somebody might knock it over! It was a great life wasn't it? - well perhaps not!

On the other hand it was really - yes at times it was a bit rough but there were many more good times and a comradeship and a sense of being unlike any other time in your life.

That comradeship is still with us in the RNA, so if you've not been to a meeting for a while come on along, (can even arrange with the Chairman to have your tot knocked over, instant nostalgia!), and if you know someone who could join bring them too, we look forward to your company last Thursday of every month at the Trecarn, we have a good programme still to run so see you there, until then,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gus Aye' with a stylized flourish underneath.