



The Rum Tub or Norrie's Nocturnal and Nautical Natter

In this issue

Editorial	1
Norrie's natter.....	2
HMS Fittleton disaster	2-3
40 Amazing WWII facts	4-6
Fact or Fiction?.....	7-8
Bloody Ridge in Pacific	9-10
Zeebrugge Raid VC	11
On a lighter note	12

DID YOU KNOW?

The only time that iconic cartoon characters Mickey Mouse (a Disney character) and Bugs Bunny (a Warner Brothers character) have appeared together was in the film *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*.

Cleopatra was born closer to the present time than to the construction of the Great Pyramids of Egypt

Lice via static electricity build-up, such as that generated by removing a sweater or combing dry hair, can be rejected a distance of one meter away from their current host.

Although very little is known about them due to sparse historical records, there were female gladiators, known as gladiatrices, in Ancient Rome

Americans love affair with the penny costs them more than a chunk of change: it costs 1.99 cents to mint a 1 cent penny.

Although the phrase 'Elementary, my dear Watson' is deeply linked with the Sherlock Holmes literary series, at no point in the text does Holmes ever utter the phrase.

Just spent 15 minutes searching for my phone in my car using my phone as a flashlight!

HMS Ulster

Rum Tub

Volume 5,

Issue 4

September 2016

By Shipmate Norrie Mullen

Hi! Shipmates,

The dust is slowly settling, so to speak. As I said in last issue, I had rather a lot on my plate. I did not realise then just how traumatic the next weeks of my life were to become.



I had reported that my wife Angela had been diagnosed with cancer. Then for some bizarre reason she was discharged to my care and told she had to come for back for her surgery in a few weeks' time. Sadly, she went downhill so fast, losing pounds of weight and became so ill I had to call 999.

Blue-lighted to local hospital, she was quickly examined by an A & E doctor and a Urologist, who had her transferred to Emergency Admission Unit (EAU) until a bed was available on the Urology ward.

Once on the Urology ward, she underwent a series of scans and tests, which indicated the cancer was very aggressive and spreading rapidly. It was at this point that the 'bomb shell' hit. An Oncologist asked if he could speak to the both of us frankly. In the ensuing conversation, he revealed that Angela's cancer was far too advanced to operate and that she was being transferred to Palliative care.

Angela was then moved to Rowcroft hospice and palliative care. I have to say it is a marvellous place and they just could not do enough for Angela. Sadly she died in my arms just 10 days later.

I want to sincerely thank all those shipmates that turned out to support me at Angela's funeral, it was very comforting, with so much support, not only from shipmates, but also many other associates and friends, Freemasons, Veteran Support Group and a whole host of others.

Life is too short, take each day as it comes and enjoy it.

The way I see it anyway!

Norrie's Natter

The polo shirts for those you that have already received seemed very popular and in fact two of the shipmates have now ordered a second one.

I will have some Ulster Ball caps and ties for sale at the reunion, limited number, first come first served.

I did not get much response from the suggestion that we invite our sons/daughters and possibly grand children to reunions. Maybe not such a good idea after all.

Plans are in hand for next two reunions, 2017 and something (hopefully) a bit special for 2018, the 60th anniversary of the 1958-60 commissioning year.

Although I have been in contact with majority of 1958-60 crew and a few of other commissions, I rarely get the chance to meet a long distance Ulster man. One of the shipmates on my books lives in Turks & Caicos islands and on a recent business/holiday trip to UK, drove all the way down to Teignmouth to meet me. Paul Day was on one of last commissions undergoing training before being drafted to submarines.

Although passing AIB and selection for SD, he could never get spared from submarine to take the course. Eventually, he left RN for the Merchant Navy where he worked his way up to a Masters ticket.

We had a very pleasant evening in the White Ensign club, before he had to leave for an early start in the morning.

Ω Ω Ω Ω Ω Ω Ω Ω Ω Ω Ω Ω

HMS Fittleton Memorial Service

Sunday 18th September marked the 40th anniversary of Fittleton disaster. The Memorial Service was held in the village of Fittleton in Wiltshire in memory of one of the worst disasters to befall the Royal Navy in peacetime. A very moving service with fourteen survivors in attendance.

On 20th September 1976, HMS *FITTLETON* was one of seven

minesweepers of the 10th MCM Squadron, which had just completed 10 days of a NATO exercise - "Operation Teamwork" and the ships were on route to Hamburg for a three day official visit.

The minesweepers were in company with HMS *MERMAID* a frigate of unusual design, she had been built as a Yacht for President Nkrumah of Ghana but due to political changes was never delivered, the RN took over the ship, and she was converted into an MCM Support ship. *MERMAID* had an exceptionally short fo'c'sle deck only 68 feet when compared to other frigates.

At about 1500 on the 20th September, the minesweepers were ordered to take part in heaving line transfers to receive mail. *FITTLETON* was the first to approach *MERMAID* and being one fifth the size of the larger ship was required to approach to a distance of about 50ft. The transfer was to take place between *FITTLETON*'s fo'c'sle and the RAS (Replenishment at Sea) position on *MERMAID*'s fo'c'sle. This meant that the longitudinal separation between stems of the two ships at the waterline was about 25 ft. As *FITTLETON* closed in on *MERMAID* increasing water pressure between the hulls caused the smaller ship to drop back about 40 ft astern of the proposed RAS position and had to abandon the attempt. Once the RAS position had been realigned, *FITTLETON* started her second attempt and in doing so, began to experience acute forces of interaction between the ships (known as Canal Effect), in particular, the resistance barrier emanating from the bow of the larger ship. Instead of dropping astern, the interaction forced *FITTLETON* ahead and at the same time she was sucked in towards the *MERMAID*'s bow. Despite various manoeuvres in an attempt to avoid a collision or risk injury to the fo'c'sle party at the guardrails, the CO decided not to stop the engines (the clutch disengaged at 7-8 knots) and rely on the noted acceleration from its twin Napier Deltic diesels and drive the ship out of trouble. At first with the rudder hard to port and with

both engines full ahead *FITTLETON*'s stern came into line with *MERMAID*'s bow, and it was thought that she would break away safely. This was not to be, for no sooner had the ships cleared one another, the bow wave from the larger ship, acting on the underwater stern and fittings of the *FITTLETON* forced the stern to port and the bow to starboard resulting in the minesweeper being driven across the path of *MERMAID*. Despite *MERMAID* immediately using her controllable pitch propellers to go astern, her bow struck the *FITTLETON*'s starboard side in the region of the Minesweeping Store pushing her sideways, this interaction caused the ship to roll over through 180 degrees. The time between the actual collision and capsizing was less than a minute.



Some of the crew managed to jump overboard but many were trapped onboard. *HMS CROFTON* was the first ship reach the capsized hull and by a remarkable feat of seamanship, succeeded in placing her stern against the upturned hull, from where she was able to rescue, not only those who were thrown clear and subsequently surfaced, but also a non-swimmer who had clambered up onto the keel. With the assistance of the other minesweepers HM Ships *CRICHTON*, *HODGESTON*, *KEDLESTON*, *REPTON* and *WISTON* 32 survivors, three of them injured, were eventually transferred to *MERMAID*.

Sadly twelve sailors lost their lives in this tragic accident.

An annual Memorial Service for those who gave their lives was held in the church of All Saints in the village of Fittleton, Wiltshire and this continued for several years until survivors decided to commemorate just the decennial

anniversaries on the 20, 30th and 40th. On display in the church is small wooden plaque containing the ship's badge and a brass plate bearing the names of those lost and the ship's Name Board together with a cut glass goblet donated by the family of one of the victims whose body was never recovered.

DEEPLY PROFOUND THOUGHTS BY MEN WHILE FISHING

Two men are out ice fishing at their favourite fishing hole, just fishing quietly and drinking beer.

Almost silently, so as not to scare the fish, Bob says, 'I think I'm gonna divorce my wife. She hasn't spoken to me in over 2 months.' Earl continues slowly sipping his beer, then thoughtfully says, 'You better think it over, Bob. Women like that are hard to find.'

Aging Aunt Mildred

Aging Aunt Mildred was a 93-year-old woman who was particularly despondent over the recent death of her husband. She decided that she would just kill herself and join him in death.

Thinking that it would be best to get it over with quickly, she took out his old Army pistol and made the decision to shoot herself in the heart, since it was badly broken in the first place.

Not wanting to miss the vital organ and become a vegetable and a burden to someone, she called her doctor's office to inquire as to just exactly where the heart would be on a woman. The doctor said, "Your heart would be just below your left breast."

Later that night Mildred was admitted to the hospital with a gunshot wound to her knee.

40 Amazing World War Facts

By James Moore in Daily Express 2013

AS the guns finally fell silent at 11 am, on November 11, 1918, Private George Edwin Ellison would go down in history as the last British soldier to die in the First World War.

Having served four years on the Western Front the 40-year-old was killed at 9.30 am, despite the armistice being signed at 5 am.

He was one of a staggering 11,000 tragic souls who became casualties on the last day of the war, even though an end to the conflict had already been agreed.

Here, in the run up to Armistice Day and the 100th anniversary of the start of hostilities, we've put together 40 other incredible facts about the 1914-1918 war that was meant to end all wars.

1. Officially a British soldier had

to be 19 years old to serve overseas but many lied about their age. About 250,000 under-age boys served. The youngest was discovered to be just 12.

2. Average life expectancy in the trenches was about six weeks. Junior officers and stretcher bearers were some of the people most at risk.

3. During four years 25 million tons of supplies were shipped to the British forces on the Western Front including three million tons of food and five million tons of oats and hay for the horses.

4. As the war went on the amount of food given to soldiers was reduced. A common meal in the trenches was maconochie - a stew of turnips, potatoes and carrots. Other rations included bully beef and even Marmite. There was a small rum ration but tea tasted horrible thanks to the chloride of lime used to purify the water.

5. The war claimed the lives of at least 6,000 men a day. More than nine million soldiers died during the fighting.

6. An incredible 65 million men from 30 countries fought.

7. Some 25,000 miles of zig-zagging trenches were dug on the Western Front alone. Many had nicknames like Bond Street or Death Valley. German lines were given names like Pilsen Trench.

8. German trenches were far superior to Allied ones. Built to last some had shuttered windows and even doorbells. At Hooge, near Ypres, opposing trenches were 50 yards apart.

9. A soldier spent 15 per cent of the year on the frontline,

usually for no more than two weeks at a time.

10. At the Battle of Mons in 1914, the British infantry fired their Lee-Enfield rifles so efficiently that the Germans thought they were facing machine guns.

11. At Christmas 1914, an unofficial truce was observed along two-thirds of the Western Front. Near Ypres, Belgium, some German and British troops played a football match in No Man's Land. Germany won 3--2 (but not on penalties).

12. Sixty per cent of casualties on the Western Front came from shellfire. There were also 80,000 recorded cases of shell shock.

13. In 1917, anti-German sentiment forced George V to change the Royal Family's name from Saxe--Coburg and Gotha to Windsor. Many road names in Britain were changed too.

14. Famous people who served include the writers AA Milne, creator of Winnie The Pooh, Lord Of



A British Red Cross hospital in France during the conflict which claimed 6,000 men's lives per day



The Rings author JRR Tolkien, sculptor Henry Moore and the actor Basil Rathbone.

15. None of the soldiers had metal helmets in 1914. The French were the first to introduce them, in 1915. Future prime minister Winston Churchill wore a French one during his time on the front in 1916. Average life expectancy in the trenches was about six weeks

16. Air raids on Britain, carried out by Zeppelins and aircraft, along with the naval shelling of Scarborough, Hartlepool and Whitby, killed more than 700 people.

17. Disease accounted for a third of deaths during the war. Duck boards eventually helped ease cases of trench foot, an infection caused by damp and cold. However, with semi-sanctioned brothels being set up behind the frontline a massive 150,000 British soldiers came down with venereal infections.

18. A total of 346 British soldiers were shot by their own side, mostly for desertion. Another sanction, called Field Punishment No 1, saw offenders strapped to a gun wheel or post, sometimes within range of enemy fire.

19. As well as taking up thousands of male jobs at home, some 9,000 women served in France as part of the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps working in such roles as cooks and drivers.

20. There were 16,000 British conscientious objectors who refused to fight. Many received white feathers as a sign of cowardice. Some were given non-combatant roles, others were imprisoned.

21. The prominent war recruitment poster Your Country Needs You famously featured Lord Kitchener with a pointing finger.

Kitchener himself was killed when the ship he was on struck a German mine in 1916.

22. So called Pals Battalions included groups that had joined up together. They included schoolboys, railway workers and two made up of professional footballers.

23. By the end of 1915, 2,446,719 Brits had volunteered. However, conscription was still needed. It was introduced for 18-41 year olds during 1916.

24. The Victoria Cross was awarded 628 times. The youngest recipient was Boy Seaman Jack Cornwell, 16, who remained at his post during the Battle of Jutland despite suffering ultimately fatal injuries.

25. One of the biggest blasts of the war occurred when the British detonated a million pounds of explosives under the Germans at Messines Ridge, in Belgian West Flanders. The resulting explosion could be heard 150 miles away in London.

26. In 1917 food shortages at home caused by the loss of British shipping to German U--boats meant the government banned the use of rice at weddings and the feeding of pigeons.

27. There were more than 16,000 conscientious who refused to fight. More than 100,000 homing pigeons were used. In 1918 one called Cher Ami, saved 200 US soldiers who had been cut off when it delivered a message to rescuing forces despite being injured by a bullet.

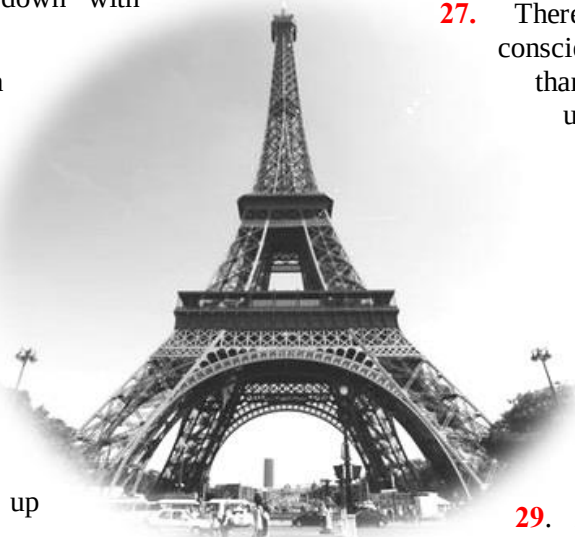
28. At the height of the war, the British Army had 870,000 horses. Dead ones were melted down for fat, which was later used for making explosives.

29. Dogs were used to lay down telegraph wires. Terriers were put to work hunting rats.

30. Periscope rifles were developed to see over the 12 ft trenches. Other new weapons included flame throwers and tanks - the first tank, in 1915, was called Little Willie. Tanks were split into males (armed with cannons) and females (with machine guns).

31. Trench language contributed many words to the English language: lousy and crummy for the lice that infested soldiers as well as dud, bumf and blotto. Trench butterflies were bits of toilet paper blowing around the battlefield.

32. The Eiffel Tower intercepted German radio messages that led to the execution of Dutch dancer and German spy Mata Hari. British nurse Edith Cavell was shot for helping soldiers escape behind German lines.



The Eiffel Tower intercepted German radio messages

33. Initially, the only protection against gas attacks was a cloth soaked in a soldier's own urine. British officer Edward Harrison invented the first practical gas mask, saving thousands of lives.

34. The Defence Of The Realm Act 1914 included stopping Britons from talking on the phone in a foreign language, buying binoculars or hailing a cab at night. Alcoholic drinks were watered down and pubs had to close at 10 pm.

35. Away from the Western Front, the fighting was just as fierce. Lawrence Of Arabia made his name during the war in the Middle East, while during the failed Gallipoli campaign the Allies suffered 250,000 casualties fighting the Turks.

36. The war in the air saw Germany's Baron von Richthofen, dubbed the Red Baron, shoot down 80 Allied aircraft. The top British ace, Major Edward Mannock, shot down 61 enemy planes. Both later died in action.

37. Soldiers in the trenches were highly superstitious. Some believed that angels had appeared over the trenches to save them from disaster while phantom cavalry were also seen.

38. By 1918, Britain was spending £6 million a day on the war. The total cost has been estimated at £9,000 million.

39. When soldiers returned there was a baby boom. Births increased by 45 per cent between 1918 and 1920. However, the 1918 influenza pandemic killed more people worldwide than the war.

40. On the morning of the Battle of the Somme, July 1, 1916, the British suffered 60,000 casualties - 20,000 dead. It was the worst toll for a single day in military in military history



Aussie and Emu Joke

An Aussie truckie walks into an outback cafe with a full-grown emu behind him.

The waitress asks them for their orders. The truckie says, 'A hamburger, chips and a coke,' and turns to the emu, 'What's yours?' 'Sounds great, I'll have the same,' says the emu.

A short time later the waitress returns with the order 'That will be \$9.40 please,' and he reaches into his pocket and pulls out the exact change and pays.

The next day, the man and the emu come again and he says, 'A hamburger, chips and a coke.'

The emu says, ' Sounds great, I'll have the same.' Again the truckie reaches into his pocket and pays with exact change.

This becomes routine until the two enter again. 'The usual?' asks the waitress.

'No, it's Friday night, so I'll have a steak, baked potato and a salad,' says the man..

'Same for me,' says the emu. Shortly the waitress brings the order and says, 'That will be \$32.62.' Once again the man pulls the exact change out of his pocket and places it on the table.

The waitress cannot hold back her curiosity any longer. 'Excuse me mate, how do you manage to always pull the exact change from your pocket every time?'

'Well, love' says the truckie, 'a few years ago, I was cleaning out the back shed, and found an old lamp. When I cleaned it, a Genie appeared and offered me two wishes.

My first wish was that if I ever had to pay for anything, I would just put my hand in my pocket and the right amount of money would always be there.' 'That's brilliant!' says the waitress.

'Most people would ask for a million dollars or something, but you'll always be as rich as you want, for as long as you live!'

'That's right. Whether it's a gallon of milk or a Rolls Royce, the exact money is always there.' says the man. Still curious the waitress asks, 'What's with the bloody emu?'

The truckie pauses, sighs, and answers, My second wish was for a tall bird with a big arse and long legs, who agrees with everything I say.

FACT OR FICTION?

Submitted by Shipmate Robert Styants
Secretary/Editor of the RN Engine room Association.

**The nuclear submarine
USS "Scorpion" (SSN-589)
sank in the Mediterranean
Sea in May 1968 with the
loss of all 99 men aboard.**

On May 27th when "Scorpion" failed to arrive at the scheduled time in Norfolk Virginia, the Pentagon launched a massive search operation, which a week later presumed the boat to be lost with all hands. The "Scorpion's" wreckage was found months later:

A board of inquiry reviewed available information and concluded it didn't know the cause of the sinking. It was considered to be one of the all time US naval mysteries. Fifteen years later Ed Ofley a Panama beach local reporter preparing to write a story about the loss, obtained an interview with retired Vice Admiral Arnold Schade who gave him his first clue that this was a much bigger story.

He set up a telephone interview, with not a suspicion it was other than an accident, and not trying to trip the Admiral into telling him a lie. However during the interview Schade let on that the search for "Scorpion" was underway five days before the official search began. Five days before the government set in motion a very public search a private one had been going on some time.



Offley got confirmation of Schades account and wrote his story. A year later after gaining access to declassified information he broke another story saying "Scorpion" was sunk by its own malfunctioning torpedo. The story was published and Offley felt very pleased with himself; until next day when the newspaper production supervisor who had served twenty years in the navy said with a malicious grin, 'Good story, but too bad you got the wrong cause for the sinking!

In 1968 he had been an admirals flag yeoman, with access to all the top secrets at that time. The Russians had sunk the "Scorpion" in retaliation for a mid-sea collision between US and Soviet submarines, that resulted in the sinking of a Russian sub. Offley wasn't able to confirm this for another fourteen years when he obtained the most significant piece of information and with his other meticulous records wrote a book.

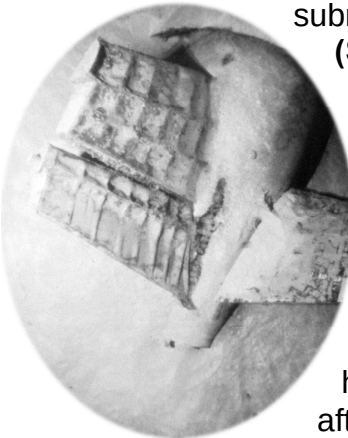
He learnt that since the 1950's the government had underwater tracking stations set up around the world; the technicians who monitor these can not only distinguish submarine sounds, but pinpoint the exact one! Offley got access to two people who had analyzed the recordings who told him they showed a confrontation between "Scorpion" and a Soviet submarine, which ended with the Russian firing a torpedo.

"Scorpion" dodged it for five minutes but could not escape. Ed Offley says the government will refute his story but does not care as he has dozens of people who were there at key moments with supportive information.

TRUTH OR FICTION?

Eds Note: I was at HMS Neptune (Submarine base) at the time and there at Submiss and Subsunk alarms. Several versions of what happened were 'floating' about, the only one I felt with any truth was Scorpion had been on a 'sneaky' and got caught out by the Russians

Stern view of the nuclear-powered attack submarine **Scorpion (SSN-589)** showing the upper portion of the rudder (with draft markings) and the port stern plane. Note that the impact with the ocean floor has caused the after portion of the



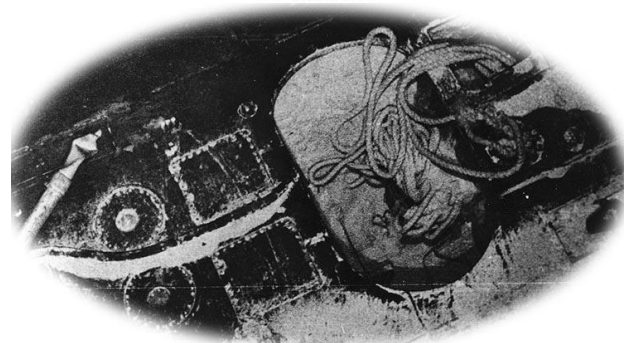
engine room section to be telescoped into the machinery room. The ribs of the stern planes can be seen due to the deformation of the metal covering then and display the massive force which was imparted to the ship upon impact with the sea bottom.

Official Release

In summary, Scorpion was lost because two battery-associated explosions created onboard problems the crew could not overcome. There was no Soviet involvement.

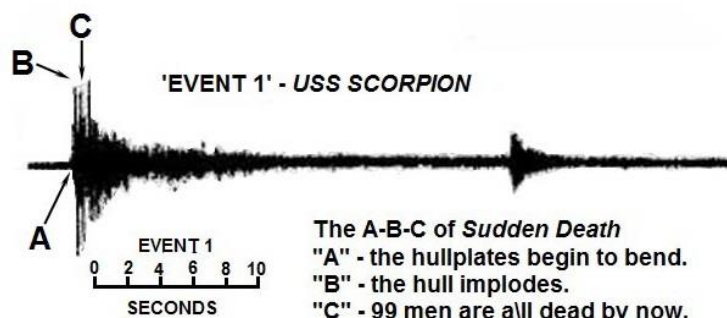
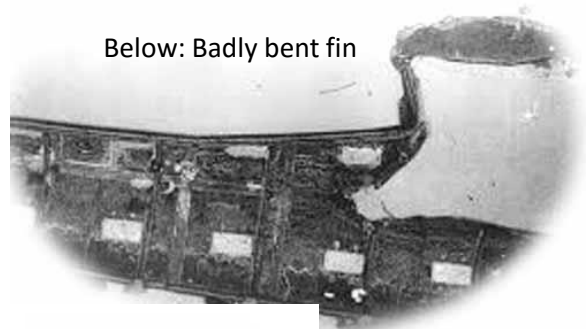


CO Commander of the **Scorpion (SSN-589)** at the time of her loss.



This image shows the top of the hull, aft of amidships. The large oval opening is the stowage bay for the messenger buoy. Also visible are circular ballast tank vents, two rectangular access hatches into the superstructure and damaged snorkel exhaust piping.

Below: Badly bent fin



'BLOODY RIDGE' WWII. IN THE PACIFIC.

Submitted by Shipmate Robert Styants
Secretary/Editor of the RN Engine room Association.

Japanese Military Headquarters was very conscious of the need to deny the United States

access to Australia to set up bases to use against Japan. On March 15th 1942, they approved a plan to extend its defensive perimeter from Port Moresby New Guinea across the Pacific Ocean to the Fiji islands and Samoa: these with the Solomon Islands, the New Hebrides, and New Caledonia would be heavily fortified with forward air and naval bases.

The waters between each island fortress would be guarded by the Japanese navy.

Once isolated from American help Australia could be absorbed into plans of invasion by Japan.

By November 1942, Japan was narrowly winning the battle for control of the seas around Guadalcanal where their warfare skills carried out at night caused the U.S. Fleet a grave disadvantage in supplying and reinforcing American US Marines engaged in a bloody battle of attrition on the island.

The critical factor in favour of the U.S. was the resolute defence by the US Marines of a captured Japanese airstrip called 'Henderson Field' after Major Lofton Henderson, a marine pilot killed at 'The Battle of Midway'.



Whatever the Japanese achieved at night was largely cancelled out by intrepid U.S. Marine pilots there.

The plan to isolate Australia from American aid was under command of

Vice Admiral Inouye at Rabaul in the occupied territory of Australian New Guinea.

The first targets were to be Port Moresby, Australian territory of Papua and the island of Talagi (Solomon Islands). Talagi fell 3rd April 1942 and the Japanese developed a naval base.

The first attempt to capture Port Moresby by a powerful seaborne invasion force the first week of May 1942 was defeated by a joint American Australian naval task force at the 'Battle of the Coral Sea' 7th & 8th May 1942.

An even worse defeat occurred when the Japanese attempted to seize the U.S. base on Midway Atoll 4th June. 'The Battle of Midway'. Japan lost four of its best aircraft carriers, and its naval superiority over the U.S. Pacific Fleet.

The naval setback at Midway justified postponement of plans to seize New Caledonia, Fiji and Samoa, but deemed more important to capture Port Moresby and all the Solomon islands.

On 24th June 1942, U.S. Admiral Nimitz was directed to capture Talagi and adjacent positions.

27th June he was directed to size a site for an airfield adding Guadalcanal to 'Operation Watchtower'.

29th June, the Japanese crossed the thirty miles of open sea from Tulagi to Guadalcanal with 2,000 troops and



construction workers to build an air base at Lungi Point on the northern coastal plain of Guadalcanal. Native coast watchers reported progress to the Allied Forces and it became critical when they reported the airfield was nearing completion. On 5th July 1942. Admiral Nimitz directed the 1st Marine Division would seize and hold the Japanese airbase before it reached operation status.

The US Marines had been stationed at Wellington New Zealand and trained for amphibious operations since June 14*. Mostly composed of raw recruits they were trained and led by tough experienced professionals.

'D' day was fixed for 7th August 1942. Taking the Japanese by surprise the allied forces had secured Tulagi and nearby small islands in addition to the airfield on Guadalcanal by nightfall 8*. August.

In response to the allied landings, the Japanese assigned various units of its army the task of retaking it

The first numbering 917 men embarked in destroyers at Guam, landing 19* August near Lungi Point

Underestimating the strength of the allied forces, this first attack lost all but 128 of its men.

Various attempts by ship to land on Guadalcanal were repulsed by aircraft from Henderson Field and many sunk. Some so called 'Express Runs' were more successful and between August 29th and September 4th Light cruisers, destroyers and patrol boats were able to land 5,000 troops. Some were sent by slow barges and sixty one of these with 1,100 troops left Santa Isabel Island 4th & 5th September. Aircraft from 'Henderson field'

attacked the barges lulling ninety men and destroying much of their equipment.

The remaining 1,000 were landed, and General Kawaguchi with 6,200 troops was confident he could beat the allied forces and declined the offer of another infantry battalion, believing there were only 2,000 US Marines on Guadalcanal.

The main Japanese assault began around Lunga Ridge south of the airfield manned by U.S Marine Corps 1st 'raider* division and 1st Parachute Battalion, under command of Lt/Colonel Merrit A. Edson. Wave after wave of Japanese

troops were mown down; the US Marines were heavily outnumbered: short of ammunition, sleep and food. The defences were almost overrun, but urged on by Colonel Edson the attack over two nights was ultimately defeated with heavy loss. The episode became known as "Edson's Ridge" or 'Bloody Ridge'.



"HEY, WAIT A MINUTE ! WHAT'S THIS
'FOR POORER' STUFF ???"

Zeebrugge Raid VC Recipient Remembered

A **MEMORIAL** dedicated to Able Seaman Albert McKenzie VC was unveiled in Bermondsey, South London, on 23 October 2015, writes Paul Kendall. Standing on the junction of Tower Bridge Road, Bermondsey Street and Decima Street, close to where McKenzie was born and where the Decima Street Boys Club was founded, of which McKenzie was a member, the emotive statue was dedicated in the presence of Admiral Lord West, McKenzie's great nephew, Colin McKenzie, and local dignitaries.

Albert McKenzie was the first London sailor to be awarded the Victoria Cross, in his case for his role in storming the Mole at Zeebrugge on St. Georges Day, 23 April 1918. The objective of the operation was to block German submarines and torpedo boats gaining access to the English Channel from their base eight miles inland at Bruges. Approximately a third of all merchant vessels sunk during the First World War were by German vessels based at Bruges and if they were not stopped it was feared that Britain would be starved into submission. The intention was to sink a number of obsolete Royal Navy ships in the entrance to the Bruges canal.

Able Seaman McKenzie was one of the men landed from HMS *Vindictive*, their aim being to attack and neutralize the battery at the end of the harbour arm, or Mole, as well as creating a diversion to ensure that three obsolete cruisers were able to pass the Mole to enter the harbour where they could be scuttled at the entrance to the canal. McKenzie's actions were recorded in *The London Gazette*: 'On the night of the operation he landed on the Mole with his

machine-gun in the face of great difficulties, and did very good work, using his gun to the utmost



advantage. He advanced down the Mole with Lieut. Comdr. Harrison, who with most of his party was killed, and accounted for several of the enemy running from a shelter to a destroyer alongside the Mole. This very gallant seaman was severely wounded whilst working his gun in an exposed position.'

McKenzie sustained shrapnel wounds to his back and a smashed foot. When the retirement was sounded McKenzie had to be carried by Leading Seaman William Childs up a ladder on to the Mole parapet from where he crawled on his hands and knees to HMS *Vindictive*.

McKenzie was awarded the Victoria Cross following a ballot of his comrades who thought that he was worthy of the honour to represent the ratings from the Royal Navy who participated in the operation. He briefly left Chatham Royal Naval Hospital to receive the VC from King George V at Buckingham Palace. After succumbing to septic poisoning from his injury to his foot McKenzie died from influenza on 3 November 1918. Aged 20, he was buried at Camberwell (Forest Hill) Cemetery, London.

A Royal Navy guard of honour was also present when the memorial was unveiled at noon on the day that marked Able Seaman Albert McKenzie's 117th birthday. At the same time, HMS *Belfast*, berthed in the River Thames within a mile of the statue, fired a gun salute in his honour.

The memorial itself consists of a concrete plinth which was made from a small section of the Zeebrugge Mole generously donated by the people of West Flanders. A rail is attached to the plinth and represents the Mole parapet. At the top of the plinth stands an iron sculpture of McKenzie armed with a Lewis gun.



The statue of Albert McKenzie

ON a lighter note...



"I want this deck scrubbed and the heads cleaned in five minutes - and the same to you!"



Defence Cuts

A blonde woman motorist was about two hours from San Diego; when she was flagged down by a man whose truck had broken down.

The man walked up to the car and asked, "Are you going to San Diego?"

"Sure," answered the blonde, "do you need a lift?"

"Not for me,. I'll be spending the next three hours fixing my truck. My problem is I've got two chimpanzees in the back, that have to be taken to the San Diego Zoo. They're a bit stressed already so I don't want to keep them on the road all day. Could you possibly take them to the zoo for me? I'll give you \$100 for your trouble."

"I'd be happy to," said the blonde. So the two chimpanzees were ushered into the back seat of the blonde's car and carefully strapped into their seat belts, and off they went.

Five hours later, the truck driver was driving through the heart of San Diego when suddenly he was horrified! There was the blonde walking down the street, holding hands with the two chimps, much to the amusement of a big crowd. With a screech of brakes he pulled off the road and ran over to the blonde.

"What are you doing here?" he demanded, "I gave you \$100 to take these chimpanzees to the zoo."

"Yes, I know you did," said the blonde. "But we had money left over so now we are going to Sea World."

