

I joined HMS Ulster on the 24th September 1966, and left on the 15th October 1967. The Ship mostly operated out of Portsmouth day running except for trips abroad, and was attached to HMS Dryad as a Officers Navigational Training Ship with Captain Briggs in command.

He not only trained British Navigators but foreign ones too. I remember we had some German Officers aboard and Captain Briggs used to shout at them if they got things wrong and called them 'Krauts' which was to everyone's amusement. Not to the German's I hasten to add.

Lt. Cdr. Briggs as I remember him correctly, was a scruffy individual with his suit rather dishevelled, with his rings hanging off his sleeves. He used to drive an old green Morris Minor, sometimes, wearing a Dear Stalker. But as you have said, and despite his appearance, he was an excellent Navigator and Driver, and you could not fault him for that.

One day, we was out in the Solent doing 'dummy' anchorages in very shallow water, and I was quartermaster on the wheel with two young Telegraphs men, and one of them had turned the Telegraphs in the wrong direction and nearly put the ship aground. There was hell on, the orders were coming down thick and fast and I had a job trying to keep the ship on course and see that there wasn't any more mistakes. Then everything went quite, except for the noise of heavy shoes thundering down the ladder to the Wheelhouse when the door flew open, and there was Captain Briggs with smoke coming out of his ears, and gave me a right old rollicking. But as everyone knows, once the telegraphs have been turned - even in the wrong direction, you can only turn it back. Simple! He was right of course, as it put the ship in danger.

There was a very sad case when we was in Dry Dock in Portsmouth having some work done on the hull, when one of the electricians whom I believe came from Dover stepped out onto the deck by the Gangway, slipped and went through the ropes by the gangway. Scouser - little Tommy Gavin tried to grab him, but he fell into the bottom of the Dock onto the Granite Steps. Sadly, he died.

I met my former wife aboard Ulster, as I was a good friend of Bud (Colin) Abbot who was the killick of my mess, who later got rated Petty Officer, unfortunately died in Haslar at the age of 29. Betty, his wife and I continued to communicate and got married a year later, and I brought up her two children which I am proud to say. It was only through Bud that I ever went for higher rate as at the time I was absolutely disinterested.

So there you are Norrie, my recollection of HMS Ulster, some good, some sad news, and you would be welcome to send it to Captain Briggs if you wished. You can use your discretion whether it's suitable or not. Please send him my very best wished.

Sid Anning