



# CNOA

## Chatham Naval Officers' Association



### The CNOA Newsletter for June 2020

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HMS Audacious, HMNB Clyde © Crown Copyright MoD Navy 2020

#### HMS AUDACIOUS ARRIVES AT CLYDE HOME

HMS Audacious, the fourth of the Royal Navy's Astute-class submarines, has arrived at her new home at HM Naval Base Clyde.

The new submarine arrived at the Naval Base flying the White Ensign after sailing from BAE Systems in Barrow-in-Furness.

Welcoming the vessel to her new home were members of the Submarine Flotilla.

"It is with great excitement that we welcome HMS Audacious to the Clyde, joining her three sister submarines," said Cdre Jim Perks OBE, Head of the Submarine Service. "HMS Audacious represents an ever-improving example of the world-leading Astute class submarine. She is right at the cutting-edge of technology. She will provide the country with remarkable security at sea to protect our nation's interests."

## Chairman's Flag Hoist:



Dear Fellow members,

I hope you and your families are keeping well during the continued lockdown. If you need any support please contact one of the Committee members and we will do our best to help. You will have seen the work the Committee has done during lockdown and we all hope to be back for our monthly meetings soon; in the meantime, we are trying to extend our newsletter to keep the conversations flowing between members. Thank you to those who have made regular calls to others to check on them.

Continuing to document my 'Life in a Blue Suit', I have now reached 2003 and will soon be reliving Trafalgar 200 where I was Second Officer of the Guard for a Royal Guard in Portsmouth Dockyard.

You may have been following the escalation of activities in the South China Sea and, like me, wonder where it will end. The US in particular has asserted navigational rights and freedoms around the Spratly islands. China continues to expand its navy and is building ships in months rather than years. Research suggests it has 68 submarines including two new nuclear upgraded versions of a Jin Class. China has also built its first aircraft carrier to carry the J15, a mass-produced carrier-based fighter jet. The scaling up of China's navy has led Japan to start developing a hypersonic anti-ship missile.

Closer to home, HMS Queen Elizabeth has left Portsmouth for training in preparation to become strike capable later this year. The RN tested all crew for Covid 19 before she sailed; a wise decision after more than 1,000 sailors onboard French carrier Charles de Gaulle tested positive and sadly a US sailor died of the illness onboard the USS Theodore Roosevelt.

Along with your treasurer Jan Dean I have been delivering an NVQ in Leadership and Management to Cadet Officers that are in progression plans to command units; we have been doing this over the Internet in two hour blocks during evenings and it works better than I expected. I wonder which adaptions we made during home working will continue when we are allowed out.

Stay safe.

Yours Aye,

*Jon*

Jon Vanns  
Lt Cdr (SCC) RNR  
CNOA Chairman

## 2020 Future Speakers & Events: Subject to revision

12 June: Lt Col Duffield – Chatham Dockyard from old images – **Postponed**  
26 June: Ladies' and Guest Night – **Cancelled**  
10 July: Peter Goodwin – Nelson's Arctic Voyage – **Postponed**  
14 August: CNOA is on leave  
11 September: Guy Bartlett – Stealth Aircraft, State of Art War Machines  
9 October: Vanessa Nicholls – Dementia Friends  
23 October: Trafalgar Night Dinner, Officers' Mess, Brompton  
13 November: Derek Goodwin – Reflections of Marine Engineering Sales  
11 December: Cdre Bryant – President's Address  
16 January 2021: New Year's Luncheon, Bearsted Golf Club

Additional events will be included as details become available.

As always, we are most grateful to those who send items for this Newsletter. **All such contributions by the 5<sup>th</sup> of each month please.** Please email [contact@cnoa.org.uk](mailto:contact@cnoa.org.uk) with articles, news items and photographs.

Derek Ireland (Hon. Secretary) and Suzanne Wood (Newsletter Editor)

Could other CNOA members also provide short presentations based on their own service related experiences for the CNOA meetings? **Yes, of course they could!** Please let Jon Vanns know or email [contact@cnoa.org.uk](mailto:contact@cnoa.org.uk)

## From Plymouth, Devon to Plymouth, Montserrat From MOD Navy

The Royal Navy's Caribbean task group has joined forces in Montserrat for the first time as it prepares for the impending hurricane season.



A Royal Navy Wildcat helicopter flying over the hot volcano on the island of Montserrat © Crown Copyright MoD Navy 2020

Helicopter carrier/support ship RFA Argus linked up with the Royal Navy's permanent presence in the region, HMS Medway, to begin their combined disaster relief planning and preparations.

It's just six weeks until the storm season begins and, in almost every year for the past couple of decades, Royal Navy or Royal Fleet Auxiliary ships in the Caribbean have been called upon to assist island communities, most recently Bahamians in the wake of Hurricane Dorian last autumn.

In Montserrat, RFA Argus' air group was reminded of the devastating power of Nature – but not as the result of a storm. Half the island, including its capital Plymouth, remains out of bounds, the result of a series of eruptions from the Soufrière Hills volcano, which had been dormant for hundreds of years.



RFA Argus off Bermuda © Crown Copyright MoD Navy 2020

The crisis reached its climax in 1997, destroying 80 per cent of Plymouth and the island's only hospital and airport, burying it in mud and ash up to 12 metres deep. Destroyer HMS Liverpool helped islanders move to the north side of Montserrat, although two-thirds of the population subsequently emigrated to the UK.

Soufrière Hills remains active and each year the Royal Navy supports the Montserrat Volcano Observatory by helping the scientists to re-locate seismic sensors and equipment.

In addition, wherever RFA Argus visits as part of her deployment to the region she's sending her helicopters – three Merlin troop carriers from 845 Naval Air Squadron and one smaller Wildcat maritime patrol aircraft – into the skies to provide the latest information on helicopter and beach landing sites if the worst should happen. They've already scouted Bermuda, the British Virgin Islands and Anguilla but the ghostly ruins of Plymouth were a stark reminder of the planet's power when unchecked.

"The airborne view of the abandoned city served as a powerful reminder of the impact of natural disasters – and reinforced the need for RFA Argus' presence to enable rapid humanitarian relief," said Merlin pilot Captain Anne Bloechle, a US Marine Corps officer on exchange with 845 Naval Air Squadron.

"If a disaster should occur during this hurricane season, our support helicopters can bring supplies and personnel from ship to remote locations ashore. The recent flights have familiarised aircrew with the islands to ensure the best possible support to those living in nature's destructive path."

Together with a specialist Crisis Response Troop from 3 Commando Brigade Royal Marines working alongside her air group, RFA Argus will remain on station with HMS Medway until the late autumn and also be available to provide resilience to British citizens overseas during the Covid-19 pandemic, just as their Royal Navy and Royal Marines comrades are doing in their support to the UK Government at home.

“I feel it is important to provide help to our overseas territories when needed,” said 38-year-old Lieutenant Mark Jones from Plymouth (UK).

“I still remember hearing about the volcano on Montserrat as a young boy, and I also saw the devastation caused in 2017 by Hurricane Irma. Although we cannot control the weather, I am keen to uphold the UK’s continuing dedication to the provision of assistance from the sea wherever it may be required.”

## **£500,000 from Seafarers UK for fishers impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic**

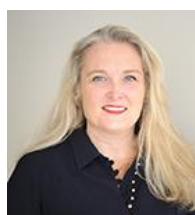
**From Seafarers UK**



In response to the Covid-19 pandemic’s impact on merchant seafarers, fishers and their families, the Seafarers UK charity has created a new Seafarers UK Covid-19 Emergency Fund of £2 million, with £500,000 immediately allocated to assist fishing communities across Britain.

Included in the grants that have been awarded to charity partners providing advice and support arising from the widespread impacts of the coronavirus are:

- £250,000 to provide match funding with The Fishmongers’ Company’s Fisheries Charitable Trust for innovative projects to support fish and seafood businesses, benefiting the fish-catching sector. The COVID-19 Rapid Response Grant Programme guidelines are at:  
<http://fishonfriday.org.uk/covid-19-rapid-response-grant-programme-grant-guidelines/>
- £200,000 to The Fishermen’s Mission to provide hardship welfare grants to fishers and their families, based on requests received via the Mission’s frontline staff – see:  
<https://www.fishermensmission.org.uk/covid-19-helping-us-help-you/>
- £50,000 reserved for organisations working with fishers around the UK.



Seafarers UK’s Chief Executive Officer, Catherine Spencer said: ‘We are feeling very motivated by the scale of this Emergency Fund. It will provide hardship support through our long-term charity partners, and our new work with The Fishmongers’ Company, which demonstrates our cause approach to helping fishers.’

‘We are supporting welfare and providing hardship grants, but also tackling the underlying causes of financial difficulty. We will help fishers keep fishing by creating new online routes to consumers. We are supporting fishers during the collapse of hospitality and export sales to create new supply chains to a previously untapped domestic market in the UK that we hope will endure beyond the Covid-19 crisis. Our ambition is for fishers to receive fair value for their fish while bringing wholesome food and a reasonable price to consumers too.’

Grants from Seafarers UK are offered to charities and other organisations providing services to fishers and their families. Applications should be made via email to [grants@seafarers.uk](mailto:grants@seafarers.uk). See grant funding guidance for applicants or phone 020 7932 0000 for more information.

Individual fishers seeking support should contact SAIL (Seafarers' Advice and Information Line), a dedicated free Citizens Advice facility that receives an annual grant from Seafarers UK. Phone 0800 160 1842, email [advice@sailine.org.uk](mailto:advice@sailine.org.uk) or visit [www.sailine.org.uk](http://www.sailine.org.uk).

## Royal Navy joins forces with the US in Arctic for cold-weather training

From MOD Navy

The Royal Navy has joined forces with the US to practise operations in the icy waters of the Arctic. While many Armed Forces personnel remain in the UK supporting the current national fight against Covid-19, the ship's company of HMS Kent is focused on ensuring we are prepared for future global threats.

HMS Kent joined two US Navy destroyers, a nuclear submarine, a support ship and a long-range maritime patrol aircraft above the Arctic Circle this week to hone skills in challenging environmental conditions.

The Portsmouth-based frigate, plus her Merlin Mk2 helicopter from 814 Naval Air Squadron, is designed to help protect the UK's nuclear deterrent and keep Britain safe.

For the exercise, HMS Kent has linked up with Arleigh Burke-class destroyers USS Donald Cook and USS Porter, fast combat support ship USNS Supply, an American P8-A Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft, and a US nuclear-powered submarine.

More than 1,200 military personnel from the two nations are involved, conducting key training in support of the UK's Defence even while the UK Armed Forces are supporting the fight against Covid-19.



HMS Kent on patrol in the north Atlantic © Crown Copyright MoD Navy 2020

Commander Matt Sykes, the Commanding Officer of HMS Kent, said: "I am delighted for HMS Kent to have this opportunity to work with our US allies. Conducting an exercise in the Arctic Circle is a new challenge for the ship's company, whose dedication and professionalism in preparing for this exercise have been impressive."

"The challenges of working in this extreme environment should not be underestimated but HMS Kent's presence here continues to demonstrate the UK's commitment to the north Atlantic and high north. Finally, I would like to thank the friends and families of HMS Kent for their unswerving support throughout this period."

Both the UK and the US are committed to ensuring no nation dominates the Arctic region, which is assuming growing importance in the face of increased activity and melting polar ice.

The Arctic exercise comes on the back of Anglo-US anti-submarine warfare training in UK waters just a few weeks ago, when the two allies linked up to help train future submarine commanders undertaking the Royal Navy's world-renowned Submarine Command Course, also known as Perisher.



HMS Kent's ship's company take part in a replenishment at sea with USNS Supply © Crown Copyright MoD Navy 2020

Lieutenant Georgia Harding, HMS Kent's Principal Warfare Officer for underwater warfare, said: "This exercise is the culmination of a high intensity period of anti-submarine warfare training that has seen a step change in HMS Kent's readiness to conduct operations. Being able to work with US Navy ships, submarines and aircraft is an excellent opportunity to further hone our skills in a challenging environment."

The waters are no warmer than 4 degrees Celsius; sea temperature, salinity and various temperature layers play key roles in the effectiveness of sonar.

HMS Kent's operations play a key role in the defence of the United Kingdom. The Royal Navy continues to conduct essential training ashore and at sea in order to fulfil its critical outputs now and in the future.

#### **Update on 4 May 2020**

HMS Kent arrived in the icy Barents Sea this weekend conducting operations alongside US allies to ensure security and stability. The Royal Navy warship continues working with ships from the US Navy to demonstrate our commitment to freedom of navigation in the challenging conditions above the Arctic Circle.

It is the first opportunity for many of the sailors serving in HMS Kent to enter the Arctic Circle, where there is currently constant daylight amid the freezing temperatures.

HMS Kent's Operations Officer, Lieutenant Commander Paul White, said: "The Royal Navy is committed to maintaining long-term stability within the high north. HMS Kent, working with US allies, has demonstrated our commitment to global security and freedom of navigation while operating in a multi-national task group in an open and transparent manner."

HMS Kent has experienced the full spectrum of challenging conditions recently, having operated in the high temperatures of the Gulf last year before taking up her current tasking in the north Atlantic and high north.

## **Sir John Hawkins Hospital From Mrs Susan Fairlamb, Deputy Governor**

The governors of Sir John Hawkins Hospital offer their grateful thanks to the CNOA for their continued generous support.

The almshouse is fortunate to have a delightful small secluded garden overlooking the River Medway, full of vibrant and colourful planting, and a lawn with cottage-style borders leading to the riverside. However, the garden has flooded three times over the winter and spring months, which has meant the loss of many plants due to the brackish water.



Your recent timely donation will be used for the purchase of replacement plants. The garden is a wonderful asset for our residents to enjoy at the best of times and has been a safe retreat during the current crisis. Your support is very much appreciated by everyone.

## Royal Engineers Association From Mr Glenn Scarborough, Chairman, Medway Branch

On behalf of the Medway Branch of the Royal Engineers Association, I would like to thank Chatham Naval Officers' Association for your very kind donation.



The Corps of Royal Engineers has had a working affinity with the Royal Navy for many years in varying capacities, especially during times of conflict, and it is fitting therefore that we should maintain that affinity during peacetime.

The Medway Branch of the Royal Engineers Association has within its ranks, "Friends" of the REA who are in fact veterans of the Royal Navy.

As with all military and Naval Associations, we exist to provide care and support for our respective veterans and their families both socially and in times of need.

As a result of recent conflicts in the Middle East and elsewhere we have a growing number of veterans who are very much in need of assistance in one way or another. With so many instances of PTSD, some of which are so severe as to cause veterans to take their own lives and others resulting in an individual's inability to work, thereby bringing financial hardship to their dependent families, we are being called upon more and more for support.

Over the Christmas period, due to the generosity coming mostly from other veterans, we were able to provide an enjoyable Christmas for three local veteran families with young children, turning it from a potentially worrying and depressing occasion into one of great joy. However, due to their ongoing circumstances, they are still not out of the woods and others are joining the list.

The very generous donation you have made on behalf of Chatham Naval Officers' Association will go some way to alleviating their situation and will be shared between them. It is with sincerest gratitude that we thank you on their behalf.

With grateful thanks.

## COLREGS: still fit for purpose? From The Maritime Executive

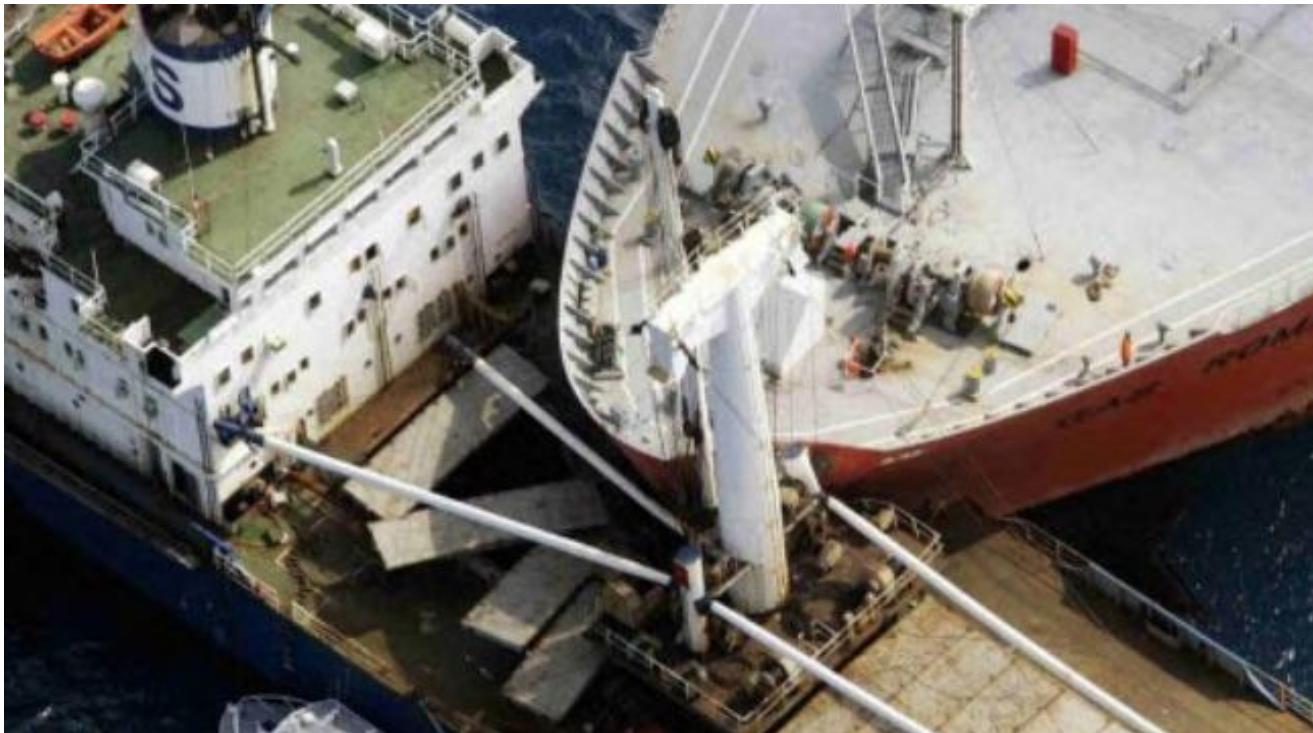
By Harry Hirst, Master Mariner, Managing Partner, Singapore for Ince & Incisive Law LLC.

There has been much debate about the Convention on the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea, 1972 (**COLREGS**) over the last 12 months or so, with many suggesting that it is now time for not just some amendments but a total revision of the Rules. So are the COLREGS still fit for purpose?

### The future: autonomous ships

Many believe that, in the not so distant future, the fundamental changes in the way in which ships will be operated will render the current COLREGS unworkable. This is primarily a reference to autonomous ships, but it is also the case that the increasing use of automation and reducing numbers of crew are likely to result in the bridges of crewed ships in the future being unmanned for some if not all of the time.

It is generally understood that a fully autonomous ship (one with no crew) or any vessel with an unmanned bridge or cockpit (one with no watch-keeper) cannot comply with the COLREGS. That understanding comes from Rule 5 which requires every vessel to “at all times maintain a proper look-out by sight as well as by hearing...” and seeing and hearing in this context have always been understood and interpreted as references to the human senses.



It is worth noting however, that this and the other Rules are not directed at humans but at vessels. So for example, the requirement is for every vessel to maintain a proper look-out, to proceed at a safe speed, and to determine if there is risk of collision; and for the action taken to avoid collision to be large enough to be readily apparent to another vessel observing visually or by radar. Similarly, in restricted visibility the requirement is for every vessel which hears “apparently forward of her beam the fog signal of another vessel...” to reduce her speed.

The actions of “seeing” and “hearing” do not have to be limited to their human functions; they could be interpreted more widely so as to include the electronic “eye” (camera) and “ear” (microphone) as well as the human eye and ear. If this wider interpretation were to be adopted then a fully autonomous ship, or a vessel with an unmanned bridge, which is properly equipped with cameras and microphones should be capable of complying with Rule 5. Indeed, such a vessel may in fact be better equipped for doing so, when one considers, for example, the ability of infra-red and thermal imaging cameras to “see” in the dark and microphones to determine the direction from which a sound is emanating.

Care would be needed to limit the scope of the equipment which can qualify as an electronic “eye.” It could not include radar for example, as the Rule for vessels navigating in or near an area of restricted visibility recognizes that a vessel which is not in sight of another vessel may nevertheless detect the presence of that other vessel by radar. A vessel fitted with a thermal imaging camera might similarly be able to detect the presence of another vessel in restricted visibility in circumstances where the human eye could not. The powers of the human eye, however, are well documented, and I believe it should be possible to program the electronic eyes and master computer on an autonomous ship to know when the prevailing visibility calls for the application of Rule 19.

There still remains the issue of seamanship however: how does an autonomous ship, or a vessel with an unmanned bridge, know what “precaution... may be required by the ordinary practice of seamen?” The answer, I believe, will be provided by artificial intelligence (AI). Computers can be programmed to learn (think: Chess; Go) and it would appear, therefore,

that the technology may already exist to program a vessel computer to know what the practice of good seamanship requires.

I am not convinced therefore, that the COLREGS necessarily require any amendments to accommodate the fundamental changes in the way that ships will be operated in the future, save perhaps, to include a definition in Rule 3 extending the meaning of the words "by sight," "visually," "by hearing," and "hears."

The suggestion that new rules must be written now to take into account both manned and unmanned ships, does of course, beg the question: why? The owners of manned ships have to ensure their vessels comply with the COLREGS whatever they might think about these Rules, which have been in operation now for over 40 years. Why should it be any different for the owner of an unmanned ship?

It is also worth remembering that these Rules, whilst worded differently to their predecessors, prescribe the same basic collision avoidance maneuvers; for example, when two power-driven vessels are meeting head-on, for both to alter their courses to starboard. The current Rules have evolved into their present arrangement and wordings through a series of incremental changes and amendments over the years, and as result their entry into force during the 1970's was seamless and largely without incident. Implementing a complete set of new rules especially new maneuvering rules, or introducing wide ranging amendments to the current Rules, is a potential recipe for disaster. It would also be a time consuming and costly endeavor, being one that will require international agreement and re-training on a global basis. I believe we should proceed cautiously therefore before we seek to totally revise the "rules of the road" for the sea.

### **The present: collisions are still happening**

Collisions at sea are still happening, but whilst the number of collisions each year is not noticeably decreasing the world fleet capacity has increased significantly since the COLREGS came into force.

When expressed as a percentage of the world fleet therefore, the number of collisions is actually decreasing over time and therefore showing some improvement. This said, the number of collisions is still unacceptably high, and it is still very much the case that most all collisions are the result of human error and in particular, a failure to properly implement – or comply with – the Rules.

This, however, is not reason to change the Rules. The Rules are not the cause of collisions; the cause of collisions is the failure by mariners to properly comply with the Rules. If, as some suggest, the many technologies designed to improve the avoidance of collisions since the rules came into force are being ignored, then the problem is with the mariners and not with the regulators ashore, or with any disconnect between the two. No amount of regulation will force a mariner to use a particular piece of equipment or technology, just as no amount of regulation will force a mariner to properly comply with the Rules. Proper compliance with the Rules is a seamanship issue, and seamanship is taught in the classroom and acquired from experience at sea.

### **The Rules: lack of proper understanding**

The cause of collisions is not the COLREGS but how mariners interpret and (mis-) apply the Rules. Too many mariners today, I feel, lack a proper understanding of the Rules and how they are to be applied.

The causes of most all collisions can be broken down into two broad categories:

1. failure to maintain a proper look-out; and
2. failure to take the appropriate avoiding action.

## ***Proper look-out***

With a proper look-out the mariner will make “a full appraisal of the situation and of the risk of collision.” Many collisions occur because the mariner fails to do so, and in particular, to properly appraise the risk of collision. This is so notwithstanding the technological advances that have occurred during the last 40 years and notably the development of AIS and ARPA which make the job of detecting other vessels and determining their movements much easier today than it was when the COLREGS first came into force.

I question therefore whether mariners are being properly trained in the use and limitations of these “new” navigational aids, and what is meant by “a full appraisal of the situation and of the risk of collision.” An all too frequent criticism of the mariner today is that he or she spends too much time looking at the ARPA and ECDIS and not enough time looking out of the bridge windows. Certainly, very few mariners today it seems ever slow down to allow themselves more time to make a full appraisal.

A full appraisal requires a proper understanding of the three most important phrases in the Rules: “risk of collision,” “close quarters situation,” and “passing at a safe distance.” These phrases are not defined in the COLREGS, and this is not surprising as their meanings will clearly vary with the prevailing circumstances and conditions of every case.

Too many mariners do not appear to have a proper understanding of the meaning of these phrases and, I believe, are interpreting them too narrowly. Many mariners, for example, are interpreting “risk of collision” to mean the two vessels will definitely collide if no avoiding action is taken; and believe a few cables is a safe passing distance at sea in open waters in all conditions.

## ***Inappropriate action***

Even when a proper look-out is being maintained, collisions are still occurring because mariners are failing to take the appropriate avoiding action. Action taken to avoid collision should be “positive, made in ample time and with due regard to the observance of good seamanship.” All too often the action taken is too little and too late. I question therefore whether mariners are being properly taught the meaning of “positive” and “in ample time.” Indeed, I have heard of some mariners using the trial maneuver facility on the ARPA to determine what is the minimum alteration of course they have to make to avoid actual collision and ensure the other vessel passes a few cables clear.

Many mariners also do not understand that the overtaking, head-on, and crossing Rules do not apply in restricted visibility when the vessels are not in sight of one another.

## ***No reason to change***

That many mariners today appear to lack a proper understanding of the Rules and how they are to be applied is not, in my opinion, reason to change the COLREGS. It might be reason to do so if this lack of understanding arose from the way in which the Rules have been drafted. The COLREGS, however, are simply and concisely worded, and the Rules have been logically arranged; and as noted above, the problem is not with the words used in the Rules but with the meanings of those words.

## ***Summary***

For all these reasons I believe the COLREGS are still fit for purpose and there is no need for the Rules to be totally revised, whether to accommodate autonomous ships or to reduce the number of collisions.

There are going to be some fundamental changes to the ways in which ships will be operated in the future but these changes will only require a few minor amendments to the COLREGS to ensure the Rules continue to be workable.

If the shipping industry is serious about reducing the number of collisions it would do better to focus its attention on the way in which mariners are taught the Rules and how to apply them, and not upon the Rules and how they might be changed

## **Remarkable troopship blunder**

**Published in The Times, 14 June 1919**

The 5,700-ton United States transport Federal arrived at New York yesterday from Antwerp "heavily laden" with one "troop" – namely, Captain M D Mills of Seattle, who had the entire ship to himself. He was met by a band in an official welcome boat in the Lower Bay and was greeted at the dock by five Red Cross, two YMCA, and two Knights of Columbus (American Catholic) workers, all offering large quantities of food and tobacco.

How the ship came to make the trip in these circumstances, nobody appears to understand. All her Captain knows is that he received orders to sail; all Captain Mills knows is that he was told to go in the ship.

It is not quite correct to say that he was the only passenger for, just before the Federal sailed, the embarkation officers remembered a regulation which lays down that no troops shall be sent to sea in a transport unless a representative of the Quartermaster's Department accompanies them. So, they detailed Lieutenant John Nidrof to accompany Captain Mills.

During the voyage, in accordance with the regulations, Captain Mills summoned himself on deck every morning and called the roll, told himself he was present, and reported "All correct" to the officer of the Quartermaster's Department

When the ship docked yesterday morning, she was boarded by three embarkation officers, the senior of whom asked for the officer commanding the troops aboard.

"I am the senior officer," said Captain Mills, saluting.

"Please muster your men on deck;" ordered the embarkation officer.

"I'm all present, Sir;" replied Captain Mills, saluting again.

The formalities for disembarking troops were gone through and Captain Mills filed down the gangway and marched away.

## **President Trump tells Navy to 'shoot down' Iranian gunboats if they harass US ships**

**By Reuters 22 April 2020**

President Donald Trump said recently that he had instructed the US Navy to fire on any Iranian ships that harass it at sea, a week after 11 vessels from Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Navy (IRGCN) came dangerously close to American ships in the Gulf.

Close interactions with Iranian military vessels were not uncommon in 2016 and 2017. On several occasions, US Navy ships fired warning shots at Iranian vessels when they got too close. While the US Navy has the authority to act in self-defense, Trump's comments appeared to go further and are likely to stoke tensions between Iran and the United States.

Trump wrote in a tweet, hours after Iran's Revolutionary Guards Corps said it had launched the country's first military satellite into orbit.

*"I have instructed the United States Navy to shoot down and destroy any and all Iranian gunboats if they harass our ships at sea,"* — Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) April 22, 2020



## August 2016 article

A Reuters article appeared in August 2016 entitled: "How can the US Navy Defeat Swarm Attacks?" The article, reproduced below, gives a glimpse into the approach the US is taking to defeat 'Swarm Attacks'.

Four times last week, speedboats belonging to Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps – a sort of government-sanctioned Islamic militia – harassed four American vessels patrolling the Persian Gulf. The incidents, while tense, ended bloodlessly. Still, they offered a glimpse into the kinds of methods Tehran could employ to potentially devastating effect during a shooting war.

Outgunned by the United States' much larger and more sophisticated weaponry, Iran's troops have, for decades, honed so-called "swarm tactics" that could reduce America's technological advantage. Instead of trying to match the U.S. military weapon-for-weapon, Iran deploys large numbers of relatively unsophisticated systems on land, at sea and in the air. The idea is to overwhelm American forces, much in the way a single bee is a nuisance to a human being but a swarm of them could prove lethal.

The Pentagon is well aware of the danger Iran's swarms pose, however, and is devising new weapons to counter them, including small, precision-guided rockets and even lasers.

The August incidents came just hours apart. On August 23, four armed Iranian patrol boats sped to within 300 yards of the destroyer USS Nitze near the Strait of Hormuz. The 505-foot-long missile-armed destroyer fired off flares as a warning, and the Iranian boats withdrew.

A day later, three similar boats sailed tight circles around the U.S. patrol vessels USS Tempest and USS Squall. One Iranian boat sped toward Tempest on a collision course, which compelled Squall to fire warning shots with a heavy machine gun. The Iranian boats withdrew only to return later the same day and harass the destroyer USS Stout. A few hours later, an Iranian boat played chicken with Tempest by speeding head-on toward it.

The U.S. Navy was apoplectic about the encounter with Tempest, in particular. "This situation presented a drastically increased risk of collision, and the Iranian vessel refused to safely maneuver in accordance with internationally recognized maritime rules of the road, despite several requests and warnings via radio, and visual and audible warnings from both U.S. ships," said Commander Bill Urban, the U.S. Fifth Fleet spokesman.

This is hardly the first time Iranian speedboats have clashed – or nearly clashed – with American ships. In July, five Iranian boats came within 500 yards of the amphibious assault ship USS New Orleans. On August 15, Iranian boats launched rockets while conducting

training exercises just a few miles from two U.S. ships. In 2015, Revolutionary Guard craft blew up a large target vessel that Tehran had built to mimic a U.S. aircraft carrier.

Similar incidents have occurred regularly for decades, and indeed have come to represent Iran's main method of provocation in the Persian Gulf and beyond.

The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps employs swarm tactics in the air and on the ground, too. The guard corps has bought scores of small, low-flying aircraft that it apparently hopes can overwhelm enemy defenses. Its tactics complement those of the mainstream Iranian military. The Iranian navy, not to be confused with the guard corps' naval arm, conserves its meager resources — large missile-armed warships — for infrequent, long-range deployments to distant waters, in recent years hailing at Syrian and Chinese ports.

The navy's cruisers serve a mostly diplomatic function. In a sense, the navy is the good cop in Iran's at-sea dealings with other countries. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, meanwhile, plays the bad cop, which adds an element of uncertainty to the Persian Gulf that helps to keep Tehran's rivals off balance.

But the United States isn't just rolling over in the face of the guard corps' naval harassment. Historically, the U.S. Navy has trained and equipped its forces for battles with other well-armed navies also operating their own large warships. Its main weapons for such battles are large, multimillion-dollar cruise missiles, of which most ships can only carry a few. The threat from large numbers of nimble, inexpensive guard corps speedboats compelled the Americans to think differently.

In the 1980s, the Navy began bringing U.S. Army attack helicopters aboard some of its ships in the Persian Gulf. The Army copters' missiles and guns were ideal for blasting Iranian boats. In 1988, U.S. and Iranian forces fought a brief, violent skirmish that damaged or destroyed several Iranian vessels.

The U.S. fleet began adding Army-style missiles to its own helicopters. And in 2012, the sailing branch went a step further when it finally fielded a custom-made guided rocket of its own that is specifically optimized for defeating swarms of boats. The Advanced Precision Kill Weapon System (APKWS) is a 2.75-inch-diameter rocket with a laser seeker.

Navy and Marine Corps helicopters, as well as other aircraft, can carry pods, with each containing up to seven of the rockets. The copter shines a laser on enemy boats, or other targets, then fires. Each APKWS rocket heads for a different boat, in essence swarming the swarm with tiny lethal munitions. The guided-rocket system has a 95-percent hit rate, according to the military. "This will give the helicopters a potent capability against swarming fast inshore attack craft," noted Jane's, a defense trade publication.

And that's not all. In 2014, the U.S. Navy fitted a new, large laser gun to the amphibious ship USS Ponce, which is permanently stationed in the Persian Gulf, where it acts as an at-sea base for helicopters, small boats and special operations forces. Big, slow and otherwise lightly armed, Ponce was uniquely vulnerable to the guard corps boat swarms.

The so-called Laser Weapon System (LaWS), aimed by an operator holding a video-game-style controller, shoots a 30-kilowatt laser over a distance of several miles. As LaWS doesn't fire conventional missiles or bullets, instead drawing power from a generator, it essentially never runs out of ammunition and is perfect for wiping out a swarm.

The laser system is a one-off weapon — and, at \$40 million, it didn't come cheap. But having proved that a laser can work in real-world conditions, the Navy is planning to build more and bigger lasers and, potentially, outfit all its front-line warships with them. If that happens, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps swarms might finally meet their match.

# The strange saga of RCGS Resolute

## From The Maritime Executive

*Editor: This is a follow-up story from last month's newsletter article about the sinking of the Venezuelan patrol ship following a collision with RCGS Resolute.*



Polar cruise ship One Ocean

In the wee hours of March 30, an armed Venezuelan Coast Guard patrol ship fired on and rammed a Portuguese-flagged, Bahamian-owned, Canadian- and German-operated polar cruise ship floating not far from the uninhabited Venezuelan island of La Tortuga. The ice-class vessel survived while the patrol ship sank. All its crew were rescued.

While the media is covering the bizarre incident at sea as a humorous and wacky story which provides a welcome break from the coronavirus deluge, in fact, the reason why the ice-class cruise vessel was steaming towards the Caribbean involves a long trail of unpaid suppliers, creditors, vendors, and crew members. It also involves hundreds of passengers who are now out tens of thousands of dollars each for luxury polar expeditions.

In other words, the company can't just be seen as the innocent victim of what some observers interpret as a Venezuelan mission gone wrong.

So just how did RCGS Resolute end up in a pitched battle with the Bolivarian Navy that, as I'll show, may in fact be a proxy battle for a dispute between Venezuela and Portugal? Let's start at the beginning.

### Resolute's long voyage to bankruptcy

In 2007, Nova Scotia native Andrew Prossin founded Canadian tour outfitter One Ocean Expeditions to offer luxury cruises to the Arctic and Antarctica. Polar expeditions took place fairly seamlessly for about a decade, and the company grew to be one of the more well-established names in the industry. By 2018, the company decided to expand its fleet from two to three ships, leasing the now-infamous RCGS Resolute. That year, however, problems were already beginning.

In August 2018, one of One Ocean Expeditions' three leased ships, Akademik Ioffe, ran aground in the Northwest Passage not far from the Nunavut village of Kugaaruk. Nobody was injured and no fuel was spilled. Yet the incident still drew attention to the dangers associated with the rising number of cruise ships sailing through the Northwest Passage.

Then, in December 2018, one passenger aboard a cruise to Antarctica described on Tripadvisor how the ship had been bizarrely unable to refuel in Ushuaia. The snafu resulted in a series of upsetting changes to the itinerary including only 3.5 days in Antarctica instead of five.

*"I'm currently on the Resolute's 12/10-12/20 Antarctica cruise, and it has been an unmitigated disaster...*

*...we were informed upon our arrival in Ushuaia that the ship did not have enough fuel for our trip, and we would therefore be taking an unscheduled 1.5-day detour to the Falkland Islands to fill up...*

*...Many of the staff (esp. the registration desk) are unknowledgeable or give outright false information, and the general impression given is of a fly-by-night operation. This is even more galling considering that the owner of One Ocean is on our ship, together with his personal guest Stephen Harper (former PM of Canada)."*

Passenger review on Tripadvisor, December 2018

While Akademik Ioffe's grounding and the lack of fuel in Ushuaia may have been freak occurrences, bigger cracks in One Ocean Expeditions' foundations soon began. In May 2019, the Shirshov Institute of Oceanology in Moscow, Russia recalled the two vessels it normally leased to One Ocean Expeditions through a Cyprus-based vessel management company, Terragelida Ship Management. Since 2011, the two ice-class research vessels, Akademik Ioffe and Akademik Sergey Vavilov, had been leased on one-year renewable contracts.

Why the Russian research institute recalled the two research ships is unclear: they may have needed the ships, One Ocean Expeditions may not have been paying bills on time, or there may have been another reason altogether. While One Ocean Expeditions claims the two vessels had been leased through autumn 2019, the Nova Scotia-based Chronicle Herald claims the contracts were set to expire in summer. Therefore, they may have just not been renewed rather than broken.

Two ships down, the Canadian outfitter was unable to honor many of the expedition's passengers had already booked. This may have posed significant financial problems if, as alleged by the Chronicle Herald, One Ocean Expeditions was using payments for future cruises to cover current bills – including for things like the renovations to RCGS Resolute.

The company blamed its quandary on the Russians, attempted to restructure, and cancelled and rebooked (rather than refunded) passengers on future cruises, leaving many embittered. Meanwhile, crew members were going unpaid, as a Guardian investigation in 2019 revealed, and passengers were missing out on trips of a lifetime.

### **Arrested in Canada – twice**

On August 9, 2019 in Iqaluit, at the end of the "South Baffin Explorer; Art, Culture & Wildlife" cruise and right before the start of the "Baffin Island and Greenland Explorer" cruise, RCGS Resolute was arrested in Iqaluit, Nunavut, over allegations of \$100,000 in unpaid bills to a Nova Scotian contractor. In a scene straight out of a movie, the town's sheriffs and officers went out on a boat into the harbor while crew members sailed up to it in a Zodiac.

The bills were likely paid, as a few hours later the ship was on its way to Ilulissat, Greenland. Following a cruise off the world's largest island, the ship made a westbound and then return eastbound journey through the Northwest Passage. Yet RCGS Resolute's life as a cruise ship would not last more than a few more months.

On September 20, a services provider and eight former employees had the vessel arrested again, this time in Halifax, Nova Scotia, over two cases of claims of unpaid bills and wages. Four days later, the bills were paid and the ship began sailing south.

### **Antarctica or bust**

On October 16, at the start of the Antarctic cruise season, RCGS Resolute left on its final expedition - a 19-day trip from Ushuaia, Argentina to Antarctica that cost at least \$21,195 per person. Yet supposedly due to problems with obtaining fuel in various ports in Argentina, the cruise was ultimately aborted after a few sailings around the coast.

"One couple in their 80s had saved their whole life for this journey and saved \$50,000 to make this happen. And they were in tears," passenger Julie Pierce told The Guardian.

On October 27, the cruise's 140 guests were left stranded in Buenos Aires. Two days later, Prossin, One Ocean Expedition's managing director, sent this explanatory letter:



Dear Friends of One Ocean Expeditions,

As many of you are well aware, the past few months have been an extremely challenging period of time for our company. The sudden withdrawal of two of our three vessels earlier this year by their Russian ship owners caused a series of complex circumstances that our team is continuing to address.

The withdrawal of these ships was an unexpected and destabilizing event, and the violation of our contract remains the subject of ongoing legal action. While this process proceeds, we have worked hard to maintain operations and service at the standard of excellence for which we have been proud over many years. Unfortunately, the difficult reality is that in recent months we have fallen short of these high expectations we set for ourselves as a leader in the expedition cruise industry. As a result of the contract breach we suffered earlier this year, our company is now in a difficult period of restructuring.

One Ocean Expeditions wishes to thank our outstanding community of passengers and partners, along with the scientific research community, for their tremendous patience and support during this difficult time. We are proud of our legacy of offering world-class polar expedition experiences to passengers from around the world, while supporting critical research into the challenges faced by our oceans and sensitive polar eco-systems. We deeply regret the inconvenience caused to passengers and our long-standing partners and we remain focused on doing everything possible to move our company forward.

The last few days have been quite eventful but please be patient for a few days as we work to restructure our business.

We will be in touch as soon as possible regarding our future plans and operations.

Regards,

Andrew Prossin  
Managing Director

## Detained in Argentina

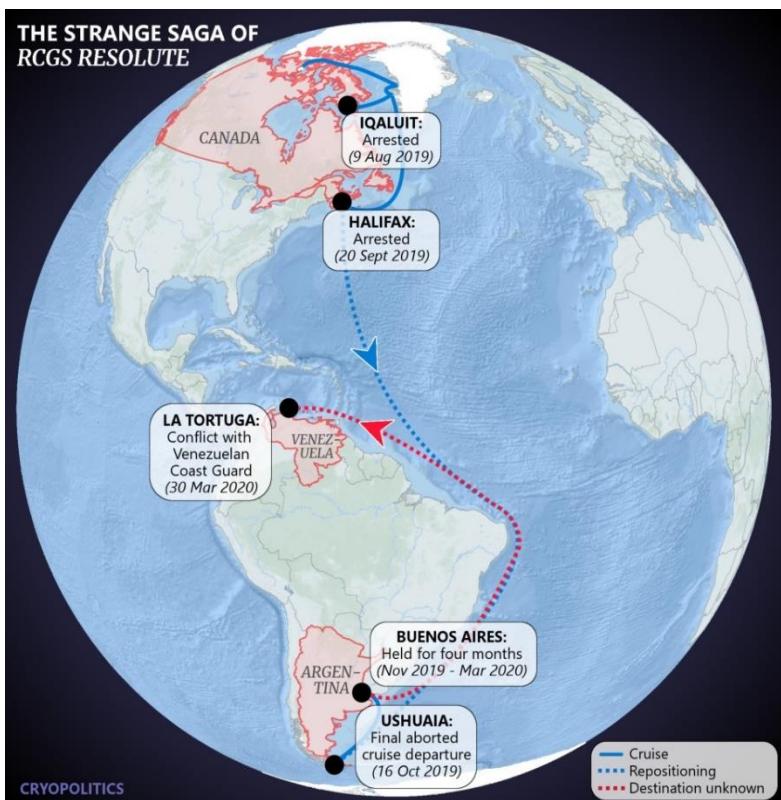
The next month in November, the Argentinian government ordered the ship to stay in Buenos Aires over unpaid bills once again. According to Argentinian newspaper Clarín, various companies and crew were demanding millions of dollars in unpaid fuel costs from One Ocean Expeditions.

Due to the lawsuit in Argentina, RCGS Resolute was unable to commence its planned "photography symposium" 15-day cruise on November 6 from Ushuaia to South Georgia and Antarctica, leaving would-be passengers high and dry once again. One man only found out about the cancellation once he had already boarded his flight to South America. Another individual – an attorney from California, naturally – launched a Facebook group that now has 1,000 members posting complaints and tips daily about how to seek reimbursement.

Ultimately, One Ocean Expeditions cancelled three expeditions in a row last autumn. The company has allegedly refused to refund bookings and instead has recommended that they seek compensation from their travel insurance providers.

## Bankrupt in Canada

In January 2020, One Ocean announced it would begin insolvency proceedings. In early March, four months after RCGS Resolute's Buenos Aires detention, its Bahama-registered, Portugal-flagged shipowner, Bunny's Adventure & Cruise Shipping Co. Ltd paid \$3.6 million to avoid the ship being sold at auction. According to the Chronicle Herald, "two European fuel suppliers, three South American ships agents, and 22 crew were paid as a result of the action." And so, on 5 March, debts cleared, the polar vessel began sailing north from Buenos Aires. Exactly what happened once it reached the waters around Venezuela depends on who you ask.



On March 29, RCGS Resolute supposedly began reporting that it was not under command while under international waters off La Tortuga, a pristine uninhabited Venezuelan island. This status means that the ship cannot manoeuvre, and all other vessels should stay clear.

Sometime after midnight on 30 March, the Venezuelan Coast Guard patrol ship Naiguatá spotted RCGS Resolute. While representatives of RCGS Resolute claim the ship was in international waters, Venezuela claims it was in territorial waters. Naiguatá radioed the vessel to find out what exactly a cruise ship – one that was also ice-strengthened, a fact probably not evident to the 42 members of the

Bolivarian navy – was doing off the waters of La Tortuga, where yachts are more likely to be spotted than Canadian cruise vessels (and probably very few vessels at all right now given the COVID-19 pandemic).

According to a press release from Columbia Cruise Services, the ship's Hamburg-based German technical manager, the Venezuelan vessel demanded to learn of the ship's intentions and then ordered it to follow to Puerto Moreno on Isla de Margarita. While the ship's master was reconfirming the request with the head office, crew members aboard the 100m Naiguatá began firing pistol shots at the 122m cruise ship and rammed its starboard side at an angle of 135°, trying to get her to turn toward Venezuelan territorial waters. A heavily edited clip released by the Venezuela Navy (or, more accurately, the Bolivarian Navy) captures the incident.

Video released by the Venezuelan Navy shows them shooting at the RCGS Resolute cruise ship then it shows the Resolute impacting the side of the GC-23 Naiguata and it shows severe damage to the Naiguata.

The crew of Naiguatá may not have realized that RCGS Resolute had an ice-strengthened bulbous bow. While the cruise ship withstood minimal damage from the scuffle, the Venezuelan vessel ended up sinking. All 44 of its crew were rescued, and the 32 crew aboard Resolute are fine, too. No passengers were aboard at the time.

According to Columbia Cruise Services, as the Venezuelan vessel took on water, the polar cruise ship remained in the vicinity for one hour until it was confirmed that its assistance would not be needed. At that point, RCGS Resolute sailed to Willemstad, Curaçao's capital, where it remains docked.



RCGS Resolute's track towards Willemstad, Curacao the morning of April 1, 2020, the day after its encounter with a Venezuelan coast guard vessel near the island of La Tortuga. Map source: MarineTraffic.com

The Venezuelans tell a different story. The official press release from the Bolivarian Navy published on March 31 accused Resolute of “terrorism” and actions that were “cowardly and criminal, since it did not attend to the rescue of the crew, in breach of the international regulations that regulate the rescue of life at sea.” The navy claims that as the patrol ship was sinking, the cruise ship suspiciously turned off its Automatic Identification System (AIS) and then abandoned the site.

A retired naval officer lamented the loss of Naiguatá, explaining rather colorfully:

*“It is not a simple ship, it is a ship 100 meters long, with capacity for 60 crew on board, commissioned in 2012. A ship at sea has no ideologies, nor do they suffer from the evil of Castro-communism. It is a world of dedication, passion for the sea, professional dedication.”*

Vice Admiral Jesus Briceno Garcia, former head of the Bolivarian Navy

### **Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro: I wanted to help**

Even Venezuela's president has commented on the questionable incident at sea. Maduro questioned whether it really was a “peaceful ship” and suggested, “At first I thought it was one of those tourist ships that nobody wants to receive and I gave the order that the ship be received and that they receive all the support.” There are some rumors in Venezuela that the ship may have been clandestinely transporting armed mercenaries to fight against the Bolivarian Republic.

The foreign minister of Portugal - RCGS Resolute's flag state - said the obvious: that there are “contradictory versions” of the incident, and that his country will “obviously collaborate either with Venezuela or with the Netherlands to fully clarify this incident.” Portugal, it should be noted, has an ongoing dispute with the Venezuelan government. In mid-February, the acting president of Venezuela who opposes Maduro, Juan Guiadó, boarded a TAP plane from Lisbon to Caracas after talks with European leaders. Maduro claims that his rival – who is recognized as Venezuela's legitimate president by the United States and approximately fifty other countries – boarded the plane using a false identity while carrying explosives hidden in a pocket flashlight.

The Venezuelan government then prohibited TAP from flying into and out of Venezuela for ninety days, which is a big financial blow to the Portuguese national airline. Ironically, in order to negotiate with the Venezuelan government over the incident, Portugal has now had to recognize Maduro as the country's legitimate president.

In a press conference, Maduro's second-in-command bemoaned his country's "stolen money" frozen in Portuguese banks and said of the country, "Perhaps they still believe we are subjects, that we are a colony and that, as an empire they can give orders."

So clearly, there is some bad blood between Venezuela and Portugal – enough that may have led Naiguatá to try to humiliate the Portuguese-flagged ship and potentially bring it to shore to be dealt with in what would have likely been a punitive manner by Venezuelan authorities.

RCGS Resolute has ended up in the Dutch constituent country of Curacao wrapped up not only in international financial debacles, but international geopolitical disputes, too. The beleaguered ship somehow may have become a pawn in a proxy fight between Venezuela and Portugal.

## My Wartime Memories

By Lt Cdr Roy Standen

I was five years old when the Second World War started and have many memories of those five years of war, from the marching of German soldiers being played on the radio, sleeping in the air raid shelters during the Blitz, through to the years when the US forces came and we hung over the school gate asking as they came by "Got any Gum Chum?" They often gave us some.

My most vivid memory is the night when, during an air raid, my father was wounded across the road from our front door. He was a fire watcher during an air raid, putting out a fire in front of a house and stepped back, accidentally kicking an unexploded bomb in the gutter. He was severely wounded and on fire. The Air Raid Wardens carried him into the house through our front door; he was still smouldering from the flames.

My Mother comforted him until the doctor and ambulance came and took him to the hospital at Woolwich. He was given a Loyal Service Award for his bravery that night.

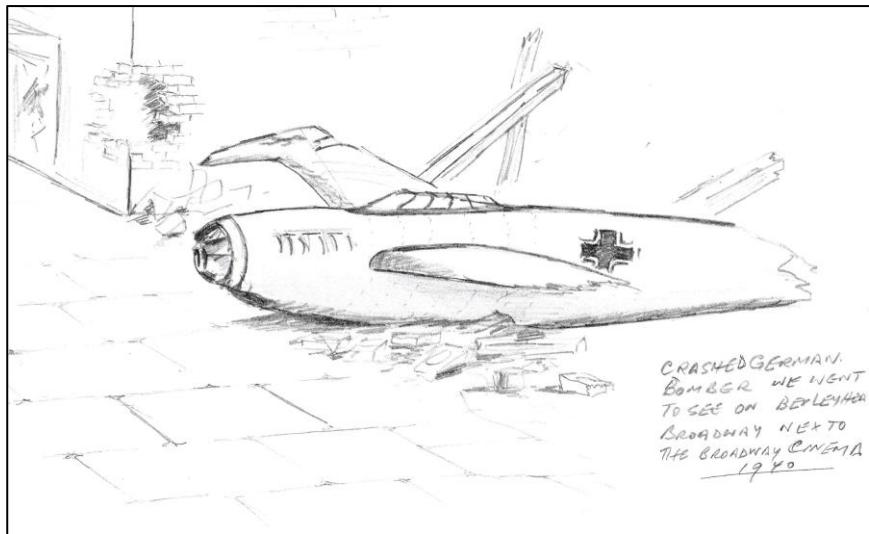
When the war ended there were, of course, very many celebrations. The local ARP Warden together with our neighbours organised a big bonfire in the field at the back of our house and I remember that he lit all of his red emergency flares as fireworks. There was a big street party for all of us kids in the main road and I remember an old man, Mr Newstead, doing his party trick standing on his head to attention with his arms by his side.

On VE night itself a lady, Mrs Brown, organised a trip to London and took us with our mothers on the train from Bexley station. On arrival at Charing Cross station we all made our way down the Mall to Buckingham Palace; there were thousands of people all doing the same thing. I remember the coloured lights, red and blue, lighting up the trees and bushes in the park whilst walking there. Once in front of the Palace, or as close as we could get,



Dad brought into N°12 after putting out a high explosive incendiary bomb across the road. Dr McWilliam came and he was taken to Woolwich hospital his leggins saved his life.  
Circa 1940/1

everyone started shouting "WE WANT THE KING". Eventually the Royal Family all came out on the Palace Balcony and waved to everyone shouting and cheering them.



*Note from the Editor: many thanks to Roy for the amazing sketches to illustrate his memoir.*

After it was all over, we made our way back to the station. There were so many people trying to get on the train and our carriage was so full that they lifted me and my friend Barry up onto the luggage rack, where we stayed until we got back home to Bexley.

## WWII veterans saluted from land, sea and air From MOD Navy

On 6 May, ahead of national celebrations marking the 75th anniversary of Victory in Europe Day, personnel from all three Services came together on the White Cliffs of Dover in Kent, to display their gratitude to the Second World War Generation.

A Lone Piper from the 1st Battalion Scots Guards (Pipe Major Andrew Reid) played whilst a Royal Air Force Battle of Britain Memorial Flight, formed of two Spitfire aircraft, performed a flypast overhead.

HMS Severn, a Royal Navy Offshore Patrol Vessel, was positioned off the coast of Dover during the flypast.

The Spitfire aircraft, piloted by currently serving RAF officers Squadron Leader Mark Discombe and Flight Lieutenant Andy Preece, were both operational during the Second World War.



Photographs © Crown Copyright MoD Navy 2020



# Old Forts and Sigint

## Stephen G Small. G4HJE. RNARS 592.

Hollywood has in recent years brought to the public attention the names of Bletchley Park, Enigma, Beaumanor and Alan Turing. They even managed to produce a good, but wholly fictional, yarn about the American Navy recovering vital Enigma materials from a U Boat.

But who has heard of Lt Lionel Beale. Royal Signals. MBE, Lt Cdr. Marshal Ellingworth DSM OBE RN Rtd, Gordon Welchman. Leslie Harrison Lambert and Fort Bridgewoods? Very few I suspect as their names have been shrouded in secrecy.

The vital work of Bletchley Park and the 'Y' Service was so secret that Winston Churchill demanded that his 'geese that laid the golden eggs and did not cackle' would never reveal the work that they had carried out.

It was not until the mid-1970s that books started to appear that alluded to the breaking of the German code system and the impact it had on the outcome of World War 2. It was perhaps surprising that the authors were not prosecuted under the terms of the Official Secrets Act, and one has to wonder why that should have been. More recent analysis suggests that The Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) took the pragmatic view that the release of the Ultra Secret, and historians' focus upon it, kept them away from a more important secret, that of the SIGINT organisation that had gathered the material that had underpinned the work at Bletchley Park. In truth, post-1945, the 'Y' organization had just shifted targets from the Nazi Beast to the Russian Bear and more latterly the Warsaw Pact.

Without SIGINT the breaking of Enigma would not have been possible. Very early on it was realised by the Code Breakers that their work was much like a very old recipe for rabbit stew: before making stew you had to catch your rabbits!

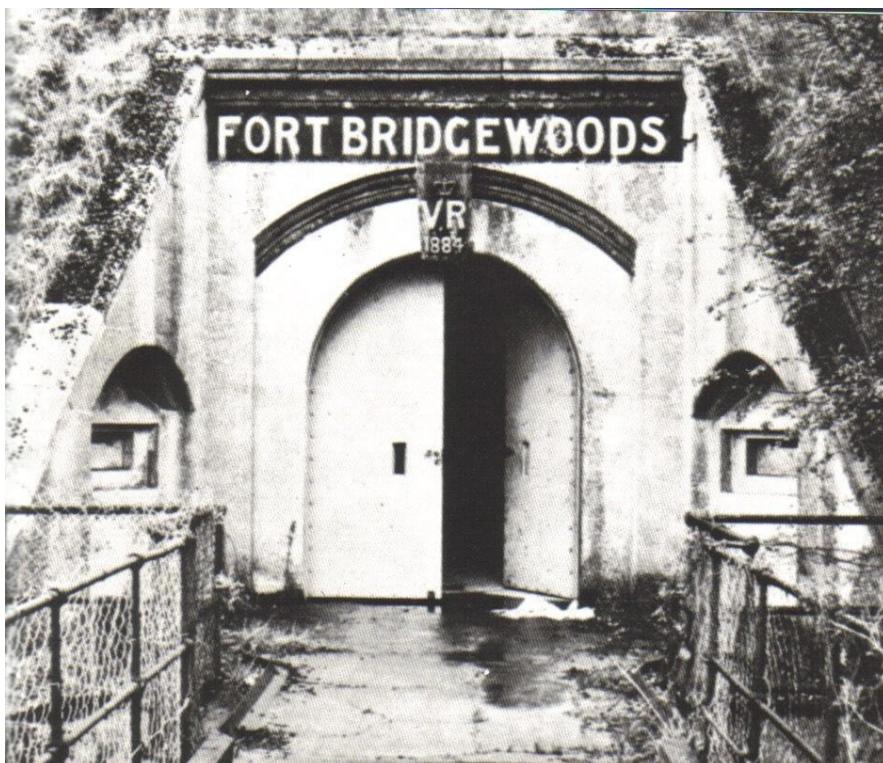
So, one asks, what has SIGINT to do with Old Forts, as alluded to in the title of this monograph? Well that all comes together at 0900 on 21<sup>st</sup> March 1926 when one reserve officer and five operators

(Experimental Wireless Assistants) opened the first military wireless interception station in a redundant Victorian Fort overlooking the River Medway, whose original intent was to protect the Dockyard at Chatham from landward assault.

Fort Bridgewoods was one of five forts built during the Victorian era to bolster the defence of the Dockyard and anchorage at Chatham. At the time of inception, we had only recently beaten the French at Trafalgar and Waterloo and the continental threat remained very real. Under the direction of Lord Palmerston a committee was set up to consider the defence of

strategic sites however, despite a promptly completed survey and recommendations, the report was shelved due to lack of political will and overstretched national finances post the Napoleonic War.

The original plan was revisited several years later as part of a review of the protection of London in view of ever-changing political circumstances across Europe. In the mid 1860s it was agreed that a number of forts would be built, including five protecting the landward approaches to Chatham Dockyard. Again, the Treasury held up the work due to cost. By the 1880s work had finally started but the Treasury insisted upon the use of convict labour to keep the costs to a minimum.



Chatham Dockyard was already being expanded to accommodate a fleet that was moving from wooden walls to those made from steel. To achieve this, a public works prison had been built at Chatham and housed predominantly Irish prisoners who supported the republican cause. The building of the forts was delayed whilst a further public works prison was built on high ground close to the village of Borstal just outside of Rochester.

The name Borstal may well be familiar as it was that given to a training system for young criminals. This was one of those early Edwardian social experiments to reduce the levels of youth crime in London and, having a redundant prison to hand, the Prison Commission gave over the old public works prison to the reformers and the name of the village was to become forever tied with the training of young offenders. It is perhaps interesting to digress here and note that, at the same time as this experiment was underway, another great social experiment to reduce youth crime in London was being conceived by a retired Army General, his name Baden Powell and his concept the Scout Movement.



By the time the forts had been completed the political landscape of Europe had changed dramatically. The French were now allies and the growing villains were Germany and Russia. The forts were, in fact, redundant before even being brought into commission and indeed none of the guns were ever mounted on site.

In 1907 The Corps of Royal Engineers carried out mining operations at Fort Bridgewoods and demonstrated how such fortifications could be undermined with explosives

laid at the end of tunnel shafts. Operations in Flanders several years on were to benefit from the lessons learnt from the exercises of the summer of 1907.

During the First World War the fort was used to house troops as they waited to embark for the Western Front. At the end of the war the forts moved into care and maintenance and slowly nature started to recover her place.

However, a new beginning for Fort Bridgewoods was born from developments in wireless technology during the First World War. Wireless had been embraced, although at times reluctantly, by both the Admiralty and Army. Certainly, the Admiralty had become well aware that fleet communications by flags at the height of battle, particularly when fogged by the belching smoke from warship funnels, was at times precarious. Wireless was of course the answer; however, many more traditional senior officers were yet to be convinced.

Advances in valve and receiver technology carried out by Maurice Wright and Captain Round of the Marconi Company at their laboratory at Chelmsford realised the reception of German Naval signals emanating from the fleet at their home port. This led to three radio amateurs, Hippersley (HLX – G2CW), Clarke (THX) and Lambert (G2ST), being commissioned into the RNVR and setting up an wireless interception station close to the Coast Guard Station at Hunstanton. It was soon realised that the Admiralty had a direct line into the communications of the German fleet. The development of aperiodic direction finding by Wright (father of Peter Wright who wrote the infamous Spy Catcher) permitted the location and potential movement of German naval ships to be plotted and, consequently, gave early notice of the German fleet being at sea prior to the Battle of Jutland.

The Army had also made advances in wireless interception and the breaking of the various simple field codes that were used between the front and rear headquarters. Direction-finding stations were also established to help pinpoint key radio installations.

All of this learning was drawn together with the forming of the Government Code and Cipher School (GC&CS) in the early 1920's under Commander Dennistorn. One of the key figures to appear on the establishment list of GC&CS was Leslie Harrison Lambert, late of Hunstanton, who was recorded as being the radio expert. Lambert was a shadowy figure who at one time had been a magician and indeed had been vice president of the Magic Circle.

His shadowy lifestyle also included his being better known in the 1930's as A.J. Alan who broadcast mystery stories for the BBC. Lambert was also a key member of the 'Y' Committee which brought him into regular contact with the fledgling wireless interception station at Fort Bridgewoods.



The Fort Bridgewoods station had humble beginnings, indeed the original receiver provided was of French design and of little use other than to pick up commercial broadcast stations. Fortunately, the commanding officer, Lt Beale, had after his leaving the Army at the end of the First World War joined the Marconi Company as an engineer and had developed and demonstrated the first duplex radio telephone equipment in 1924. Beale was the son of a very eminent doctor and indeed his grandfather and great grandfather had also been eminent doctors. Beale had been expected to follow the family tradition and go into medicine but instead he had developed an interest in the wonders of radio. In 1912 his father was granted an amateur radio licence for his son; being under the age of 21 Beale was not allowed to hold it in his own right. He had gone off to university just prior to the outbreak of war and had volunteered for a commission. His

knowledge of radio technique eventually saw his transfer to the Royal Engineers Wireless Section, the forerunner of the Royal Signals.

It is not clear how Beale came to gain command of Fort Bridgewoods, however his being a former Army officer and being employed by the Marconi Company may hold the answer. Reading the early chapters of Spy Catcher, one cannot help but realise that there was a very close association between the secret service and the Marconi Company. The common thread of Freemasonry is also alluded to. Beale was more than qualified in all respects.

The five operators; Sid Wort, Les Hadler, Jim Sparkes, Fred Hawkes and William 'Pop' Blundell, employed as EWAs at Fort Bridgewoods were all former Army men, most having served as intercept operators at Sarafand.

1926 was of course a time of great unrest in the United Kingdom and social order soon broke down with the onset of General Strike. The Fort Bridgewoods team was quickly recalled to barracks in London in order to provide essential government communications with other major cities.

Post the strike they returned to their duties and slowly developed new radio equipment and explored predominantly diplomatic traffic between the major powers in which the Foreign Office had particular interest.

Despite the value of the work that they were doing, the station was always the poor relation in the family and, as the reductions under the Geddes Act took hold, they were fighting for their very existence. What did not help was the fact that the Cryptographers at GC&CS were really disinterested in their product mainly because it arrived in various hands as written script. The products from the interception of cable traffic was far more to their taste as it came neatly typed.

Fort Bridgewoods under Beale's leadership made some very serious developments despite the financial hardships. They developed receivers that could cope with high speed Morse transmissions and a series of line filters that permitted three reception strands to be transmitted at the same time along one GPO line. Beale was in 1932 rewarded with an MBE.

Beale was not to see the ultimate fruit of his hard labour as he died suddenly on the morning of 3 September 1934 at the age of 39. The postmortem revealed that he had been a ticking time bomb as he had a congenital brain aneurysm. He had survived the rough and tumble of public school rugby, the horrors of life in the trenches to die in his own bed.

He was buried with full honours at Fort Pitt Military Cemetery Rochester with his operators acting as bearers. His wife kept a list of those who attended the funeral and at the very top is Leslie Harrison Lambert Esq. from the Foreign Office. Also present was Captain McGregor of the War Office, actually the Head of MI1B. Other mourners included prominent people from his two lodges and a wealth of family members.

The loss of their commanding officer took a great toll on the staff of Fort Bridgewoods and for a while they drifted in a world with an uncertain future. Christmas 1934 was bleak but the New Year saw an arrival that was to be the turning point in the fortunes of the intercept station.

Lt Cdr. Marshall John William Ellingworth DSM RN had retired from the Royal Navy in the December of 1934. He had joined the service at HMS Ganges on 18 May 1906 having completed his education at Oakham, a minor public school. Ellingworth had joined the recently formed communications branch and was to rise quickly to Chief Petty Officer by the outbreak of World War One. In 1915 he was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal for gallantry in action, something about which he was always reluctant to talk but of which he would always bear the scars.

Ellingworth was singled out for a commission and was one of the very first new breed signal communications officer specialists. From commissioning he was appointed to a trials team that was developing ASDIC equipment. Thereafter he had command of the High Powered Wireless Telegraphy Station at Horsea Island and subsequently the communications centre in Malta.

Ellingworth was a true professional communicator and brought with him the organised can-do attitude of the senior service. He was also noted for some of the other traits often associated with naval officers of the time and was often described as difficult to work for. That said, his leadership qualities were second to none and he ensured that the job was done in a structured and professional manner. His no nonsense approach also ensured that he got his way and that meant that his station was well prepared and equipped by the time that the second round of the conflict with Germany opened in the summer of 1939.

From 1935 it was clear to all but the government of the day that Germany was on a collision course with its European neighbours. Many, like Ellingworth, were aware that the surrender of Germany in 1918 had only signalled a half time break and that it would not be long before the second half would be played out.

Ellingworth took to organising the station for a war footing and carried out a whole series of exercises to train and test its operators to the highest levels of readiness. As well as the original group of EWAs, he was allowed to recruit, something that had been denied Beale. Ellingworth ensured that he selected highly capable operators; many being recently retired RN operators. They were very competent in the reception of Morse code under difficult conditions and well knew the difficulties attached to maintaining HF radio communications under the changing conditions during day and night watches.

The tasking of the station remained essentially a watch on diplomatic traffic being passed over high-speed commercial links across the world. The number of sets was increased to accommodate the growth of traffic. This increase in workload was as a result of careful observation of identification of new networks. The Russian's came under close observation as the Comintern took to setting up clandestine networks to serve those who were attempting to spy and undermine the western powers. Japan came under observation as their empire moved to expand their influence upon the world stage.



The structural make up of the fort was not wasted by Ellingworth and the underground casemates and tunnels were soon transformed into secure set rooms with some as deep as ninety feet underground. This preparation was to be appreciated by the operators as the south east of England came under heavy attack by the German Air Force during the Blitz.

Quality radio receivers for interception work remained a serious issue. One of the taskings post-1936 was to design a bespoke receiver for interception work. It came into service in the early part of the war as the DST 100 and was described by operators as being a pig to handle. Ellingworth would describe it as a good receiver in the hands of a competent operator. The commencement of Lend Lease overcame the shortage of quality receivers with the arrival of first the HRO and sometime later the true Rolls Royce – the AR88.



Anecdote has it that HRO stands for 'hell of a rush order' which indeed it was. National, who designed and built them, were told by the American

government to start producing them and keep doing so until told otherwise. They just kept on making them and for those who took up amateur radio post-war was that indeed a blessing!

The Italian expansion in North Africa and the engagement in the Spanish Civil War was to prove a remarkable training ground for Ellingworth and his operators. The Italians were certain that their low powered battlefield communications systems would not radiate over a long distance. How wrong could they have been! Throughout almost every 24-hour period the intercept operators were able to maintain constant watch on the major command networks and learnt an awful lot about the tactical use of radio in battle. Even when the Italians introduced new radio security measures, such as random frequency changing and daily call sign changes, they were still able to quickly re-establish interception watch and identify station locations. The identification of operators by their 'fist' and operating errors was a real trait of the expertise of the operators at the Fort and was to play a major part in the radio war with Germany.

As the Italian Army decamped from Spain aboard a conscripted ocean liner, the operators at Fort Bridgewoods were able to retain a full listening watch on their traffic until they finally docked in Naples.

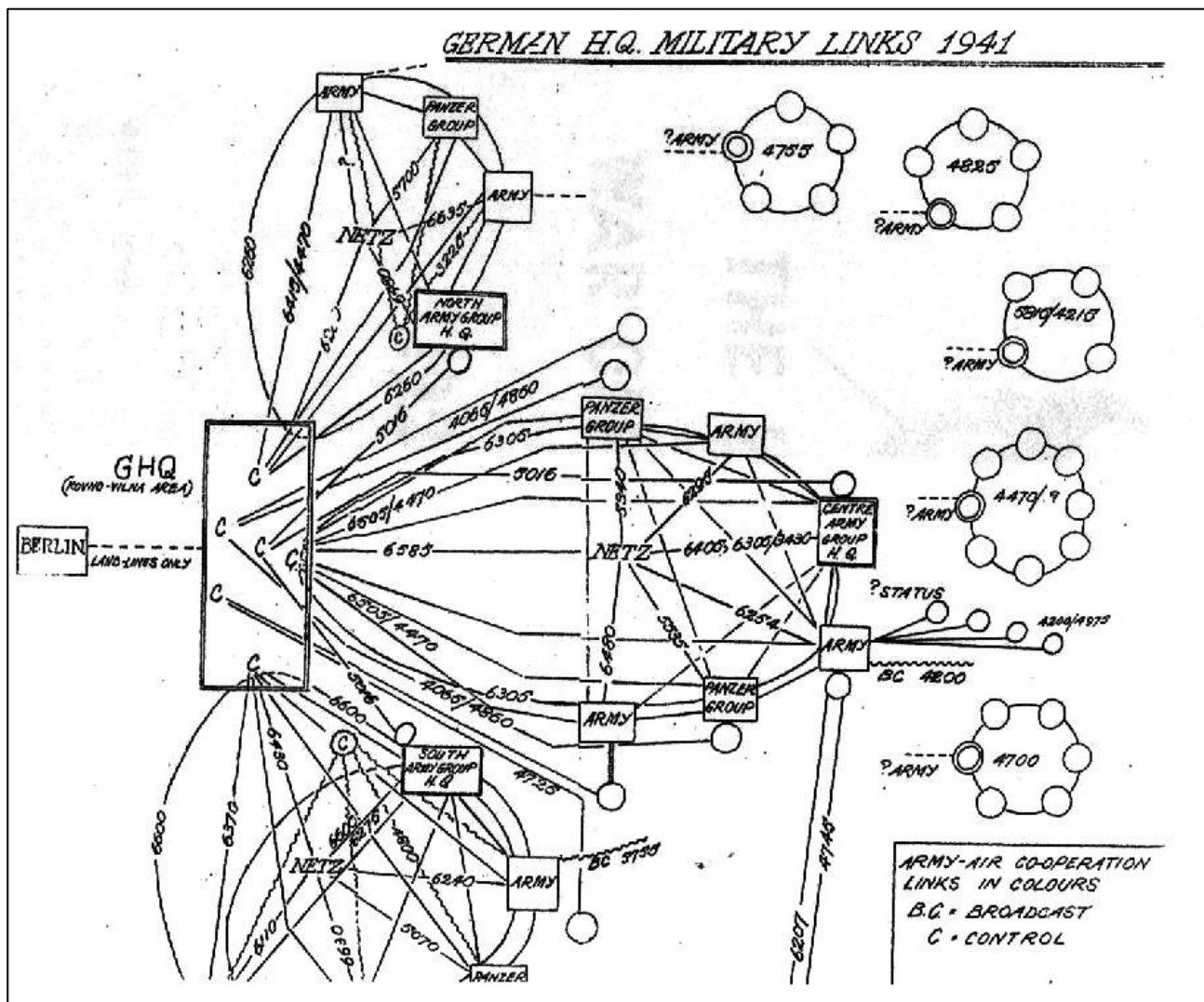
In 1938, despite there being no official tasking from GC&CS, the operators at Fort Bridgewoods had set watch on a number of radio networks that were German in origin. They were distinct in that they contained five-letter groups. Fort Bridgewoods was the first British intercept station to take five-letter Enigma traffic. Although they did not know it at the time, this would soon be their staple diet for the war period and would mark them out as vital to the breaking of Enigma.

In August 1939 Fort Bridgewoods was in all respects ready for war. The previous two years' activity intercepting Italian war traffic had allowed them to hone their skills and develop the embryonic systems that we know today as Signals Intelligence. The staff at the station had been expanded to over 100, a far cry from the original five, and this included members of the Intelligence Corps who would go on to identify whole command communications networks by the analysis of transmissions, call signs and frequencies used. One of the intelligence officers was Captain, later Major, H F Jolowicz, a professor of law from Oxford University.

The interception staff were soon into a number of what was known to be German traffic networks albeit that they were encrypted using the Enigma machine and thus no sense could be made of their content. As the German Army crossed into Belgium, France and Holland the levels of traffic were to rise exponentially and this level of observation was to prove vital to Gordon Welchman at Bletchley Park who was trying to find a way into the machine code. Welchman had demanded 500 intercepts a day so that he could observe the make up of the message headings. Bridgewoods had initially found this difficult as the Germans were still using secure telephone lines for traffic handling. Once on the move they had to rely on radio, the reality being that once committed to air, anyone with a decent receiver can intercept what is sent. The Germans firmly believed that Enigma was, like the name of the machine, impenetrable – how wrong this proved to be.

The secret that Churchill and GCHQ really did not want to come out was not that we had broken Enigma but how we had done it. In reality it was poor crypto security, operator error and the ability to use cribs that allowed Bletchley Park to break its way into Enigma.

The German cipher operators took short cuts and were lazy and accordingly basic errors in an otherwise unbreakable system allowed a way in. That still meant a lot of hard work for the cryptographers but it made it possible for brain power to exploit the back doors that were being provided by poor crypto security.



Ellingworth and Welchman formed a close friendship and came to understand each other's capabilities and needs. Welchman inducted Ellingworth into the work at Bletchley Park and Ellingworth taught Welchman about the wonders and difficulties of HF radio communications. The relationship was vital to the work at hand, indeed special traffic watches were soon to become known as Welchman specials and regular traffic lists were sent directly to him over a secure teleprinter circuit. All the message headers were transmitted ahead of the actual intercept being despatched by motorcycle courier.

The breaking of Enigma has become public knowledge in recent years but the vital part played by Fort Bridgewoods has remained shrouded in secrecy. In late 1940 it was planned to close Fort Bridgewoods, which forced a group of Code Breakers to write directly to Winston Churchill stating the vital importance of the work of the station and how critical it was to the breaking of the German code. This rested entirely upon the ability and skill of the operators who provided 100% intercept texts where other stations did not even come close. It was suggested that the breaking of Enigma hung by a thread and that Bridgewoods made the difference between it breaking or not!

The various Enigma Keys came to be known initially by colours, Red, Brown, and Green et al. As a new key was discovered from the intercepts provided by Fort Bridgewoods, Welchman would use a new coloured pencil to chart them. One of the first to be broken was Red and this initial success helped breaks into other keys.

Whilst Fort Bridgewoods was a military station it now transpired that the bulk of the traffic being intercepted originated from the German Air Force. Pragmatically, it was decided to allow the operators to continue taking this traffic as its primary tasking as it was so vital to the efforts being undertaken at Bletchley Park.

Those who have read *Most Secret War* by Professor R.V. Jones will appreciate the significance of his work countering the beam stations that were being used by the German Air Force to direct pathfinders onto target ahead of the main bomber streams. Good intelligence work and some early Enigma breaks had provided evidence of this German operation that could easily have brought Great Britain to its knees.

Fort Bridgewoods played a vital role in this intelligence work as, by careful observation, they had gained a front seat into the radio trials team who were developing the beam bombing system. As their work was secret, they had been allocated their own Enigma Key; however, they were foremost engineers rather than radio operators and this provided a real prize for the interceptors. During one particular interception watch, it became clear from operator chatter that they could not get the Enigma machines at both ends of the circuit to work. One operator clearly thought he was right so sent 'en clear' the full setting for the machine to the other operator. One can just imagine the glee of the intercept operator as he took this down verbatim and rushed to have it passed to Welchman by priority teleprint message. This was not the only occasion that this particular team managed to compromise the security of the Enigma code by their total incompetence.

Having a ringside seat was to permit Jones to daily predict the transmitter frequencies of the primary beam station, the reserve and the crossbeam station and, accordingly, they were successfully jammed.

Another important period for the station was during the evacuation of allied troops from the beaches at Dunkirk. The intercept operators had broken into a stream of voice traffic that used low level code, which was quickly broken at source. This was the communications between ground stations and the dive bombers that were attacking the troops and ships at the beach head. Ellingworth informed his chain of command and asked for the facility and permission to jam. A GPO line was made available directly to the high-powered MF/HF station at Rugby where a 10 kilowatt transmitter was put under the control of Fort Bridgewoods. However, being a multinational force operation, it was deemed necessary by the high command that the agreement should be sought of all powers before jamming could commence. After some days' delay, where the operators could do no more than swear at the set whilst the indiscriminate bombing of our troops continued, Ellingworth became so annoyed by the delay that he was minded to recall his naval history as taught at Britannia. Recalling Nelson's putting his telescope to his blind eye in order not to see the senior officer's signal to withdraw, he took the conscious decision to ignore the high command directive and commenced jamming operations. The direction to dive bomber crews from the ground station was completely obliterated by 10 Kilowatt of inverted speech as Ellingworth personally read from the Bible! This cat and mouse game continued for the remainder of the evacuation with great success. Frequency change after change was achieved with great speed, reflecting the skills of both Fort Bridgewoods operators and the technical staff at Rugby.

In late 1940 an incident was to happen that highlighted the vulnerability of this most vital military asset. It was bombed just as the shift change was taking place. It was not a direct bombing raid; in fact it was subsequently established it had been a random discharge from a retreating bomber crew. A number of personnel were killed as the oil bomb exploded alongside the bridge that crossed the dry moat. Several of the fatalities were ATS teleprinter operators who were burnt to death as they sat in the back of their transport. Sid Wort, second in command, had the sad duty of attending the hospital mortuary the following day to identify the bodies.

In March 1941 station personnel were transported to Chicksands whilst the new station at Beaumanor was being readied for use. Whilst at Chicksands one of the operators, Albert Stevens, a former CPO telegraphist, was to take a long intercept whilst on watch. Some days later he was called into Ellingworth's office and, expecting the worst, had prepared himself for a 'rollocking' of the type only Ellingworth could deliver. Instead he was asked to sit and offered a glass of finest Scotch. Ellingworth reminded him of the long intercept he had taken. It had been DF'd at the time and had provided the position of Bismarck. Subsequently the copy taken by Stevens had been the only one to be complete and broken by Bletchley Park. It was the long message to Group North from the Fleet Commander. Ellingworth congratulated Stevens on the part that he had played in sinking the Bismarck.

The Fort Bridgewoods operators moved to their new home at Beaumanor in early 1942 and remained civilian EWAs for the duration of the war. They were joined by some 76 schoolboys recruited by Ellingworth from Kent schools and trained at Fort Bridgewoods. Although designated now as a training establishment, Ellingworth kept one more secret: he still carried out interception

work from there allowing him a diversity of interception. What might be missed at Beaumanor would likely be caught at Bridgewoods and vice versa.

The Army could never cope with a Lieutenant Commander in charge of an Army facility so they made him a Lieutenant Colonel. He had the last laugh though; on VE Day, he had a 12 breadth White Ensign flown from the station's flagpole.

For those who have found this interesting and would like to know the full story you might like to consider my book: 'Fort Bridgewoods – From Victorian Fort to WW2 Y Station', which is available from the RSGB. My working title for this research project and subsequent book was Palmerston's Enigma, reflecting the origins of the fort with the secrets that it preserved. They told me that my title would not sell books!

ISBN: 9781 9101 9309 9

## **Collision: Master “fixated” on electronic chart From The Maritime Executive**

The UK Marine Accident Investigation Branch (MAIB) has released its accident investigation report into the Ro-Ro passenger ferry Red Falcon colliding with a moored yacht on 21 October 2018.

At 0811, when navigating in severely reduced visibility in Cowes Harbour, the master of the Red Falcon lost orientation when his vessel swung out of control, departed the navigable channel and was spun around through 220°. In his confusion the master drove the ferry in the wrong direction resulting in a collision with the moored yacht Greylag which was sunk on its mooring as a result. Visibility varied between 0.2 and 0.5 nautical miles but dropped to about 50 metres at the time of the collision.



Source: MAIB

The MAIB report states that the master became fixated upon the information displayed on his electronic chart and operating engine controls, ignored information displayed on other electronic equipment and became cognitively overloaded due to high stress. The bridge team became disengaged from the operation due to a lack of clear communications and emergency scenario training.

The MAIB Chief Inspector of Marine Accidents Andrew Moll said: "Our investigation highlighted how quickly restricted visibility can negatively affect individuals' awareness and orientation, which increases their stress and impacts on decision making. Crews on vessels of any size can be affected, but the consequences can be mitigated by prior preparation and training, effective teamwork and a full understanding of the capabilities and limitations of the available instrumentation."

Nobody was on board yacht Greylag when it was struck and overrun by Red Falcon. In this respect, the family on a yacht on a nearby swinging mooring had a lucky escape, said Moll. "When Red Falcon swung around it narrowly missed Cowes Yacht Haven marina wall, and had yachts been rafted there the consequences of this accident could also have been much more severe."

Red Funnel's operating procedures for navigation stated that: "All Masters and Officers must practice blind pilotage in clear weather as a Bridge team in order to establish confidence and familiarity with the Radar pictures of the district and the techniques required to manoeuvre the vessels without visual references. Such blind pilotage exercises must be carried out and recorded at intervals not exceeding one month."

Any blind pilotage training carried out was recorded within the company's computer-based training record system. The records showed that the crew of Red Falcon had last undertaken blind pilotage training departing Cowes on the day before the accident. The training records did not show who undertook the role of helmsman, and therefore who had practiced steering by compass or steering within Cowes Harbour. Further investigation of the records revealed that the helmsman on the day of the accident had not steered a Raptor class ferry into Cowes for over 10 months.

*Note from the contributor: The Red Falcon Collision is interesting and, should any member want to know more, I have the full Marine Accident Investigation Branch report into the collision and would be delighted to email it to them.*

*Derek Ireland*

## Meanwhile... more light-hearted contributions

By Jon Vanns

Here's another interesting collection of facts:

There is an old Hotel/Pub in Marble Arch, London that used to have some gallows adjacent to it. Prisoners were taken to the gallows (after a fair trial of course) to be hanged. The horse-drawn dray, carting the prisoner, was accompanied by an armed guard, who would stop the dray outside the pub and ask the prisoner if he would like "**one last drink**." If he said yes, it was referred to as "**one for the road**." If he declined, that prisoner was "**on the wagon**."

Here are some facts about the 1500s:

Most people got married in June, because they took their yearly bath in May and they still smelled pretty good by June. However, since they were starting to smell, brides carried a bouquet of flowers to hide the body odour. Hence the custom today of carrying a bouquet when getting married.

Baths consisted of a big tub filled with hot water. The man of the house had the privilege of the nice clean water, then all the sons and other men, then the women and finally the children. Last of all the babies. By then the water was so dirty you could actually lose someone in it. Hence the saying, "**Don't throw the baby out with the bath water!**"

Houses had thatched roofs, thick straw piled high, with no wood underneath. It was the only place for animals to get warm, so all the cats and other small animals (mice, bugs) lived in the roof. When it rained, it became slippery and sometimes the animals would slip and fall off the roof. Hence the saying "**It's raining cats and dogs.**"

There was nothing to stop things from falling into the house. This posed a real problem in the bedroom, where bugs and other droppings could mess up your nice clean bed. Hence, a bed with big posts and a sheet hung over the top afforded some protection. That's how canopy beds came into existence.

Sometimes they could obtain pork, which made them feel quite special. When visitors came over, they would hang up their bacon, to show off. It was a sign of wealth that a man could "**bring home the bacon.**" They would cut off a little to Share with guests and would all sit around talking and "**chew the fat.**"

Those with money had plates made of pewter. Food with high acid content caused some of the lead to leach onto the food, causing lead poisoning and death. This happened most often with tomatoes so, for the next 400 years or so, tomatoes were considered poisonous.

Bread was divided according to status. Workers got the burnt bottom of the loaf, the family got the middle, and guests got the top, or "**the upper crust.**"

Lead cups were used to drink ale or whisky. The combination would sometimes knock the imbibers out for a couple of days. Someone walking along the road would take them for dead and prepare them for burial. They were laid out on the kitchen table for a couple of days and the family would gather around and eat and drink, waiting and see if they would wake up. Hence the custom of "**holding a wake**".

## By Barbara Borland

The following clip shows the rescue of a humpback whale by divers.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rnpabwfduQQ>

*Note from the Editor: We should all look forward to an evening soon when we can share these videos with those only receiving this newsletter in print. Meanwhile, please keep sending articles and items to lift colleagues' spirits!*

## By Clifford Mickleburgh

### Ponderings

- If poison passes its expiration date, is it more poisonous or is it no longer poisonous?
- Which letter is silent in the word "Scent," the S or the C?
- Do twins ever realise that at least one of them is unplanned?
- Why is the letter W, in English, called double U? Shouldn't it be called double V?
- Maybe oxygen is slowly killing you and It just takes 75-100 years to fully work.
- Every time you clean something, you just make something else dirty.
- The word "swims" upside-down is still "swims."
- 100 years ago everyone owned a horse and only the rich had cars. Today everyone has cars and only the rich own horses.

### Some great confusions still unresolved:

- At a movie theatre, which arm rest is yours?
- If people evolve from monkeys, why are monkeys still around?
- Why is there a 'D' in fridge, but not in refrigerator?
- Who knew what time it was when the first clock was made?

### Vagaries of the English Language:

- Ever wonder why the word funeral starts with FUN?
- Why isn't a Fireman called a Waterman?
- How come Lipstick doesn't do what it says?
- If money doesn't grow on trees, how come Banks have Branches?
- If a Vegetarian eats vegetables, what does a Humanitarian eat?
- How do you get off a non-stop Flight?
- Why are goods sent by ship called CARGO and those sent by truck SHIPMENT?
- Why do we put cups in the dishwasher and the dishes in the cupboard?
- Why do doctors 'practice' medicine? Are they having practice at the cost of the patients?
- Why is it called 'Rush Hour' when traffic moves at its slowest then?
- How come Noses run and Feet smell?
- Why do they call it a TV 'set' when there is only one?
- What are you vacating when you go on a vacation?

Learning English can be confusing

## Going to Sea – Part 1

By Martin Watts

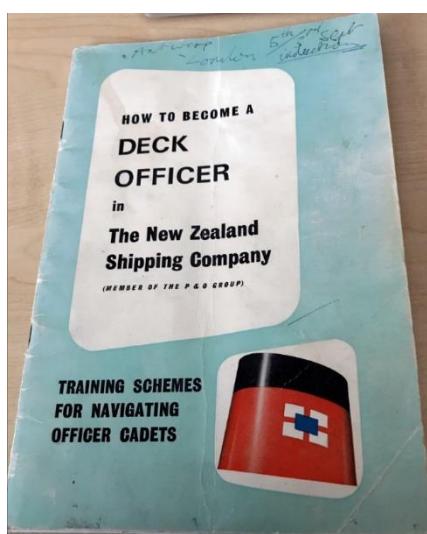
I was delighted to be made a full member of CNOA and, inspired by Brian Bissell's article in the May newsletter, I thought I would write about what I regard as the most formative experience of my life, which was a year onboard MV Otaio, the cadet training ship of the New Zealand Shipping Company.

Like many, I expect, I have used some of the time working at home to sort out files and records, and I was excited to discover my Cadet Journal, which will form the main body of this and another article, capturing life on board in the early 1970s. Before I reproduce the journal however, there is a little background which members may find interesting.

Being brought up by the Thames, I had wanted to go to sea since I was very young and the first opportunity to become acquainted with things nautical was at my grammar school, Westminster City, which had a Combined Cadet Force. I joined the Naval Section and enjoyed weekends of boat handling and sailing at HMS Vernon in Portsmouth, and summer camps at HMS Sea Eagle, Londonderry, and on board HMS Bulwark, HMS Hecate, HMS Truncheon (I believe the last of the 'T' class submarines) and HMS Dido.

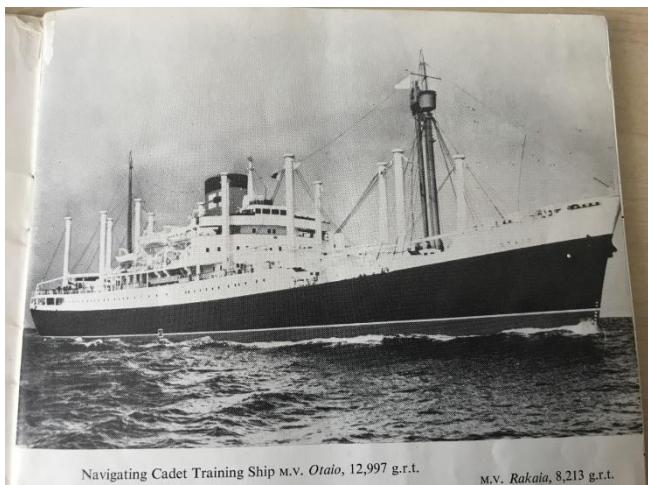
HMS Hecate, a hydrographic survey ship, gave me a lifelong interest in navigation and, as I progressed through school I was determined to apply to the Royal Navy or the Merchant Navy for training as a seaman and/or navigating officer. After much consideration, I realised

that I was more attracted to the freedom of a civilian career, albeit one in which a disciplined structure and professional code were established, especially in what was referred to as the 'bullshit' companies such as P & O.



The reason I applied to the New Zealand Shipping Company (part of the P & O Group) was that it had such a professional and traditional structure, including a purpose-built training ship, service on which earned remission of sea time for certificates of competency, thus reducing the cadetship to just over three years. Happy as I was to be selected after a long day of interviews and tests, joining NZS meant that I could not stay on at school for A levels, and I had to obtain governors' and parental permission to leave school after O levels. It is a decision I have never regretted.

Above is the cover of the booklet 'How to become a Deck Officer in The New Zealand Shipping Company', a publication which, after joining, was known as the 'Green Liar'.



To the left is Otaio at sea.

The picture below shows one of the classrooms on board, with the Instructional Chief Officer or 'Schoolie' presiding.



Below is the Cadets' mess where 42 of us could get through 150 freshly baked bread rolls at breakfast.

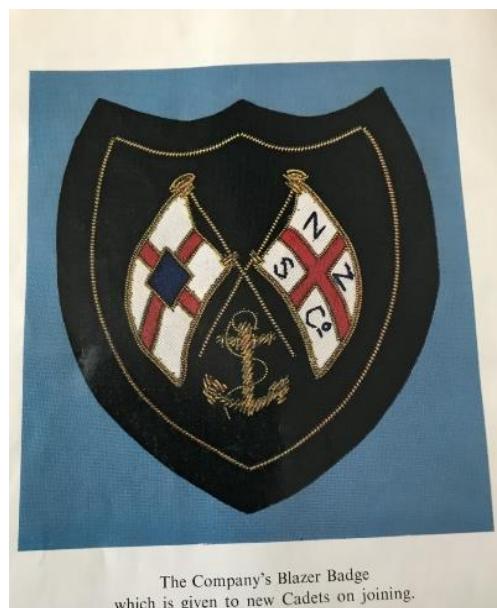


NZS Co, whose ships had Maori names, had absorbed Federal Steam Navigation Company Ltd, whose ships were named after English counties, in 1912 and, by the late 1960's, the ships of the combined fleet, whilst maintaining their individual house flags, sailed with a 'federal' funnel, which consisted of a St George's Cross with a Blue Square over the centre. The house flags were combined to create the famous 'Crossed Flags' emblem that was represented on the company

magazine, blazer, cap and sweater badges, as shown below.

There is an interesting naval story behind the federal house flag, which, like the funnel, had a red St. George's Cross with a blue square, and its origins lay in a confrontation with the Royal Navy. The following account is reproduced from the 'Green Liar':

*In 1824 the Sir Edward Paget, one of Money Wigram's (predecessor of the Federal company) clippers was anchored off Spithead flying the St George's Cross at the Main. That was, and still is, the flag flown by an Admiral and so a naval officer was sent by an H.M. frigate to investigate. There being no Admiral aboard, the Master was censured and ordered to haul down his flag, but thinking his Masthead looked bare he re-hoisted the flag after a blue pocket handkerchief had been sown on the middle of the cross. Today those markings are perpetuated not only on the House Flag but also on each side of the funnel of both Federal and NZS ships as shown on the front cover.*



The Company's Blazer Badge  
which is given to new Cadets on joining.

The Otaio was built at the John Brown yard on the Clyde and entered service in 1958. Designed as a cadet training ship she was also the fourth largest refrigerated cargo ship in existence, with a gross tonnage of about 13,000 tons, including half a million cubic feet of refrigerated space in 6 hatches each consisting of two tween decks and a lower hold. Powered by two Doxford marine diesel engines with an output of 12400 BHP driving two screws, she had a service speed of 16.5-17 knots (the latter downhill only). LOA was 526ft, beam 73ft and she had a loaded summer draft of 31ft 6 ins.

Employed primarily on the company's regular liner service to New Zealand and Australia, Otaio had accommodation for 40 deck cadets and 30 engineer cadets, together with classrooms, machine shops and a crew that included instructional staff and petty officers, with the ship being run by cadets under supervision. Engineer cadets left the ship in the late 1960s, following the introduction of shore-based cadet engineering instruction at nautical colleges.

By the time I joined there were around 40 deck cadets on board, divided into first and second trippers and led by a cadet captain and two watch captains, who were on their third voyage on board. The remainder of the ship's deck complement consisted of the Master (known as the Commander in NZS), three deck officers, an instructional chief officer and staff captain. The deck crowd consisted of a Bosun, Lamptrimmer, Carpenter, Seamanship Instructor, PT Instructor (ex-Royal Navy and a survivor of HMS York in WW2) with five ABs and two Deck Boys. The majority of the deck crew were from Stornoway and were all company men, (that is to say on permanent contracts and not from the 'pool'), many of whom had a long family association with NZS.

With a further 36 officers and crew of the Engineering, Radio and Stewards department Otaio had over 99 persons on board and was therefore required to carry a surgeon, in this case a retired and arthritic doctor whom, I remember, spent most of the voyage asleep. More of the characters on board in the next episode.

I would like to finish this initial instalment by reproducing the first page of my journal (unedited in all its 17 years old glory), dated 2nd November 1971.

*I first stepped aboard "Otaio" in the morning of Wednesday 6th October 1971. She was lying next to another NZSCo. Ship, the Hurunui, in No. 2 shed Royal Victoria Dock, London. I wasn't exactly impressed by her rusty and unseamanlike [already an expert!] appearance but that was soon changed when we secured for sea.*

*We loaded at No. 25 shed Royal Albert Dock a few weeks later after we had chipped and painted the tween decks in Number 4,5 and 6 hatches. Occasionally the monotony of chipping and scaling was relieved by such delights as bitumening the bilges and cement washing the fresh water tanks.*

*Being a Londoner, used to the sight of busy docks and Tugs and barges along the length of the Thames, I found it rather depressing to find that the Royal Docks were being slowly but surely run down. This means that there are now very fragile relations between the PLA and the Unions which represent the dockers. This leads to disputes which can only increase the chances of the docks being closed in London permanently, within the near future. I don't think this is a bad idea since the vast space isn't being utilised to the full and it is needed for more social reasons.*

*The "Otaio" is a ship which I personally find comfortable although it is a bit awkward at times having to live with as many as forty other cadets. However, there isn't a lot of friction between us and I feel that the crew are, on the whole, as equally a good bunch as the other cadets. We sailed on the 30th October, a Saturday, at 0800hrs. I remember feeling very excited about getting under way. A few days beforehand we had the managerial inspection and the voyage photograph was taken. (I am second from the left in the first seated row.)*



I must recall one funny incident during the managerial inspection, when we were paraded in front of the Commander, officers and the Managing Directors of P & O and NZS Co. The NZS MD passed along our lines and stopped to ask every first tripper why he wanted to go to sea. Like the majority, I nervously muttered something about always wanting to, but when he asked the same question of my mate Danny, he received a reply to the effect that Danny could not afford the price of a P & O Cruise and this was the next best bet. The MD and Commander (our Old Man was a Kiwi by the name of Hood, known by everyone as Robin) had the grace to laugh, but the glint in the Bosun's eye indicated that he had found his first 'volunteer' for the dirtiest jobs onboard. Danny was going to be very busy this trip. I should explain that punishment was meted out in the form of hours of unpaid overtime, all of which had to be completed before shore leave could be granted. This practice was outlawed later in the 1970s.

Even today, nearly fifty years on, I can still feel that sense of excitement, due to the prospect of going to sea and leaving the UK for the first time. We were bound for Auckland via Curacao (bunkers), a voyage that was to take 31 days.

## **VE Day Commemoration Mess Dinner and Dance - UPDATE From Lt Cdr Derek Ireland**

***Revised Date: Saturday 5 September 2020***

Place: Salomons Estate, Broomhill Road, Southborough, Kent TN3 0TG Tel: 01892 515152

Dress: Service Personnel Rig 2B with miniature medals or 1B, Civilians Dinner suit, or dark lounge suite with black bow tie. Ladies - Evening Dress

A **Formal** Naval mess dinner. Hotel rooms can be booked directly with the venue at a cost of £105 for a double including breakfast. Rooms will be released into the open market on 1st March 2020. Quote Mess Dinner when booking.

- Pre-Dinner Drinks **18.30**
- Dinner Call **18.50**
- The loyal toast to conform with the nation's timing at **19.00**

## Starters

- A** – Sweet potato soup, crispy leeks, garlic croutons
- B** – Hot smoked salmon, beetroot puree, horseradish, sippett

## Mains

- C** – Free range chicken breast, fondant potato, baby carrots, leeks, red wine jus
- D** – Orzotto Verde with smoked tomatoes and parmesan crisp (V)

## Desserts

- E** – Warm chocolate brownie with salted caramel ice cream
- F** – Salomons Estate Eton mess

Passing of the port and toasts, followed by tea and coffee in the conservatory. Then dance the evening away to 'Swing the Bluz'. Carriages at 23.30

Cost is £39 per head, (a pre-dinner drink and glass of port included) wine not included and can be pre-ordered or purchased on the night. The event can only host approximately 80 people, so attendance is on a first come first served basis. Please return slip with printed name, choice of food by indicating the letter of menu choice. Contact me if you have a dietary request.

Closing Date for applications is 1 August 2020 unless places have been filled prior to that date.

Payment by cheque or BACS – BACS mark with surname and number of guests to:  
*Sort code 11-11-08 account 00510406. Cheques payable to Mr J Vanns. Payment with menu choice please. (No payment, no place.)*

If you'd like email confirmation of receipt of menu choices and payment, please enclose an email address.

Reply to *Lieutenant Commander (SCC) J Vanns MCGI FinstLM. Royal Naval Reserve*  
No. 8 Fairfield Ave, Tunbridge Wells, Kent, TN2 3SD or [Jonvanns@aol.com](mailto:Jonvanns@aol.com)

Name	Postnominals	Starter	Main course	Dessert

## A note from the CNOA Hon. Secretary

If you enjoy the CNOA activities, why not extend an invitation to a like-minded serving or retired officer? or ask them to look at [cnoa.org.uk](http://cnoa.org.uk)



## CHATHAM NAVAL OFFICERS' ASSOCIATION

*President: Commodore Barry Bryant CVO*

*Chairman: Lt Cdr Jon Vanns (SCC) RNR*

### APPLICATION FOR FULL MEMBERSHIP

SURNAME		FORENAMES	DATE
HOME ADDRESS		BUSINESS ADDRESS	
Tel. No:		Tel. No:	
E Mail Address:		E Mail Address:	
RANK	TYPE OF COMMISSION	SPECIALISATION / AWARDS & QUALIFICATIONS	

#### BRIEF CAREER DETAILS

**General Data Protection Regulation:** I agree that all the above details may be maintained and kept by the CNOA and RSME for the purposes of membership records and security. I agree / do not agree (delete as applicable) to my details being published in a membership booklet.

**SIGNED.....**

PRESENT OCCUPATION

PROPOSER'S NAME	PROPOSER'S SIGNATURE	HOW LONG KNOWN
SECONDER'S NAME	SECONDER'S SIGNATURE	HOW LONG KNOWN