

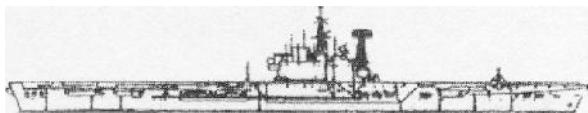


# CHRISTMAS 2016



R08

**JOURNAL OF HMS BULWARK ALBION & CENTAUR  
ASSOCIATION**



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Views and opinions expressed in the R08 are those of the contributors and unless stated are not necessarily those of the Association.

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## **EDITORIAL**

Once again another year has gone by and here we are at the Christmas issue. I must thank everyone that has sent in material over the past 12 months, if I have not used it yet I can assure you that I will be in forthcoming issues. Happily I have been sent some Centaur 1<sup>st</sup> commission material and photos which I will be using, I mention this in particular as some members have questioned the lack of early Centaur material. Our Malta visit went off very well indeed as you will see from the write up and photos on the following pages. For the cover picture I have used the only one of the late Ron Day's Christmas card designs which I have not used in past issues.

## **CHAIRMANS CHAT**

The Chairman sends his apologies for not being in a position to include his piece in this issue. Pauline his unpaid secretary is having a lot of medical problems concerning hip operations. They are spending most of their time at the Hospital. (Three operations to date).

On behalf of us all I hope it all works out well for you before too long Pauline.

As some of you know Bernie has been undergoing eye surgery in recent months. He tells me that is proving successful.

Congratulations to Keith Ridley(1370) on taking over as National Chairman of the RNA. Well done Keith may you have fair winds and a smooth sea in your new role.

Following the success of the Malta visit a similar visit to Gibraltar in 2018 was mooted. This will be brought up at the AGM next May. In the meantime for anyone who might be interested it is not too early to let us know that you are considering it.

We are looking forward to seeing you in Southsea in May at the Reunion weekend.

Bernie and the whole Committee wish you all

**A MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A  
VERY HAPPY NEW YEAR**

++++++ +

## IN MEMORIUM

John Edward Harrison(Harry) (2630) L/Seaman RP2 Bulwark1961- 63  
CTB 27 August 1916

R I P

+++ +

**John Bagley  
1936-2016**

John joined the Royal Navy at HMS Ganges in February 1952. He served in HM Ships Adamant, Centaur, Implacable, Leeds Castle, Newcastle and Newfoundland. Shore bases included Bellerophon, Excellent and Victory.

Whilst onboard Centaur he struck up a friendship with a certain Ron Day and their wives also became firm friends (The two Paulines). Ron was involved in an accident on the Oxygen plant aboard Centaur which caused severe burns to face and hands and John helped tend these wounds and support Ron through his recovery. They remained firm friends ever since.

John and Pauline were wed in 1958 and lived in a married quarter in Waverley Grove Southsea. John left the Navy in 1961 and moved to up to Rotherham.

Johns civilian life was varied, he went from Policeman to Steel worker to the Post Office as a Postie, then the Bank as a clerk. John retired in 1988 at the age of 52 for health reasons.

Within the Association John was a stalwart member of “The Yorkshire Mafia” attending social gatherings and events with great enthusiasm. He became involved with the local sea cadet unit in Rotherham, attending parades on our behalf and promoted interest and sponsorship for the cadets. John and Pauline were twice invited to attend garden parties at Buckingham Palace as members of “The Not forgotten Association”.



John you will not be forgotten rest in peace shipmate, Yer a good –un.  
Harry Roddis(1482)

### The Yorkshire Mafia at John Bagleys Wake.



l-r Denis Askham, Brian Taylor, Gloria Williams Sandra Pearson, Bungy Williams, Pincher Martin, Tiny Ashton, Neil Pearson, Harry Roddis and Jim Ure.

## **NEW MEMBERS**

- 2635 Bill Felters Bulwark 1975-76 68-69 845 Squadron LA – PO Phot
- 2636 Bob Clegg 4 Middlesex Street Barnsley S. Yorkshore S70 4JR Assoc  
Son of Geoff Clegg (1856)
- 2637 John(Scouse) Redmond 49 Christopher's Close Cromer NR27 0GA  
Bulwark 1978 – 1980 LMA/POMA

Rejoined ; Welcome Back

2197 Paddy Courtney 2 Hillwood Avenue Whitchurch Shropshire SY13 1SP  
Bulwark 1975-77 MEM1

## **SEC'S SCRIBBLES**

**SEC'S**  **SCRIBBLES**

Xmas greetings from yours truly. Another year has almost flown by. Thanks to all who've been in touch.

Our good friend John Bagley CTB recently. Yorkshire Mafia members gave him a good send off. See his obituary.

Mike Allport who only became our Historian at the Bosworth AGM also CTB. Some members joined HMS Bulwark on various trips throughout the year. If your name is on my list you're not forgotten although HMS Albion may be at the helm in 2017. Watch this space.

Mike Noonan tells me bookings are going well for Southsea 20 Looking ahead to 2018, I think members should be thinking about our AGM weekend being in the Plymouth area as HMS Bulwark will be laid up there & it may be possible to have at least the AGM on board. That's my aim anyway.

Apologies to all who usually get Remembrance Day tickets from me. The British Legion failed to inform me of the changes.

Cheers for now.

## TREASURER'S REPORT.

Thanks to those members who responded with outstanding subscriptions – either the full amount due or £2 balance resulting from my last report or letters sent. There are 28 who have yet to change their bank direct payments/standing orders to the full amount and I am hoping that this will be done for next year. The Association has no control over individual bank arrangements. It will clearly be of benefit if everyone is paying the full subscription and also be of assistance to my successor in 2018.

2016 is ending with further membership deletions as expected, being through the passage of time, some through resignations and others who have failed to notify intentions. Of course many membership groups are so affected year on year.

The financial report ending 31<sup>st</sup> December will be included in the Spring RO8.

Subscriptions for 2017 will be due from 1<sup>st</sup> January and early payments by cheque payers will be appreciated. In the meantime may I extend the compliments of the Season and best wishes for a healthy and prosperous New Year.

## BAC Christmas Cards

There are just a few packs remaining of our own Association cards designed by the late Ron Day.

If you would like a pack please contact Harry Roddis tel; 01709 816667 or by email ; roddisharryhfr@talktalk.net

**REUNION WEEKEND 5-8 MAY 2017**  
**Best Western Royal Beach Hotel Southsea**



For those who do not know the Hotel, it is situated on the Seafront opposite South Parade Pier. There are 120 bedrooms of which the Hotel has generously allocated a large number of sea view rooms to us with no supplement, the sooner you book the more chance of one of their best rooms. Car parking is free of charge with 60 parking spaces at the rear another 12 at the front, free on the road parking available in adjacent roads(much quieter area these days). Alternatively, there is a Local Authority car park at Canoe Lake (5 minutes walk). There are bus stops outside the Hotel with services covering the whole Portsmouth area. I have negotiated a discount on drinks prices throughout the weekend(except during the daily happy hour).

As usual we will be summoned to the Gala Dinner by Buglers of the RM Band sounding Rum Call. A tot of Rum or a glass of sherry will be issued by our Rum Bosun Jim Ure. The Corps of Drums will then perform Mess Beatings followed by the Dinner.

In 2015 we visited Portsmouth RNA Club on the Sunday afternoon which proved very popular. This time we can return there if you want to. So far no one has expressed a wish to have something arranged for the Sunday afternoon therefore I have not made any arrangements, please let me know if you would like to visit the RNA Club or just have a quiet day.

A point to bear in mind is the RNA club can be reached by bus from outside the Hotel or a short taxi ride so there will be no need to lay on a coach.

*If you would like a booking form please contact Mike Noonan address details on page 2.*

Book direct with the Hotel but send your menu choices to me please.

**When booking please mention BAC2017**

## **GALA DINNER MENU**

Leek and Potato Soup

or

Mille feullie of melon kiwi & strawberry(V)

*Finished with a cassis coulis*

\*\*\*\*\*

Herb Crusted Striploin of Beef

*Finished with a Madeira Sauce*

or

Breast of Chicken wrapped in Parma Ham with a Madeira Gravy

or

Salmon with White wine and chive sauce served with new potatoes

\*\*\*\*\*

Hot Apple & Blackberry crumble tart(V)

*Finished with custard*

or

Baileys crème brulee(V)

*Served with mini shortbread*

or

Profiteroles

or

Ice Cream

or

Cheese & Biscuits

\*\*\*\*\*

Cheese Platters per table - *Selection of farmhouse cheeses with celery, grapes & biscuits*

\*\*\*\*\*

Coffee or Tea with petit fours

**When booking please mention BAC2017**

## CONA NEWS & INFORMATION

### **Update of RNA & CONA Deployment to Ireland on the Marco Polo Mini Cruise 29 Sep -02 October 2017**



An update on the Naval Associations Irish Sea Deployment on “HMS” Marco Polo ‘Mini- Cruise’. The ship is under sailing orders from Liverpool at 1900 on Friday 29th September 2017, full details are available below.

The cruise is currently exclusively booked for RNA and CONA shipmates which can only continue for a limited period Anyone who would like to attend are required to place a deposit of £100. However, to encourage more to book early and ensure the exclusivity we have successfully negotiated with CONA Holiday Service to reduce the deposit so it can be paid in two sums of £50, one now and the other by 31st January 2017.

The full programme of events for the cruise is still being constructed however confirmed on the entertainment front is *Shep Woolley and the Shanty Men*.

#### **FOR BOOKING FORMS PLEASE CONTACT:**

**By Phone:** CONA Holiday Service on 0844 264 2122 **By Email:** [conatravelservices@justforgroups.co.uk](mailto:conatravelservices@justforgroups.co.uk)

**By Post:** The CONA Holiday Service, c/o Just For Groups!,  
The Old Bakery, Queens Road, Norwich, NR1 3PL

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[www.defencediscountservice.co.uk](http://www.defencediscountservice.co.uk)**

## BULWARK L15



At the time of writing Bulwark with 42 Commando RM embarked and her task group are operating in the Persian Gulf following exercises with Albanian forces in the Aegean. The picture shows Bulwark leading Ocean and RFA Mounts Bay.

A service of Remembrance was held whilst the ship was in Alexandria Egypt prior to transiting the Suez Canal 60 years after 'our Bulwark' was involved in the Suez Operation in 1956 as many of you will remember.

If the deployment follows the same pattern as in previous years the ship should be back in Devonport by Christmas.

### YOUR LETTERS

We had an excellent day onboard Bulwark whilst she was in Sunderland as the backdrop for the Sunderland Air show. I must add the hospitality for the day was superb.

Regards Mick Gilhespy(1038)



l-r Grant Dobson Allan Walker, Brian(Tug)  
Wilson, Captain James Parkin, Mick Gilhespy, Paul Wilson and WO1 John  
Dewhirst RM our liaison officer.



“To my shipmate Norman ‘Nobby’ Bugg  
Hope you have a very happy 80th birthday will look forward to seeing you in  
Southsea next year to buy you a celebration wet.

Best wishes from your Shipmate John & Family.  
John Finley (2153)”

*And so say all of us.....mn*

#### S&S 26 MESS HMS Centaur



This picture was taken on Christmas Day 1954 whilst we were in Grand Harbour Malta. Anyone in this photo please contact me, it would be nice to meet up again. My thanks in anticipation of a favourable reply. I was quite popular as in collaboration with the Regulating Officer I worked out how many tots of Nelsons blood each mess got !! ”

Brian F.G. Mulcock (2211)

"I first joined HMS Bulwark in 1964 and George Silverio was my Leading Hand (LEM ) and I was an EM2. We both worked Engine Rooms & Boiler Rooms on the Rusty B during a Foreign Commission (18 months then) in the Far East.

It was my first ship after training at HMS Raleigh and a totally different world then, but with Georges leadership and help I was able to come to terms being away from my family and adapted to the difficult conditions at that time. I lost touch with him then and many other shipmates when the ship decommissioned in 1995 and I often wondered what became of them.

It was only on receiving your email that the memories came flooding back and the nostalgia of those times and how he loved his work and equally helped me. Since I left the Navy in 1972 I have had a very successful career and am still working in my business in Manchester.

Ray Murray(2622)"

*A damaged photo of the ships water polo team was included, sadly it was not sharp enough for the scanner.....ed.*

"I have just read the welcome Summer 2016 RO8 on the web and I am sorry to hear of the sad news of Cdr. John Rawlins.

We served together on 892 Squadron and I was a S/Lt (L) Electrical Officer at the time.

I attach a photo I took of a group of some of the 892 officers relaxing on Kalafrana Beach near Luqa where we stopped off on the way to the Suez War.



On the photo L. to R. are pilots (except me): Lt.Wilson, Lt.John Rawlings, Lt.Baines, Lt.Cdr.Petrie(CO), S/Lt.Wraith, Lt.Davis, Lt.Schofield,Lt.Matson.

This may be of interest to anyone who knew these people.

Regards

Peter Wraith"

"When I joined Bulwark at the end of '68 one of my first jobs was to streamline the "Prepare for Sea" routine. I was assisted by a CPO from the Work Study Unit.

One of our meetings was with the Communicator, and we duly arrived at the appointed time. Just as we started he received a phone call and he said he had to leave for a few minutes and went out of the office. There was a Top Secret signal on his desk and the chief asked me if I was allowed to read it. When I said I wasn't he said he wasn't either - and popped it in the shredder!

Never heard any more about it.

When we reached Singapore in 1970 there were problems with the air conditioning - or lack of it - and I was asked to investigate. Apart from people opening scuttles to get some air there was also a problem with maintenance - or lack of it. Most of the ACUs were mounted near the deckhead, ie about 8ft up, and the mechanics couldn't reach them - so they were just signing them off and going to the next job. The answer was a quick trip into Singapore to buy a light-weight folding ladder.

There were also some ACU's blocked by equipment which had been fitted later - in one case a 6ft steel rack of equipment welded in place right against it! Still signed off

By the way, we got the Prepare for Sea checks down from 2 days to about 6 hours."

Richard Palmer (2592)



A Full House on Bulwark berthing in Singers.

## MALTA 2016

### MALTA REVISITED

(by Neil Montgomery ex CSPT1)

On 3/4th October 14 intrepid adventurers set out from the UK for a Bulwark reunion in the autumn warmth of Malta. There was to be no organised schedule of events so the five couples and four individuals were free to set their own agenda's.

Luckily I met up with Mike (the knowledge) Noonan, Jim (time to stop for a beer) Ure and Peter (don't tell 'em your name) Pike our very own RM Bandy.

Culture was our driving force (honestly) coupled with refreshments to keep ourselves hydrated.

#### Our diary

**Wednesday** - Sliema ferry across to Valetta. Amazing how the inlets are now yachting marinas and how vast tourism has become on the island. Fortunately we had our own tour guide in Mike - his knowledge of the island and its history were phenomenal.

We spent the day in Valetta remembering the old days and spinning numerous dits. After my last trip 40 years ago the Naafi was now a bank, there was a new Barraka Lift and 'The Gut' is now known by its original name of Strait Street and home to accountants and lawyers.

**Thursday** - a contact of Mike's and fellow Association member, Gerald Goodwin(1768), who is resident on the island was good enough to collect the four of us in his car and take us on a tour of the three cities, the Commonwealth War Grave Cemetery at Kalkara where there was a prominent memorial to HMS Bulwark, Hal Far and Pretty Bay. A terrific day, thank you Gerald.

**Friday** - overnight Mike had been contacted by a former Bulwark member who was holidaying on the island and to my surprise he was an old run ashore oppo of mine from the 74 - 76 commission. Thus it was, that the intrepid foursome made their way to Golden Bay and a DTS with Bill Felters, ex navy photographer. The Pinot Grigio flowed and memories came flooding back. It turned out Bill was a Ganges boy as well so was eligible to subscribe to another organisation whose membership secretary happened to be on the trip with us!!

The evening was set aside for the whole 14 people on the trip to meet with Gerald and his wife Carmela and have a meal in Valetta next to Oliver Reed's pub. The chef truly excelled himself and met everyone's taste with magnificent fare.

We believe Lewis Hamilton was drafted in to drive the mini-bus back to the hotel, but we cannot be sure!

**Saturday** - the reality of Friday night's activities came back to haunt the group so it was decided to have a quiet day. A harbour tour was the order of the day on a lovely calm sea. I was the only one that made the gym that day.....same as every day, come to that!!

**Sunday** - time was rapidly moving on to the end of our visit so we tried out the hop on/hop off northern bus tour stopping off at Mdina and Bugibba. This was time to buy a few rabbits and check out the motor racing competition that was going on outside the city on the streets below.

**Monday** - sadly this was the last full day for some of us. However, it was filled with action. It started with a trip to 'The Gut' where we worked with a local historian and a film crew to put on tape some memories of our visits from years gone by. There is always a limit to what can be put on tape for prosperity, but the unspoken word had everyone in fits of laughter. We all had about 15 minutes of fame, then it was off for lunch and Barraka Lift for Mike and Pete to talk to a local TV crew for a programme that was aired on 15th October on Maltese TV.

The lift had been replaced since our last visits in the 60's so it was a pleasure to ride it again knowing it wouldn't rattle around and terrify all sober users.

Once again we all managed to meet in the evening with additional friends and have a farewell dinner and drinks before we all went our separate ways on Tuesday.

**Tuesday** - all over. A brilliant return to Malta and certainly much more cultural than those heady days as a sailor in uniform. My thanks, in particular, go to Mike for giving of his huge historical knowledge to us all, to Jim for ensuring we took lots of 'hydration' breaks, to Peter for regaling us with hilarious stories from his past and finally, to everyone who was on the trip who joined in every 'happy hour' and made it a trip to remember.

Thank you all.

Neil Montgomery (478)



Centaur entering Grand Harbour Malta 1960. This picture is on display in the Malta Aviation Museum Taq‘Ali. Well worth a visit if in Malta.



The new Baracca lift



Dghaisas off Customs House Quay(old Fleet Landing)

### Capucine Naval Cemetery Kalkara



Robert George Joseph  
AA4 HMS Centaur 28/4/1955



1906 Bulwark Memorial



l-r Neil Montgomery John Mallia (TV interviewer) Peter Pike (TVCameraman)  
George Cini Jim Ure Mike Noonan in Strait Street aka The Gut



Interior of 'The Pub' where Oliver Reed  
CTB It is now generally known as

### Ollies Pub

I include this to show there is still one  
Matelots pub left in Valletta.



Carmen Goodwin Pam Till  
Annette Bushnell



Geoff Clegg Peter Pike Ken Bushnell  
Neil Montgomery Mike Noonan



Neil Pearson compliments the Chef following a very good dinner. Also in the picture ;  
l-r Carmen Goodwin Pat Clements  
Sandra Pearson Mike Noonan Jim Ure  
Gerald Goodwin, Barry Till, Neil Montgomery  
joking with Geoff Clegg

### Farewell Dinner in the Hotel

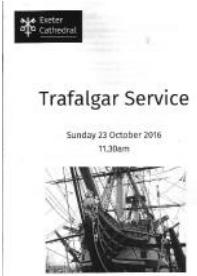


John Bishop & Pat Clements Paddy & Lucy Courtney Geoff Clegg hiding behind his son Bob



Bill & Sarah Felters with Jim<sub>19</sub> Ure Peter Pike & Neil Montgomery

## Trafalgar Service



In recent years I have attended the annual Trafalgar Service at Exeter Cathedral on the Sunday nearest 21st October. There is a RN/RM flavour with RM Bandsman and 7 Bells rung at 1130hrs on the HMS Exeter Bell and Readings by Serving Personnel.

In the Sermon by The Venerable Ian Wheatley RN Chaplain of the Fleet he mentioned that the Ships Company onboard the new Aircraft Carrier HMS QUEEN ELIZABETH will be 800+ - about the same as HMS VICTORY carried at the battle of Trafalgar. The Deckheads will higher than five feet. That sounds pretty good to me.

Regards,

David Chapman-Andrews(2385)



Shep Woolley has released a new CD 'Strangers on a Train' which would make a good stocking filler at £10 + £4 p&p (recorded delivery) Contact details ;- [shepwoolley@email.com](mailto:shepwoolley@email.com) tel; 02392 754559 or 7 Livingstone Road Southsea PO5 1RS.

*It is very rare for me to include a plug but I do know from feedback and conversations with members how popular Shep is with many of you.*

*No I do not get a freebie copy.....*

## The Late Harry Shepherd Memories of HMS Centaur

Extracts from a family publication sent in by Mrs Brenda Shepherd

*By way of explanation after leaving Ganges in 1947 Harry served in the following ships ; Whirlwind, Jutland, Ceres, Bulawayo Triumph and RNAS Ford. After all the seetime Harry was looking forward to some shore time and settling into Married life with Brenda when after only twelve weeks at Ford Harry got a pier head jump to Centaur in the Med.*

"Centaur had an angled deck and carried a squadron of Sea Hawks and Gannet aircraft.

I was assigned to the main Naval Stores which included flying clothing and safety equipment. We were involved in endless exercises which took us all around the Med with our main base at Malta.

On one of the exercises a Sea Hawk from 803 squadron ran into some bother with its hook and was instructed to ditch alongside the ship. This was not a common practice but to date, our only experience had been with petrol driven aircraft which usually remained afloat for some time allowing the Pilot to evacuate to be picked up by helicopter or sea boat. However Sea Hawks had a jet engine which was considerably heavier and the moment the lane came to rest it put its nose down and disappeared from view in seconds. After what seemed like minutes but was probably only seconds, there was a rush of water from below the surface and up popped the Pilot in his ejector seat. He must have travelled 15-20 feet in the air before crashing down. It was a marvel that it worked, but miraculous that the plane was facing in the right direction when he decided to eject.

One of my duties was to instruct new Pilots as part of their sea training on their duties and responsibilities for personal equipment. I was an old sweat by now (at least 23) and there would be about six pilots about the same age or even younger than me taking instruction. It was sometimes quite embarrassing because sometimes they would forget themselves and call me Sir!

However we had a few laughs and some of them asked if they could join my oppo and me when we went ashore.

As young Officers this made them immediately recognised as Officers they were very vulnerable in a Naval Port like Gibraltar with a few thousand matelots getting tanked up. Officers were not allowed to wear uniform ashore and as they were young and British thus made them immediately recognised as Officers and some drunken matelots could take advantage. However if they were in the company of Senior Ratings they were reasonably safe because in those days it was a serious offence for a rating to lay a hand on a senior rating. They could

beat the hell out of each other and no one would worry, but they never bother us. We did endless exercises in the Med and when we came into Port it was usually Gibraltar or Malta. Malts was the main victualling and Naval stores port. It was here I had to replenish or return damaged ‘permanent stores’. Pilots had a habit of losing their flying clothing especially anti glare spectacles which in those days were valued at £12 (a months wages.) Loss of these items resulted in the Officer being put on Captains report when not only did he have to pay for the items, but it was on his record which was more of a blow. I was very popular on these occasions and knew exactly how to advise on the preparation of the reports. In fact many of them asked me to complete their report for them, they usually got off. If I had damaged clothing or anti glares I would go ashore to the depot armed with a few cartons of cigarettes. A pair of anti glares would be snapped in half and I would suggest to the storekeeper there were two damaged pairs and with flying overalls by ripping them down the centre, hey presto we had two damaged sets. This meant I could replace the lost items and sign the Officers log as correct. I never considered it really corrupt, because most of the losses were regretted and just carelessness on the part of the offender, the black mark on their record could surprisingly be very serious.

I got on well with my Divisional Officer and one was called into his office. He wanted to talk about the service and where it was going, then he referred to the glut of Chiefs and POs in the service. He then switched to the shortage of Supply Officers and I could not believe my ears when he said he was prepared to put my name forward as a CD Candidate (Officer training). It was sometime before I realised that CD candidates were required the Higher Educational Test (HET). As my formal education ended at the age of 12 there was little or no chance of passing. When I saw my boss the next morning and broke the news he did not seem too bothered. He sent for the Schoolmaster who was doing his sea training, in my presence he gave him three months to ensure I passed the exam when we reached Portsmouth. It was an impossible task and goes without saying that he failed.

It was a bit of a blow, I was still feeling bitter about being uprooted from RNAS Ford and drafted to the Med but kept my head down and took the decision to leave the Navy on completion of my nine years. This also presented problems for me I had no idea what to do, I had no trade or profession and a family to support. Educational skills were minimal and I could not think who would want to employ an ex Petty Officer from the RN living in rented accommodation. My time was up and I decided to call it a day rather than going on for a further 15 years or so to secure a pension.”

*In civvy street Harry held various jobs including trainee Manager at Woolworths and a salesman for Hoover before joining Glaxo. By the time Harry decided to retire he had reached Senior Management level at Smith Glaxo Cline.*

## Albion Concert Party 1967



Does anyone remember this review entitled 'Peacock Pie'?

### SEVEN SOUNDS OF SOUL (Albion 1967/8)

The photo above photos below were passed to me by a relative of the late Naval Airman Nigel "Nobby" Clark who was the drummer in the group. According to the write up in the ships commission book the group were quite successful as they played in clubs ashore in ports the ship visited during the commission. Durban, Singapore, Hong Kong and Freemantle are mentioned. They also broadcast on the radio in Hong Kong.



## HMS BULWARK - The last, last Commission - a scribbler's recollections....

I joined Bulwark in late October 1977 straight from POWTR's Course. The ship was deep in Preservation by Operation (P by O) mode and we were in 3 Basin in Portsmouth Dockyard and 'welded' to the jetty in the corner of the basin.

The ship's company numbered some 180 personnel led by a Lt Cdr as Senior officer - I *think* his name was Murdoch and he was an Weapons Engineer Officer.

I was one of two Leading Writers on the Scheme of Complement and I was responsible for all pay accounting matters. The other Scribe was Roger Cornish who looked after all administration onboard. As we were a tender for pay purposes, I was usually based in the Pay Office in HMS Nelson only going onboard when required, and, of course, for Pay Parade and mis-musters every fortnight for those ratings still paid in cash.

Now Roger 'Oggie' Cornish was not your average Killick; A nice guy, well-read and erudite; he ploughed his own furrow. He was also a qualified glider pilot. In addition, he always dressed smartly and drove a 3.5 Litre Rover Coupe (the kind used by the Prime Minister of the day). This was a *really* impressive vehicle and the combination of the car and the way Roger dressed often fooled the Gate Staff in HMS Nelson who, on occasions, hedged their bets and saluted him when he drove in through the Main Gate. Not wishing to disappoint, Roger usually returned the salute! This provided a small piece of hilarity in our somewhat mundane and ordinary lives.

Life onboard was fairly relaxed. Access to the ship was via the quarterdeck and at the top of the brow was a huge sign which read "Bulwark Will Sail Again" in big red letters. That sign was to prove to be prophetic although I am not sure that many of us really thought so at the time. The empty aircraft hangar was used for lunchtime 5-a-side football so you can understand what I mean by *relaxed*. We also had a good Wednesday afternoon sporting make-and-mend routine. Rugby was my particular interest and our team played regularly against other ships and establishments in the area - all fairly standard stuff. Life carried on in much the same way into 1978 without too much excitement or deviation from routine. However, one particular incident I remember well was turning-to one morning to learn that the 'Bulwark Will Sail Again' sign had been torn down and thrown in the basin. More seriously, the ship's bell had also been thrown over the side and there was also some damage to equipment and instruments on the bridge. It did not take the authorities long to discover who had done this and two disgruntled ABs found themselves summarily punished and sent to Detention Quarters prior to being discharged SNLR. The bell was recovered by divers and the sign replaced. The damage to the bridge kit was not too extensive and so it was repaired easily.

It was mid 1978 when the decision was made that Bulwark would, indeed sail again and things ramped-up considerably. We moved into dry dock for refit and the new ship's company started arriving. The timing of the decision coincided with the paying-off of HMS Tiger which had just returned from the Far East so we received a lot of through-drafts from her. The new Commanding Officer was to be Captain G. M. K. Brewer (late of HMS Tiger). Coincidentally, he had also been my Commanding Officer in HMS JUNO some 3 years before when he was Captain of the 4th Frigate Squadron. We were still accommodated ashore in HMS Nelson in Sumaurez and Keppel Blocks which were rapidly filling up with new arrivals to the ship. One morning I found myself in the wrong place at the wrong time onboard when there was a discussion between the Senior team about forming a Juniors' Mess in Nelson and in particular, who should be made the Killick of the Mess. As I passed by the Routine Office en-route to standeasy I was selected from a cast of one! I was also informed in clear terms that should any of my little charges be adrift onboard at turn-to then it was me that the Joss would come looking for. To avoid the wrath of the Fleet MAA, I made sure that they were all up and about at call the hands which, I am sure, made me unpopular to say the least. I did, however, avoid the dreaded summons to the Regulating office.

Things continued at quite a pace (relative to when we were in P by O anyway) and personnel continued to arrive. My first Chief Writer was the estimable John Monckton and the Supply Officer (Cash) was Lieutenant Bill Jennings and I learned a lot from these two gentlemen. Our first Commander (S) was John Shillingford and we continued to crew-up. The receipt of my B13 for POWTR coincided with a change in the Scheme of Complement and I was retained onboard to fill this new position as the POWTR in the Pay Office. We had a strong team of Writers, Oggie was still there and we had the likes of Steve Hampton, Dave Cox, Mike McMaster, Tony Aris, David 'Ollie' Twist, Colin Bradley and Andy Busbridge-King, to name but a few.

We remained in Dry Dock throughout the Autumn with dockyard maties swarming all over the ship painting anything that didn't move - and a few things that did. The engineers also had to work hard bringing back to life boilers, engines and outside machinery which had been long shut down and in need of some serious TLC. I also remember that the Stores Department had their work cut out storing ship with tens of thousands of items. I seem to recall it was a miserable and wet time weather-wise (and the winter of discontent with Callaghan's Government in its death-throes). Against this backdrop, POSA Ian Tidbury and LSA Ken Aitken certainly earned their corn working on the jetty coordinating the receipt and distribution of stores. We moved onboard in November 1978 working towards a Commissioning date of February 1979. The move out of dry dock to the outer sea wall was another milestone and we started

to feel, smell and resemble a seagoing unit again. We also continued to crew-up with a number of recent arrivals from HMS Ark Royal which had just paid-off in Devonport.



*Prince Charles, accompanied by Captain Brewer and Lord Mountbatten arrives in the Hangar for the commissioning ceremony*

We commissioned the ship in February 1979 with a ceremony and Divisions in the Hangar in the presence of Prince Charles and Lord Mountbatten - a great day. We sailed soon after for sea trials, shakedown and exercises prior to work-up at Portland. I am not sure what the sea-riders thought of the grand old lady but we got through ok.

April saw us sailing for exercises up north with an embarked force as well as ASW and Jungly Squadrons of aircraft and personnel from their respective Air Squadrons.

It was hard to remember that less than 12 months before we were playing 5-a-side football where these helicopters now resided! It was not all work of course and we had some really good runs ashore in Hamburg, Copenhagen and several stops in Norway.

One particularly memorable time was when we were alongside in Hamburg and I went as part of a detachment from the ship to visit Berlin which, in 1979, was well behind the Iron Curtain. We travelled the rail corridor on the British Military Train which was a fascinating experience. For example, handing over our passports to Russian Guards and seeing rows of Russian tanks massed at the border. We learned that the train was one of 3 corridor routes from the west into Berlin and it ran every day. The trip was led by Commander (S) and we had a great time staying in Army barracks in the West of the City. The trip included a visit in uniform across from West to East Berlin through Checkpoint Charlie. Given what we saw then and the atmosphere and vast differences it is hard to think that only 10 years later the wall would come down and Germany reunited - no one who was there then could have predicted that.

*Our Detachment from the ship witnessing the changing of the Guard in East Berlin*



On the way back to Hamburg we took the opportunity to visit Belsen which was a most sobering and thought-provoking experience. During the Hamburg stop we also had a sporting visit to our affiliated Army Regiment in Fallingbostel the 4/7th Royal Dragoon Guards (*better known to us as the vulgar fractions*). We spent the morning driving tanks on their range and then played them at various sports in the afternoon with a run ashore at the end - all good stuff. At this point I should mention that the ship had a very strong team of PTIs (CPOPT Taff Williams, POPT Neil Montgomery and LPT Brian Hodgson) who were very active in arranging all sorts of enjoyable and interesting sporting and fitness sessions for all the ship's company. In particular their often ingenious use of the ship's kit when organising flight deck Olympiads and the like was quite brilliant. They also ensured that everyone had the opportunity to take part in sport and

used the flight deck whenever it was possible in between flying operations. In sum, they made a real difference to life onboard.

*The ship's rugby team prior to a cup match against HMS Norfolk*



In August 1979 we heard the terrible news that Lord Mountbatten had been murdered. It was only a few months after he had been our guest at the commissioning and we were all saddened to learn of his death at the hands of the IRA. I remember that Regulating PO 'Rocky' Hudson managed to arrange to revert himself temporarily to Leading Regulator so he could volunteer to be part of the Gun Carriage Party at the funeral which was manned by ratings in square rig.

Later on that year we went to the Mediterranean with amphibious exercises on Sardinia with a Commando force embarked. After Gibraltar and the compulsory Rock Race, we also visited Cyprus where we picked up a small detachment from the Queen's Lancashire Regiment (for reasons I have forgotten) and while strolling along

the flight Deck I literally bumped into someone I was at school with and who was now a Corporal in the said Regiment. It was also while in Cyprus that the ship's rugby team had one of our more memorable wins against the RAF base team (the Flamingos) who were unbeaten by any team for 3 seasons and, apparently, had not lost to any visiting ship before. Visits to Naples and Barcelona followed and we made it home for Christmas. While in Naples the PTIs arranged a run up Vesuvius as they were obviously not content with

just trying to kill us by encouraging us to run up the Rock of Gibraltar! Another highlight of this deployment when alongside in Gib was a concert in the Hangar arranged by the organisation that promoted entertainment for our forces abroad and headlined by Max Bygraves. He entertained an initially somewhat sceptical ship's company who, by the end, were all up on their feet singing "You need hands" accompanied on stage by several of our ship's company all wearing anti-flash gloves as hats!



*Captain Brewer starting the Rock Race in October 1979*

One thing I do remember well and that is we had a very active Padre onboard, who, not content with administering to our liturgical and spiritual needs, took it upon himself to arrange trips and visits wherever we landed ashore. The padre's name was Bennett (I think?) and he headed an organisation named appropriately as 'Bish-Vista' International Tours. They were very well run and extremely popular with the ship's company. I certainly took advantage of some of the runs ashore he organised and they were much appreciated.

January 1980 saw us sail for the USA and we spent an enjoyable few weeks alongside in Mayport where we underwent an Assisted Maintenance Period. The ship never looked so good with a new paint job and many other defects rectified. In addition, many of us (me included) took advantage of some leave in Florida and wives and girlfriends flew out to join us (BishVista again). We also had a change of Command with Captain Brewer leaving and Captain Symons joining. Much less importantly! I job-changed from the Pay Office to the Captain's Office taking over from POWTR Arthur Beach. With me on one side of the office was LWTR Mike McMaster. On the other side, separated by a hatch was the Captain's Secretary, Lt Cdr Ian Mulligan.

The Assistant Secretary, Sub Lt Mike Prior and the ASec (P) Midshipman Glen Tinsley.



*Bulwark alongside in Mayport in February 1980*

We sailed north from Mayport in late February and took part in an exercise (*called Safe Passage I think?*) while steaming up the eastern seaboard with the US and Canadian Navies. One incident I remember was a close call when we were doing an approach to RAS with an RFA. I was ‘goofing’ on the flight deck, the sea was a bit lumpy to say the least and we were approaching the RFA for a RAS on our starboard side. There was another frigate (Canadian) who was coming down our starboard side in the opposite direction. I *think* he was meant to go astern of us, turn, and then do an approach to RAS with the RFA on the other side from us. However, as he was half way down our starboard side, he turned to starboard and headed straight for us. He got *very* close before going full astern and sliding down our starboard side in the swell in order to get clear. I am sure that Captain Symons would also remember this incident and I would imagine he was not overly impressed with the actions of our Canadian friend. Clearly, I’m no expert! but I assume that we would not have been too manoeuvrable on the final stage of our own approach to the RFA and so could not have done much collision avoidance of our own. In any case, from an admittedly uneducated perspective, it was a very close call.



*Some lumpy weather during exercise Safe Passage off the east coast of the USA*

Our last run ashore before going home was to Philadelphia and we were alongside a finger jetty with an RFA opposite us. I took an opportunity to go up to New York and visit the sights (including the Twin Towers and its ultra fast lifts). Then we had the incident which was the most serious in my time onboard and that was the fire in A Boiler room. We first heard that there was a fire onboard with the 'fire, fire, fire' broadcast pipe at about 0630. This was fairly quickly followed by the call to Emergency Stations. As spare hands not involved in the fire-fighting or the duty team, we were mustered, initially on the Jetty and then moved into the Hangar.

Some personnel were called back onboard to assist with boundary cooling and I helped others move AFFF drums from the RFA opposite onto our ship to supplement our rapidly reducing stocks. Apart from that there was not a lot more we could do.

We could see that the uptakes to the funnel were shedding paint and discolouring with the heat from the fire and it was a very serious incident. The fire was eventually brought under control after several hours and we returned onboard just before lunchtime to learn that A1 Boiler had set on fire as it was being flashed-up by the watch below and had just about melted into the bilge, such was the heat from this self-sustaining hydrogen fire. The duty part and marine engineers worked very hard to bring the thing under control and it was a huge team effort to achieve this.

Obviously this delayed our sailing and a Board of Inquiry team were flown out to investigate the circumstances surrounding the fire. In the meantime, the engineers worked out how best to isolate A1 boiler so they could still operate A2 which they achieved successfully and we were ready to sail for home (albeit on 3 boilers) after about a week - a remarkable achievement by the stokers. BishVista tours once again came to the fore arranging guided tours of A Boiler Room (for a suitable donation to ship's charities) and, along with many others, I went down to take a look. The boiler tubes were melted into the deckhead and the deck looking like crazy stalactites and stalagmites, the condenser was also melted into the bilge and it was as black as night down there. Sharing a mess deck with Stokers and Artificers I learned a lot about the circumstances that started the fire and knew more about things like gauge-glass drill, feed water and something called Igema fluid than I ever thought possible or necessary as a mere scribe!

Also flown out in support of the Board of Inquiry team were two Wren Writer Stenographers (one Leading Wren and one Wren) who operated onboard from our office typing up the transcripts of the proceedings and interviews. Many will remember that the Captain's Office was in the Commanders' Flat way back aft and, given the amount of brass hats in the vicinity, it was unusual for us to get any visitors.

However, once the buzz went round that Wrens were onboard all sorts of people were just popping in to see us and we were never so popular! In addition, the ship was ready to sail before the Inquiry had finished so a decision was made that the Wrens would remain onboard and sail back to the UK with us. They were accommodated in the Commando Force CO's Cabin and looked after by the Captain's PO Steward.

They continued their work from our office and the arrangement worked well. They enjoyed their time onboard and we had the (then) unusual sight of coming alongside in Portsmouth after a deployment to be greeted by wives and girlfriends and one boyfriend of the Leading Wren! I was also very glad to be back as my wedding was planned for the end of that week.

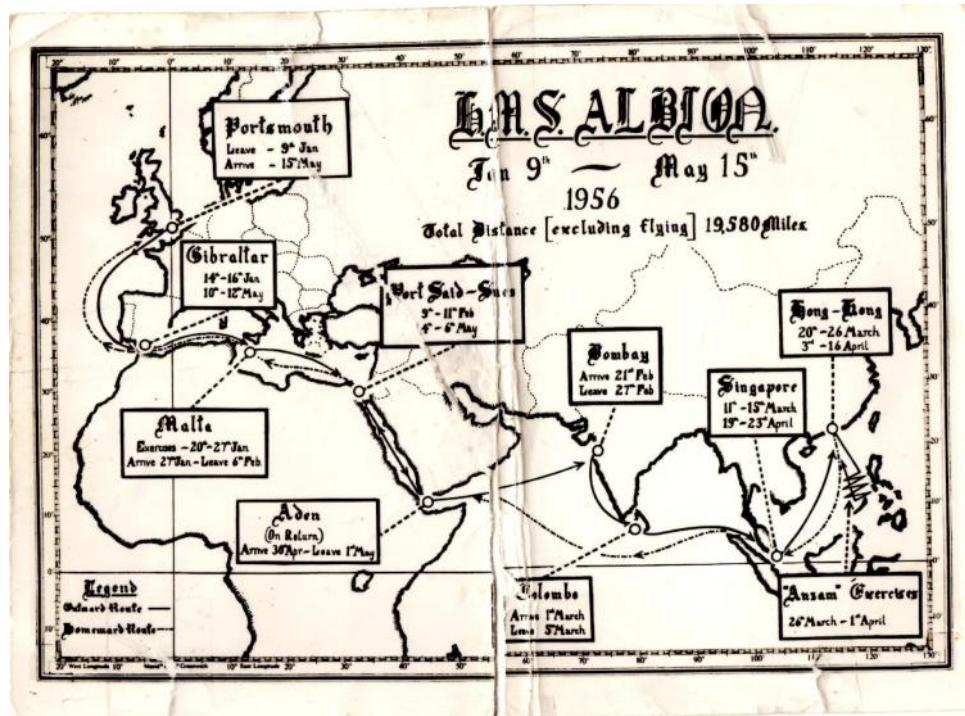
After a couple of weeks alongside we again sailed for Gibraltar. We had another truly shocking incident here when Writer Colin Bradley was killed in an accident ashore. His death hit everyone hard, particularly Ollie Twist as they were very good friends.

Colin was a good bloke and his death was a freak accident and a tragedy for this fine young man and his family. We then sailed for more exercises in company of other ships and Navies. As I recall it was more of the same really with beach assaults on Sardinia (again!) and a few runs ashore. These included Toulon where the embarked force enjoyed themselves up the coast on the French Riviera - although the French might not have seen it in the same way.... We got back in the Summer and went on leave. September 1980 saw us back up North off Norway with 45 Commando embarked for Exercise Teamwork. Along with a couple of others I was landed to take part in the Ben Nevis fell race and rejoined the ship by helicopter some 3 weeks later after several days passage in RFA Tidepool trying to catch up with the Fleet. The irony of this was that we drove all the way up to Fort William for the race only to have it cancelled at the very last minute (when we were actually preparing to start) because the weather on the top was considered to be too dangerous for 500+ runners to be let loose on the hill - very frustrating but no doubt a sensible decision. On the way back home we stopped off in Arbroath to land 45 Commando and we had a sports Olympiad against them on their base. We played them at several sports and lost just about every one except, bizarrely, the dry slope skiing competition. This was a huge surprise to all as 45 Commando are the Arctic Warfare specialists and lived on skis.

The ship was back alongside in Portsmouth in November 1980 and I was at home on weekend leave when I heard a news report of a fire onboard. The fire was in the mattress store in the cages at the forward end of the Hangar, and, if I recall correctly, was started deliberately. This was all cleared away, cleaned up and after Christmas leave we again sailed for the Med. While alongside in Portsmouth (and, once again, goofing on the flight deck!)

I also remember seeing HMS Invincible enter Portsmouth for the first time at the start of her sea trials. She was seen as the future and we were very much the old lady of the Fleet by then. I left Bulwark in Gibraltar in February 1981 to fly home to go on Petty Officers' Leadership Course at HMS Royal Arthur. My replacement only had six weeks at sea before the ship paid-off but, as we all know 'drafty' works in mysterious ways and I presume he was through drafted to another ship to complete his sea-time. I would have liked to remain onboard for the whole commission but it was not to be. Bulwark went on one more visit (to Lisbon I think?) and then came back to Pompey in April 1981 flying her Paying-Off Pennant. All in all it was quite an eventful three and a bit years and, even through the 'fog' of nostalgia, I still think my stint in Bulwark was a seminal and extremely rewarding time in my Service.

John Large (2243)



When I joined her in Dec 55 and off on a Foreign which was cut short by the Suez Crisis. Singers to UK in 17 Days!!

Marshall Clarke (1725)

## **My Nine Years Service in the Royal Navy**

John Lambert (2451)

### **Concluding Part**

We flew out to Singapore in August 1961 by Bristol Britannia straight into Barracks at HMS Terror. Now living as an acting PO living conditions were much improved, four POs to an open cabin and Senior Rates bar selling cold Tiger beer.

Bulwark was still in dry dock, she recommissioned with a new crew all flown out from the UK the biggest exchange up to that time and cheaper than sailing the ship back to the UK. We moved onboard and on 7<sup>th</sup> October the Commissioning warrant was read.

The Chief Stoker sent for me “Have you got your boiler ticket PO ?” he asked “Yes Chief” I replied “Good you’ve got the afternoon watch, 78,000 horse power at your fingertips”. A vast change from the Scott were I had learned by boiler craft only a year before. Fortunately she was the same class as Albion with two destroyer boilers in each boiler room working at 431p.s.i.

We then sailed for Pulau Tioman, a small island to clean up the ship, then a RAS to take on fuel etc. On 13<sup>th</sup> November we sailed for Hong Kong.

Exercises were carried out in the New Territories with landing by helicopter. We returned to Singapore for Christmas. Our Captain was James Dalgliesh (A gent). Mrs Dalgliesh joined her Husband with her son. She visited the boiler room on Christmas day which was greatly appreciated.

On 6<sup>th</sup> January 1962 we crossed the equator with due ceremony, then on to Geraldtown where our Commando exercised with the Australian Army. Then onto Freemantle where we went alongside, on the 16<sup>th</sup> we had a march past.

We sailed North on 26 January with the Australian SAS lining the jetty as we left.

Our next stop was Socotra in the Red Sea from 19-22 February where the Sultan came onboard and our Doctors flew ashore to examine the local children.

We were off Bahrain 8-11 March, Singapore 23 March – 16 April then onto Hong Kong 24 April-7 May. Then we were off Borneo hunting Pirates before returning to Singapore and HMS Terror for a self refit. On 23-31 August we back in Hong Kong by 9 September we returned to Singapore for Admirals Inspection with every department inspected. We left Singapore on 12<sup>th</sup> September for more exercises up the Gulf. From 19-22 October we were anchored off Port Victoria Seychelles, then to Mombasa 25 October-5 November and on to Aden where we handed over to Albion now also a Commando carrier. We sailed for UK and Portsmouth 26 November. I steamed the ship home bringing her into Plymouth for her refit were I had my first and only married quarters in Fegan Road St Budeaux. My duties were 1 in 15 like the ERAs. I had a motor cycle and sidecar, it was ideal for Looe or Polperro or going on Dartmoor.

At the end of the refit period my Wife(Jean) was pregnant and returned to her Parents in London and I went back onboard.

Back at sea I was carrying out Full Power Trials down B boiler room when the Forced Draught Fans over speeded (great fun). This caused pulsation and the boiler had to be shut down rather rapidly. We sailed back out to the Far East, being based mainly at Singapore. This time we were more involved with the Borneo Confrontation and supplying the Army in Kuching and Labuan with a new set of Officers who had to learn their way about.

On 4<sup>th</sup> June 1964 I received a telegram to inform me that I now had a Son, Paul Andrew, I think we were off the Philippines operating with the US Navy.

In November I was flown home for demob and to see my son for the first time now 5 months old.

I underwent an EVT course in Fuel Technology and was due an interview at Bristol Siddley in Hatfield but joined the Met Police instead.

From £26 - £27 per week as a PO passed for Chief down to £12 per week as a probationer constable. I was informed my nine years in the RN counted towards my Police pension. You believe everything you are told when you are 27 but as we now know, not one day of my service counted. I never received a penny but officers in the other services did, they were given money to enable them to enhance their career.

I served in North London all my 28.5 years as a uniformed P.C. Five years riding lightweight motor cycles (noddy bikes) driving cars and on van relief.

I was an authorised shot for 22 years and attached to two crime squads and two murder squads. I was at all the events during those years, Greenham Common, American Embassy, Brixton Riots and the Miners Strike(4 times).

In 1985 I was attached to the Keith Blakelock murder squad as an Authorised Shot. They asked for probationers who knew about computers to transpose statements. A young W.P.C. who had just joined from Enfield training school spoke with me. I was informed that she had served four years in the WRENS and that half her service counted towards her Police Pension ( she had never even served at sea).

My last eight years was as a 'Home Beat' Officer in Enfield. I made enquires of my local MP, we wrote to the Mod who informed me my nine years in the RN did NOT count towards my Police Pension. (Had I previously worked for the GPO, council library service etc then that would count but NOT the Senior Service. I have been diagnosed with a hearing loss through steaming machinery without any ear protection, this too fell on stony ground.

(I note that our MPs are awarding themselves a 9% pay rise whilst I live on my OAP and a Police Pension which I paid in for.)

Remember This IS England.

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