

The Airey Fairey

Journal of The FLEET AIR ARM Association



Issue 14 Summer 2005





**THE FLEET AIR ARM
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Contributions for inclusion in "The Airey Fairey", the official journal of the Fleet Air Arm Association, are most welcome and should be submitted to the Editor prior to the deadline shown below. Whilst every effort is made to include them, due to space limitations this is not always possible. However no article is wasted as those not used are retained for possible future use. Where there are events of general interest and dates for these are after the issue of the magazine, they will of course be included. Should you wish for articles and/or photos to be returned then please enclose a SAE.

Submission DEADLINE for the next issue (Winter) is 31st December 2005

With respect to originals the editor can scan a variety of photographic media, prints up to A4 in size are acceptable as are 35 mm or APS (as a complete cartridge not individual frames) film. Please enquire before submitting larger format negatives or transparencies.

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Note: the term 'National' has been officially dropped from the title of the FAAA. Back issues available: Issues 9, Issue 10 (very limited numbers), Issue 11, 12 and 13.

Outer cover images: the main picture on the front cover is from Des Mardle and the inset from Fred Wadley as is the Malta Memorial inset on the Rear Cover. Rear cover images are; top image and FAAA Standard Bearer detail at centre left are both from the International Drumhead Ceremony via Ben Worship. The centre right image is by the Editor as is the bottom picture of the FAAA stand in the Veteran's Centre. The portrait inset image, also by the Editor, is of the professional Nelson look-alike actor Alex Naylor with his 'Emma Hamilton', Finni Golden, of Victory Films, Portsmouth.

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EDITORIAL

This Issue is late but then I was anticipating a little more input from our members on their experiences at Trafalgar 200, including the International Festival of the Sea. I would like to thank Ron Frost for input and also Don Bell. I would also like to thank those branches; Angus, Bristol, Derbyshire and Ford which regularly send copies of their newsletters, parts of which may be used in future. To Jo Towler, don't despair the pieces you send may appear yet. I will return to 'News From Around the Branches' in the next issue. I have been asked to start a 'Do you know the whereabouts of 'my old opo XXX' section so start sending in your requests.

The 2005 FAAA Re-union

A couple of weeks ago I was looking forward to my first re-union with the Fleet Air Arm Association, never suspecting I would have my arm twisted by Arnold [Secretary], to write a piece about this re-union.

Being in Coventry, there was a certain amount of curiosity on my part. Back in February 1956, I had a one month pr-release course there with GEC. On reaching Coventry I soon realised that it had changed considerably, with a very complicated ring road in the centre. I think all veterans approaching from the south had to negotiate it.

On arrival at the hotel, I was very pleased with what I saw. The hotel stood in several acres of grounds, which were nicely landscaped. The reception area was very impressive and spacious, the best of all for the veterans, there was a large swimming pool and fitness centre. What we used to call a Gymnasium.

After we had booked in we were directed to a large and pleasant bedroom, and after depositing our baggage, went back to the reception (and bar) to meet the other guests. Sadly, I could find no one I recognised, but found the veterans a very friendly crowd. I expected nothing less. However, I did meet one who had been Ships Company on board Ocean when I had been aboard with 825 Squadron, as we both worked on the flight deck must have seen each other. I expect we had both altered appearances a little since 1952!

Dinner that evening was another great "Get Together". There were so many introductions, it was impossible to remember most of the names (for myself anyway). However, I was sitting next to Bill and ex-Essex Copper. When I left the Andrew, I too had changed one navy blue suit for another with Surrey Police, so we had something in common. Also on our table was Fred (Sandy?) who had travelled all the way from Nova Scotia, my apologies to the others at the table whose names were not retained by this old brain.

The following morning (Saturday) had been reserved for the Annual General meeting. I don't intend to go into detail on the business carried out, save to say that speakers made their various points and were not too worried about offending each other. In the bar afterwards all was peace and sweetness.

I was curious that among all the old timers (our elected officers) was a mere stripling, a youth. This turned out to be our President, Rear Admiral Johns. Still Policemen also seem to be getting younger these days! At the end of the AGM, he [Admiral Johns] gave us a very clear resume [included later in this addition] of what was happening in the Fleet Air Arm these days, and made a very optimistic forecast for its future.

In the meantime a coach trip had been laid on for the wives and partners to Royal Leamington Spa and Stratford-on-Avon. I know my wife enjoyed this very much.

On Saturday evening we had our Gala Dinner and Raffle, Fred on our table won a bottle of Scotch but didn't drink spirits himself and very kindly passed it round. Thanks again Fred. It was at this dinner that Arnold collared me to write this epistle. After dinner we had music and dancing, it was amazing the energy displayed there, I think the amount of wine consumed during the dinner [not to mention Fred's whisky] had something to do with it.

The organisation that went into this re-union must have taken many hours and much dedication, my thanks to those responsible.

Don (Dinger) Bell

The following is a letter, passed on to the editor by our secretary, from Thomas G. Barnden M.B.E. with an accompanying article which follows on.

Dear Arnold,

It was interesting to put at least some faces to names at the Reunion weekend.

You mentioned during the meeting at your concern at the lack of material for the Association's magazine. I therefore have enclosed the following. It has absolutely nothing to do with Naval Aviation, but with man's determination to overcome just about anything, it is a very good story. Last October I had access to some old wartime Merchant Navy documents. They have been under wraps since that time so I was very lucky to get them at all. I kept the vernacular as close as I could to the original and obviously reduced the content in size. The gist of the article though is essentially as it was written by the long deceased Captain, who's name I thought best not to divulge. I had the report published in a magazine somewhat more salty than the FAA[A journal] which was part of my other life. I called the article "A bad day at the office". You may not think it suitable and I will not be offended in any way by your decision.

My friends and I thought the weekend was great and well worth the journey. May there be many more.

Yours Aye Calm Waters
Thomas G Barnden. M.B.E.

Report on the Towing and Sinking of "LCT 1045" by the Skipper of Steam Tug "Empire Winnie", aka "A bad day at the office".

On the afternoon of Tuesday October 24th at about 1400 while lying to at anchor in Arromanches Harbour [Gold Beach on DDay], I received a signal to proceed with all speed to the assistance of LCTs in distress in the approximate position of 58a buoy, English Channel, weather at this time being a strong NE wind causing a heavy sea.

I at once weighed anchor and cleared harbour at 1415, arriving at given position at 1830. As visibility was very poor due to heavy rain and with darkness coming on, I circled the area with morse lamp flashing but was unable to contact any LCTs.

As we were unable to locate vessels we radioed this information and were informed that LCT 1045 and LCT 1015 were now in position 7½ miles due West of buoy 14a. I at once steamed to the vicinity of this position and as before circled the area with morse lamp flashing. As once again nothing was seen of LCTs and the time now being 2210, I slowed speed and drifted in the direction I thought the LCTs may also have drifted.

On the morning of the 25th I received another signal that the LCTs were now 10 miles due West of 14d buoy. Whilst steaming to this latest position I received another signal that LCT 1015 had LCT 1045 in tow and was trying to navigate L Channel near the L2 buoy.

Arrived at buoy L2 at 1015 and again commenced searching. I found LCTs at 1115 one mile due North of Pt De Barfleur and within 1½ miles of shore. L1015 was towing L1045, the towing hawser consisted of a about 30 fathoms length of wire. I at once relieved L1015 of L1045, the time now being 1130. I attached my towing hawser of 30 fathoms of 3½ inch wire to L1045's starboard bow. I then received a signal from L1015 that she was unreliable and may require assistance at any moment. Informed L1015 by

signal that as we would only move very slowly she should stay as close astern as possible and we would await developments.

Within five minutes of taking L1045 in tow and steaming very slowly I noticed that she appeared to have broken in halves but was still hanging loosely together. I thought this rather curious as very little weight had been put on the towing hawser. I at once stopped engines and signalled a small American tug in the area to take off L1045's crew. If I had tried to take off the crew my course change would have caused a complete break between the two halves further endangering the crew.

The American tug duly took off the 16 crew members of L1045 then closed on Winnie leaving the Master of L1045 with us and then continued on her way to Cherbourg. Winnie meanwhile continued towards Arramanches with tow and L1015 in company, weather at this time being slight wind from NE with a moderate sea.

When in the vicinity of L6 buoy the stern part of tow [L1045] broke free leaving us towing the fore-part only. We managed to manoeuvre ourselves and tow so as to successfully secure another tow hawser to the aft end of L1415 which was accomplished with much difficulty due to other boats at anchor in area known as "Omaha". We then went to anchor, the time being 1730. Both fore and aft ends of L1045 remained afloat, this being due to air-tight tanks, apparently part of their construction. At about 2300 the wind freshened from NE creating heavy seas which caused the aft end of L1045 to capsize and sink—still attached to Winnie's tow hawser.

At 0730 on 26th we endeavoured to clear towing wires and hawsers from aft end of ...

(Continued on page 22)

Trafalgar 200 and Festival of the Sea, Portsmouth.

By Ron Frost. Vice Chairman, Bristol Branch

The Trafalgar 200 & Festival of the Sea has been advertised and known about by me for two years and I wanted to attend, so on 15th January 2005, I started to telephone hotels and travel bureaux in Portsmouth to get accommodation for my wife and I so that I could do so. I got no luck at all and was told by the bureau that I would not get accommodation within 10 miles of Portsmouth. Guessing just how busy the area would be, I did not care to drive down daily and where would we park if we did? Our local coach company had scheduled a day visit to the FoS, so we thought we would settle for that. Then through the RNA circular, I heard about how they had made arrangements with Portsmouth University to use their Halls of residence at Langstone Campus at £195 B&B for a seven-day stay. We booked that and so on Monday 27th June I drove there and arrived at noon.

Soon after, we caught a bus to Southsea pier and walked along the front taking in all there was to see. I had joined the RN there at Victoria barracks in June 1955 but everything around had changed since then and I hardly recognised a thing. The weather was hot with a clear blue sky. We could see many of the 170 Warships of 44 nations

lying at anchor a fair way out, for as far as we could see. From time to time, a tall ship would sail by towards the harbour. We thought we would find the Veterans entrance that we would need tomorrow. This was on the common opposite the Queens Hotel. We continued along the front until we reached the Victory gate of the dockyard before catching the bus back to the campus.

Tuesday: After a very nice full English breakfast and coffee, we caught the bus to the Queens hotel stop. We crossed the road to the Veterans entrance and joined the queue to show our passports and be checked by security for guns and bombs. We entered a vast blue tent, the size of a football pitch. In there were stalls for various organisations. We worked our way around, coming to the Fleet–Air–Arm Association stand, manned by S/Ms Arnold Thompson and Lionel Smith and had a chat. About eight members of a Royal Marine Dance band were playing and we sat for a while, drinking coffee and listened. As we moved on we met many other Shipmates we know and with some, enjoyed a tot of rum or two and had a few laughs.

We left the Vets area and walked to the seashore. There were already a lot of people there; some we learned had slept on the beach in order to get a good viewing position. After a while there began a re-enactment of The Vice Admiral, Lord Nelson being rowed out to join a half scale replica of HMS Victory.

There were so many people lining the sea wall and beach (the following day's newspapers estimated 350,000), that it was near impossible to see all that was going on on the sea but the organisers had installed very large TV screens on the common to show the important events. We noticed that they were showing her Majesty the Queen and Prince Philip joining the HMS Endurance (The Red Plum) on which they were to review the fleet. We watched for a while before moving to the sea front to try to see first hand, we could just make out her ship, as it plied to and fro among the three rows of war ships. There followed a mock battle at sea, canons being fired and Seamen fighting with cutlasses etc. After that the Tall ships, in full sail, were sailing to and fro along the coast, they looked magnificent.

As we were intending to return to the campus on the bus, we realised that with so many people who would also be wanting to get to their home or accommodation, there was sure to be some problems so we decided that instead of waiting to see the advertised "Greatest Firework show to ever take place" which we would have loved to have witnessed first hand, that we would make our way back. That was about 8pm. We arrived at the bus stop and after waiting an hour without seeing a bus going our way; we were told that the last bus had gone. We resorted to a taxi and after a short while, watched the fireworks from about two miles away, which was better than not seeing them at all. As it turned out, as we saw on local TV in the morning, it was pandemonium after the fireworks show ended. Pedestrians were walking or standing in the roads so that the traffic could not move. When the buses were able to ferry the car drivers to the park and ride areas to the cars they could not get back on to the roads. We met one couple that had not managed to get to their bed until 3am. I think we did the right thing to leave early as we did.

Wednesday: We caught a bus to the Queens hotel stop and crossed the road to the Veterans entrance, joined the queue to have our tickets and passports checked and searched again for guns and bombs and we were in to choose a seat to view the events and take part in the Drum head religious service. After a few minutes, who should take the seat in front of us but our very own FAAA Treasurer S/M Ben Worship.

The event started at 11am with an introduction by Brian Hanrahan welcoming the Royal party, His Highnesses the Duke of York and Prince Michael of Kent and all the Veterans, some with their spouses, making 10,000 in all. The massed bands of the Royal Marines came on and played and counter marched, for perhaps 20 minutes. They were very good, as always. Then a massed band of Sea Cadets and Marine Cadets did a similar show, culminating in building the Drum Altar to start the religious service of multi faith. The Standard Bearers, 170 of them, marched on from each side until they lined three sides of the arena. The first hymn of "All people that on earth do dwell" started the service. The Bishop of Portsmouth then gave a prayer and this was followed by the Rabbi Malcolm Wiseman reading the psalm 46. The torch of remembrance was then carried on and placed in front of a replica of HMS Victory main mast. This mast was covered with drawings done by local children, depicting scenes of Nelson's time. Kate Adie then interviewed Veterans who had had some of the most extreme experiences in WWII and Falkland wars, and then interviewed children about what was their understanding of the wars.

Then two choirs sang followed by the blessing from the Bishop and the singing by all, of the Naval hymn "Eternal Father strong to save" as Aircraft flew overhead and HMS Illustrious sailed by as close inshore as possible in salute to the Veterans.

The drumhead service concluded with the Royal Marines retrieving their drums and marching off. We returned to the tent and met a few more S/M friends and a few more tots and then left the enclosure to go to the town for something to eat and drink. We caught the 3.30pm bus back to the campus, had a rest and then walked to the 'Thatched house' pub for our evening meal. Thursday. It rained, so we decided not to visit the FoS but to do some shopping in town.

Friday: We caught the bus to the Hard and walked to the Victory gate entrance of the Dockyard, queued for about ten minutes and we were in the FoS. There were many strolling players and ancient Nelsonian plays being acted out. We walked on to see and to go on board, some of the tall ships, they really are magnificent vessels. Next we came to HMS Tyne, a fishery protection ship. We went on board and spoke to the Officers. I found this most interesting, as I did not know more than the general knowledge of the subject. We looked at a few more war ships and then came to the Royal Fleet Auxiliary ship Fort Victoria We went on board. What an enormous ship. I spoke to the deck hands but either they did not know the answer to my questions or had been told not to say anything. Anyway we found a RN warrant officer and had a long chat with him. By this time, it being a long walk back to the gate, we started back and caught the bus back to the campus. We had heard that there was a good Royal British Legion club at Fratton Bridge,

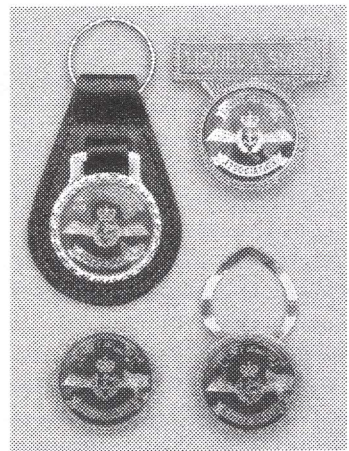
so we caught another bus and went there, stopping and having a meal at Wetherspoons on the way.

Saturday: We thought we would have an easier day, so bussed to Gunwharf Quay. This is a vast new development. We walked around admiring the site and then had a meal. In the afternoon we had a boat trip around the Solent to see the ships still lying at anchor. This was very enjoyable. Then, back to the campus.

Sunday: Back to the FoS again. First we visited the Dockyard chapel of St Ann, built in 1703. It had been badly damaged by bombing in April 1941, and not fully restored until 1945. I was particularly interested in the HMS Hood Memorial book of remembrance, kept there, having lost an 18-year-old cousin on her. We went on board a number of ships from Countries such as Turkey, Russia, India, Pakistan, Oman (on which we were surprised to find one of the crew playing the bag pipes) and then stopped for a pint of cider and a Cornish pasty. We had heard being advertised over the PA, that "Operation Combat" was about to begin, and decided to go. The Royal Marines from Delta company joined troops of the Black Watch and the Tank Regiment in a combat skirmish against a rebel force. It was very exciting but what a noise they made firing the tank gun and mortar fire. We continued and came to the HMS Illustrious and would have gone aboard but the queue was several 100 metres long so we decided that we had been aboard Carriers before and we would give it a miss.

Over the PA, they were giving out that a skirmish would shortly be taking place on the sea. This was again the Marines in their armed hovercraft, pursuing rebel forces in rigid inflatables accompanied by more machine gun fire and explosives. We had a long wait before that commenced and when it finished we made our way back to the Hard and caught the bus to the campus. We had enjoyed our week in Portsmouth and tomorrow we would drive home.

An Association Lapel Name Badges (maximum 14 characters) @ £5 ea', Scarf Rings @ £5 ea', Key Fob @ £2 ea' and Lapel Badge @ £2 ea' incorporating the Association Badge, are available from Ron Frost of Bristol Branch, (profits go to the Fly Navy Heritage Trust). Please send cheque with order, made out to R G Frost, include notice of name or nick name to be inscribed. Also branch name or titles such as Chairman, Secretary etc can be included in small characters but it is preferable to discuss this with me (Ron Frost) by telephone. Tel: 01453 843723, e-mail: ron.dianefrost@btinternet.com, snail mail: 10 Charfield Road, Kingswood, Wooton-under-Edge, Gloucestershire.



End of World War 2 National Commemoration Day Sunday 10th July 2005

Input from: Des Mardle, Angus Branch.

At this event, the final event of Veterans Awareness week which ran between 4th and 10th July, Des Mardle of Angus Branch FAAA paraded their Branch standard (at position 201) and the Fleet Air Arm Association Standard was paraded by Don Armstrong-Rich of Eastbourne Branch (at position 115). Des Mardle sent in some pictures and thus appears on the front cover of this issue whilst in the grounds of Buckingham Palace with members of the Royal Family on the balcony in the background.



Above: In the tent, a general view of one half of the guys waiting to parade.....they look as if they had already marched from Admiralty Arch to Buckingham Palace Forecourt don't they? Remember, it was a scorching hot day!

Picture and caption from Des Mardle.

Des reports, 'Once we had mustered at the Admiralty Arch end of the Mall.....we stood around for one and a half hours whilst the concert was still taking place on Horse Guards Parade. However, the police, army and St.John's Ambulance Brigade all kept a constant supply of cold bottled water coming. I would love to know just how many bottles were handed out. The people who had to clear the empty bottles afterwards had a big job on! In the Forecourt of Buckingham Palace there is a photo of me and another [not included here ...Ed.] of Standard Bearers totally ignoring the Royals for the moment....what could have done that? Of course, it was the Fly Past of WW2 aircraft proceeding overhead down the Mall. All the guys around me felt as I did; that it was a great honour and

privilege to be parading our Branch Standards and to show Her Majesty our allegiance to her.'

The beginning of the proceedings of National Commemoration Day was marked by a service in Westminster Abbey at 11.00. This was followed at 12.00 by lunch hosted by the Queen in the grounds of Buckingham Palace with over 2000 veterans in attendance.

From 14.30 there followed a concert which concluded with 2 minutes silence, signalled by HMS Belfast and a 4 Jaguar aircraft flypast by the RAF, in remembrance of the fallen.

At 16.00 the main trial of the Standard Bearers began when they marched in step behind the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh down The Mall.

The standards of the Royal Navy, the Army, Royal Air Force and Merchant Navy (amongst the standards of many other organisations) were carried proudly by veterans who braved the heat, and the toll of years with many over 60, to the loudest cheers of the day, having thoroughly earned the cries of, 'Bravo', 'Bravo'. The step was set by the massed bands of the services and the crowds followed on behind.

A full list of standards and bearers, all seven hundred and twenty four, can be found at: http://www.mod.uk/aboutus/history/ww2/national_commemoration_day.htm

Inauguration of the Malta Siege Memorial

by Fred Wadley, FAAA Chairman

On Monday 15th August, representing members of the Fleet Air Arm Association, my wife and I attended the dedication service of the Malta Siege Memorial held at All Hallows by the Tower of London.

The weather, bright and warm, was perfect for such an occasion. The entrance to the church was lined by over a dozen Standards representing various ex-service associations. Whilst inside, during the service, the Standards of the Royal Navy, Royal Air Force and the United States Navy were presented in the transept of the church. The National Standards of the RNA, the RAFA, the FAAA, the RNSA, the Merchant Navy and the George Cross Island Association followed these.

The church, which seemed bigger inside than one would expect from the outside was packed with, I understand, nearly eight hundred people. There were representatives from all the services and many countries, more scrambled egg and fruit salad than I'd seen for a long time. The service was very enjoyable and it was nice to see how much of a Naval theme was included, the Naval Hymn, a Sailor's Prayer and the hymn 'Crossing the Bar'.

After the service, everyone made their way outside for the Blessing carried out by the Archbishop Emeritus of Birmingham, Chaplain-in-Chief to the British Association of the Sovereign Military of Malta. Following the blessing wreaths were laid by; HE The President of Malta on behalf of the people of Malta, HRH The Duke of Edinburgh for all

those who served in the British Forces, HE The Ambassador of Poland representing the Free Forces of Europe (Greece, Poland and the Netherlands), who took part in the defence of Malta, the Head of Mission of New Zealand representing the Commonwealth Forces of Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa, a representative of the Ambassador of Norway, on behalf of the Norwegian Merchant Fleet's participation in the Malta Convoys, the United States Naval Attaché on behalf of the US Naval Forces who participated in the crucial delivery of Spitfires and of oil at the height of the siege, the Minister of Shipping on behalf of the Merchant Navy and last but not least a veteran of the Malta Armed Forces on behalf of the George Cross Island Association.

Various introductions were carried out by the visiting VIPs before all the guests were invited to either the open-air reunion buffet, to which I went, held alongside the church or on HMS Belfast. I cannot report on the Belfast buffet but all in all this was a most enjoyable event and one that I was pleased to attend as our Association's representative.

Fred Wadley kindly sent the editor a memory card (trusting soul) containing digital pictures of this event. One picture which includes the FAAA Standard carried by Don Armstrong-Rich of Eastbourne Branch is placed as an inset on the front cover; the inaugurated Malta memorial is depicted in the right hand inset on the rear cover.

The Memorial inauguration was by the President of Malta, Dr Edward Fenech Adami on Monday 15th August 2005.

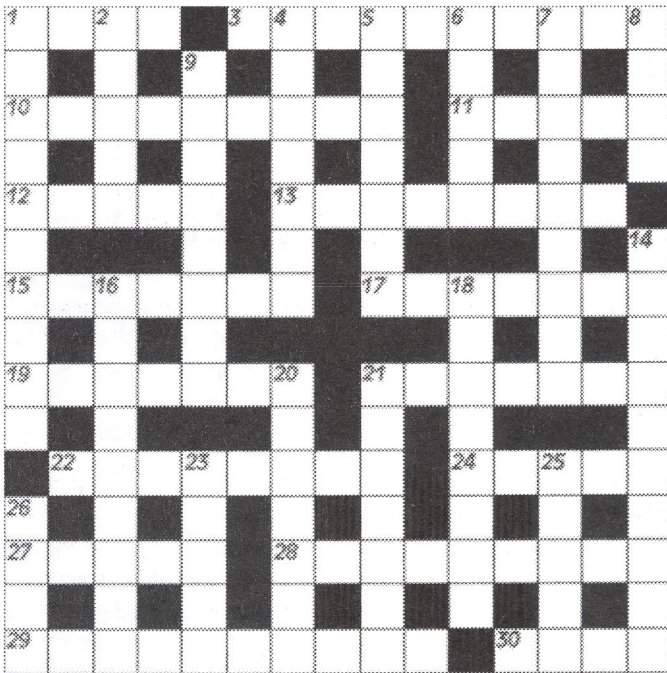
One plaque on the memorial displays the message, "To honour her brave people I award the George Cross to the Island Fortress of Malta, to bear witness to a heroism and devotion that will long be famous in history."

Right: The original plaque commemorating the unusual award of the George Cross to Malta, and dated April 15th 1942, is situated in Valetta.

Photo' by the editor 1970.



A Stand-Eazzzy Crossword



Answers
Page 26

Across :

1. With the Wind for a Hollywood great. (4)
3. Removed by coup de'état perhaps. (10)
10. Commonly the white-spotted marsupial carnivore the Quoll. (6,3)
11. Essential, five followed by old Morris. (5)
12. Stratum for egg producer. (5)
13. Of the east. (8)
15. Smartly, fashionably. (7)
17. Fleming after School for old school boy. (7)
19. End less delta with indulgence to implore. (7)
21. Delivering the main, official, message. (2,5)
22. Distant object provides old 'd' quarter. (8)
24. Alternative link to binary entity for electron path. (5)
27. Of three, dart back around one for 13 style organised criminal gang. (5)
28. Not the queen's castle. (5,4)
29. Cheap shares of copper broth perhaps. (5,5)
30. Rodent back to loo-bend has shining properties. (4)

Down :

1. Single rung broken for Western stock character. (10)
2. Crazy for confection to Jack. (5)
4. Conservative after V-formation for a win. (7)
5. For catching rodents in the shrouds? (7)
6. Maritime refuge. (5)
7. Freeze out. (9)
8. Line division made this 1798 sea battle a famed 4. (4)
9. Six balls and scramble the widow's coin for extra pay. (8)
14. Inside lane passer not required for burial at sea. (10)
16. Small bird has set food quantity for a chemistry process. (9)
18. Stumped or caught abode for the back-to-back privy. (3,5)
20. Three of mixed hop county for gewgaw. (7)
21. Piped instrument in charge, of biological origin. (7)
23. Roosevelt bear? (5)
25. Heckle saint for increased engine power. (5)
26. Got when made Post in Nelson's time. (4)

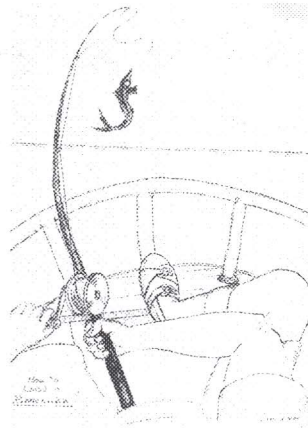
The Barracuda Incident

By Bill Williamson (including pictures) of Southdowns Branch (ex Hanworth).

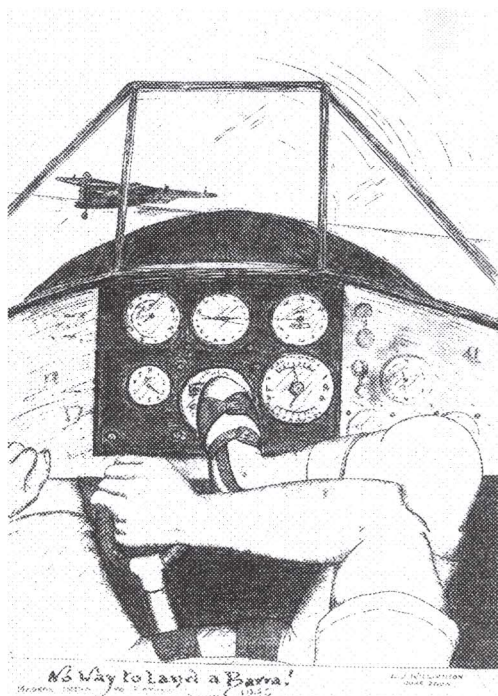
On the 27th November 1945 I flew my first Barracuda MX806. During the next few weeks I ferried a batch of these aircraft from Sulurin in southern India to Katurunda just south of Colombo in Ceylon, up to three hours per trip.

Now on the first of these flights, which started very well, with the control column held lightly between my knees I was enjoying a small orange that I had picked up in the mess, I had peeled it and tossed the skin out of the cockpit and watched it speed off in the direction of the tail. Life was good — but, suddenly the starboard wing dropped and the nose went down pointing to the deep blue sea!

I heaved the very heavy joystick backwards towards me and over to the left. I then trimmed the aircraft but this took very little weight off the stick. Looking over to the starboard wing I saw the reason for the problem — a panel about 18 inches long and one foot wide had come adrift at the front and was sticking straight up, acting as a one sided air brake.



Above:
How to Land a Barracuda



I vaguely remembered my engineering training about the stability of triangles, so with my right foot on the instrument panel and my elbow wedged into my knee joint, I was able to lock the stick in an “off to the left” position, being about right to keep the aircraft flying almost straight and level.

I breathed a sigh of relief, relaxed a little and then thought, “How am I going to land this thing?” After a long time spent in deep thought — CRACK! The panel was blown back at 45 degrees, the load on the control column was reduced to give me limited control, enough to allow me to land.

I climbed out. A monsoon burst. I got soaked. I arrived in the mess — ready for a drink, of passion fruit juice. [Oh! Yes! — Ed.]

The Future of Fleet Air Arm Fixed Wing Operations

Will the future Royal Navy have a balanced fleet (again, at last)?

It was a fortunate thing that when HMS Ark Royal IV paid-off for the last time in 1978 that fixed wing flying in the fleet did not end completely. It was fortunate that those at the top of the navy had the foresight, cunning and determination to ensure that some of those few who had learned the arcane arts involved in aircraft operations at sea were still serving and able to transfer their skills to a new breed of carriers.

However it was unfortunate that the politicians (of both main parties) and mandarins in Whitehall could not think outside of the NATO box when it came to maintaining a balanced fleet, if they had acted otherwise then it is reasonably certain that Argentina would not have attempted to take control of the Falkland Islands in 1982. It is also fairly certain that the RN would not have sustained such heavy losses in life and warships as was the case. It is also the case that the final stages would have progressed more satisfactorily, from the availability of the air logistic resources lost with the Atlantic Conveyor. Also the tragic losses in Bluff Cove would have been avoided.

We only have to hope that, with a time gap developing in the availability of air defence assets to the fleet that a similar scenario does not develop, with the Falklands or anywhere else.

The events that took place during Operation Corporate served as a timely reminder that, with fewer bases overseas, the RAF cannot be relied upon to provide full air cover, in the form of AEW or CAP, anywhere that the fleet may have to operate. As Admiral Johns points out below the new, and even current, generation of reconnaissance helicopters can also perform sterling service in the AWACS role. Of course the RAF can operate from aircraft carriers alongside the FAA, however operating aircraft at sea is sure to provide a culture shock to many in Light Blue (the reactions of those elements of No. 1 Squadron RAF, Harriers, that came on board Ark Royal in the early 1970's are recalled with a smile). The aircraft also have to weather a more structurally hostile environment than is normally the case. For airframes to have a long operational life special building techniques are required, which along with extraordinary maritime-role fittings adds to the weight and invariably the initial cost.

To attempt to navalise an existing type can be both expensive and something of a compromise, this was epitomised by the World War 2 Seafire. Such would almost certainly be the case with a navalized Eurofighter Typhoon, besides there were concerns about the proximity of weapon fits to the deck, and thus such a solution is unlikely unless the Lockheed-Martin F-35 series development becomes hopelessly compromised. A Naval Typhoon would be most likely a Short Take Off But Arrested Landing (STOBAR) variant. With the Bush administration searching for budget cuts in the wake of Katrina this may come to pass, although there are many governments around the world with a stake in the development which may help to ensure a continuation of at least one version.

The favoured version for the UK, both RAF and RN, was the Short Take Off and Vertical Landing (STOVL) F-35B, as it is for the US Marine Corps. The RN of course have much experience with operating the Sea Harrier in this capacity, however whether or not the F-35B can deliver what the Navy needs has come under scrutiny. The RAF was not interested in the Conventional Take Off and Landing (CTOL) F-35A (the USAF's favoured variant) as this would undercut their case for Typhoon acquisition. It has been reported that not upsetting the RAF was one reason for the joint settlement on the F-35B. Certainly the options are, reportedly, still open as far as the Navy is concerned for purchasing the F-35C Carrier Version (CV), or even a mix of variants. The support logistics would of course be more complex, but should fleet capability and even questions of vulnerability play second fiddle to the needs of logistic support (mostly cost driven it is suspected)?

Reasons for qualms about the CV F-35C appear to be centred on the higher cost pro rata and the fact that this version has yet to be developed and thus the lead time longer.

On the plus side, once operational, the load carrying ability and endurance of the F-35C will be superior, as will the allowable bring-back load. Indeed, because of the need to fit a front lift fan unit behind the cockpit the internal weapons bays are shorter and thus the full range of weapons fits will not be available to the STOVL version, How critical this would be to operational capability is not certain. However the adoption of catapults and arrestor gear in the CVF will open up possibilities for longer range reconnaissance and AWACS.

Excess weight has been a problem with the F-35B, and this is one of the reasons behind a resurgence of RN interest in the CV F-35C. Measures taken to ameliorate this weight problem have been partially successful and include; reducing the intercostal dimensions in the wing allowing a skin thickness reduction and redesign of the wing mate joint, weapons bay size reduction, electrical system redesign to reduce battery size and mass of wiring and allowing less thrust to the roll post outlets leaving more for main lift. These, and other, measures have made an approximately nine percent reduction on the original empty weight of 13,600 kg.

Operation of the F-35B STOVL will require less sea room than conventional jet operation and the higher sortie rate of STOVL suggests that 24 can do the work of 36 CV types when ships are operating close to their targets. Also sea state is not such a limiting factor. However if the range is longer, as the USN have discovered with sorties over Afghanistan, then the CV variant has its attractions.

With respect to the CVF itself one hopes that the mandarins have learned lessons from the past one of which is that reducing the size of a carrier far from reducing costs can actually increase them due to added complexity of construction. Certainly history has shown that over the operational life of a carrier, and CVF is mooted to have about 50 years planned, aircraft tend to grow in size. Experience with the Harrier suggests that, due to low serviceability, more rather than fewer aircraft are required, certainly if a mix of F-35C and F-35B is settled on. Besides, F-32s of any type are larger than the current

Harrier STOVL which latter has a spot factor of 0.82, where a spot factor of unity (1.0) is allocated to the F-18 Hornet. The F-32C CV has a spot factor of 1.11 and the F-32B one of 1.09, although the CV variant could develop larger yet.

Hurricane Katrina has already been mentioned but the volatility in fuel markets (sorry for the pun) that ensued, and the indisputable fact that there are good reasons to believe that we are on the peak of oil output with usage escalating as Asian economies grow fast, then securing fuel for carrier use may become problematic. Nuclear propulsion is not yet viable for aircraft, although serious trial were carried out during the latter half of the last century, but perhaps should be re-considered for CVF. Steam generation for catapults may be a thing of the past as the development of Electromagnetic Aircraft Launch System (EMALS) comes to fruition. Although whether or not this technology will be proven enough (electromagnetic interference with weapons systems, communications, ECM and radar may be troublesome) or even available for UK use are other questions.

There appears to be renewed French interest in shared production of a common CVF but French preference is almost certain to include the ability for catapult launch and arrested recovery so that their already deployed Raphael can be accommodated.

The most worrying factor is the time gap between the final retirement of Sea Harrier FA2 (2006) with its superb Blue Vixen Radar (which makes it still one of the most potent interceptors in any force) and full deployment of an F-35 type (whichever variant(s) of JSF are purchased for the RN use) which is unlikely to be before 2012. It should be stressed that the RAF accent is on the ground attack role and not interception. The re-equipment of naval squadrons with GR7s rebuilt to GR9a standard will still leave the navy short of the air defence capability hitherto enjoyed. It is understood that both the GR7 (premature fatigue of aft fuselage) and FA2 SHAR require extensive structural work, hence the earlier rather than later retirement of the latter.

The strike role is of course important, but then so is air defence. The Type 45 'Daring' class destroyers are intended as air-defence vessels and successors to the Type 42. The Type 45 has had a protracted development period partly due to political vacillation over a seven-nation NATO replacement frigate (NFR90) project which pushed aside the UK only plans on Types 43 and 44. The ships hulls, and attached superstructures, are being constructed in modules, labelled Blocks A to F (Aft to Forward). Blocks A and D being built by BAE Systems Marine Clyde (The Yarrow Scotstoun site), the bow blocks F and E built by Vosper Thornycroft and the Mega-Block B & C by BAE Systems Marine Barrow. The bow sections of the lead ship, Daring (D32?), emerged from the VT's Portsmouth site in May 2005 and were mated to the BAE built sections at Scotstoun in late June 2005. With launch date, for Daring, due in February 2006 and an in-service date of May 2009 and others so far with names, two more of Batch 1 in 2010 and three Batch 2 following-on between 2012 and 2014 it looks as if the fleet is going to have an air defence gap for awhile.

Much more information can be found on all the above topics at:

<http://navy-matters.beedall.com/index.html>

FAA Update Brief for FAA Association AGM

By Rear Admiral Fleet Air Arm, Rear Admiral A J Johns CBE

It is a great pleasure for me to be invited here today to address you and try to bring you up to date with some of the key developments that have taken place in the FAA recently and brief you on what we can expect in the future.

I thought I would start with the future of my post. As some of you are aware, I will be handing over the reins as Assistant Chief of Naval Staff (ACNS) to Admiral Massey in July, and as yet do not know where I will be going. The role of Rear Admiral Fleet Air Arm (RAFAA) is not tied to that of ACNS and if I am able, I would very much like to retain the position of RAFAA in my new post; a desire which is supported by CINC FLEET. Failing that, we may have to look further afield for a 2* Aviator, but I can assure you that it has been recognised that in the wider arena there is a definite requirement for a dark blue 2* as the head of the FAA. I therefore see that we will retain our Head of Fighting Arm at this crucial time, as we move towards the CVF era.

Commodore Simon Charlier continues with the day to day management of the Naval Air Command as Commodore Fleet Air Arm and Assistant Chief of Staff (Aviation) [ACOS AV] and he is accountable direct to Chief of Staff (Warfare), Admiral Snelson, for the provision of operationally capable Squadrons, Flights and personnel in support of Fleets requirements. Fleet Aviation has now completed its journey from Yeovilton which started nearly three years ago, and it is now based in the new Fleet Headquarters on Whale Island. The Leach building, with its open plan office layout provides a unique and exciting working environment, and by engaging daily with our Fleet brethren, Simon and his team are ensuring that they are afforded a greater visibility of Fleet Air Arm issues and that we are correctly represented in Naval Business.

An addition to the ACOS AV organisation has been the CV division, headed by Capt' James, this joint team has been formed to work on plans for the employment of the future CVF, while refocusing the CVS [small aircraft carrier] towards Maritime Strike operations using GR7/9 controlled by SK7 ASaC [Airborne Surveillance and Area Control — previously Airborne Early Warning]. The introduction of the future carrier strike capability, the new CVF with a new aircraft type offers the greatest hope and the greatest challenge right now. We are entering a crucial period for CVF as the recently formed Alliance moves us ever nearer towards Main Gate. The CVF will be one of the longest living programmes we have taken on in Defence, perhaps ever, and it is a crucially important project, not only for the RN but also for Defence. In order for the project to work correctly we will need even closer links with the RAF than we have already in this age of Jointery, as it is important for their future as it is for ours.

These links have already been strengthened, through the creation of joint Force Harrier (JFH), as I am sure you are all aware, the Sea Harrier is being withdrawn from service in

preparation for the introduction of the F-35 Joint Combat Aircraft (JCA). 800 Sqn decommissioned last year and 899 Sq'n will be disbanded at the end of this month [April 2005]. The intention is for 800 to stand up again in March 2006 equipped with GR9 and based at RAF Cottesmore. FA2 pilots have already completed the conversion course to GR7 at RAF Wittering and some are on operations in Afghanistan as we speak. As 800 stands up, 801 will disband, ending Sea Harrier presence at Yeovilton. 801 will then join 800 at Cottesmore with GR9 in October 2006. Throughout this period a Naval Harrier Squadron will have been retained and 800 and 801 will remain at least 'RN Heavy' if not totally RN manned Squadrons and will continue to conduct the larger percentage of Maritime deployments. The shape of JFH has been designed in preparation for the introduction of JCA and I am therefore confident that we shall continue to see RN fixed wing flying on the CVF and in to the future. The debate on which variant of JCA, conventional or VSTOL (Very Short Take Off or Landing), is largely complete, with the VSTOL variant achieving all its Key User Requirements. Whichever one is finally chosen, it will provide a quantum leap in performance and capability and as the CVF is a project with an estimated 50 year life span, the design is being developed with the ability to take conventional aircraft in the form of JCAs successor, if required.

The concept of Maritime Strike is being trialled as we speak by HMS Invincible who is in the Gulf on Exercise MAR STRIKE 05. This successful operation has been Joint Force Harrier with 801 FA2s and 1 Sqn GR7s embarked in theatre to provide power projection over the land independent of host nation support. They were also able to send two aircraft into Kandahar in land-locked Afghanistan, to fly sorties in support of Operation Herrick.

As you will recall, Operation TELIC (Iraq) in 2003 saw extensive involvement of the FAA, proving existing capabilities and also highlighting new ones for further developments. CHF (845/847) [Commando Helicopter Force] took a major part in the largest Amphibous Assault since Suez. The Lynx was fitted with the awesome ½ inch M3M gun and NVG [night vision goggles] to enable it to provide Force Protection which it did successfully and the Airborne Surveillance and Control Sea Kings 849 Squadron, astounding us all with the quality of the information that they can provide. I was lucky enough to fly with them last year and the capability of that aircraft is truly remarkable. To give you some idea of the scale, from where we were, above St Ives, they were able to control operations over North Wales. As capability is developed, we will see a transition in 849s role from Force Protection to Force Projection. This has again been proved in MAR STRIKE 05, when the 849 Sea King was able to take the place of the AWACS to fill a gap and was able to provide a comparable, and in some areas better, picture.

TELIC also saw the first operational use of Merlin by 814 and there again operating in the Gulf on MAR STRIKE with 820 smashing a few of the myths about Merlin and producing a very reliable and very capable aircraft, involved in Force Protection and its traditional ASW role. There is no doubt that the Merlin force has struggled with the problems of concurrent development and production for a number of years now, and the

current shortages have lead to a reduced operational Fleet at present, but we will manage our way through this difficult period.

When airborne, Merlin is proving to be an extremely capable aircraft. It is not just a Sea King replacement, it is a quantum leap in capability. For example, HMS Monmouth is currently on deployment with the NATO force in the Mediterranean and when her Merlin was disembarked in Crete, it was inadvertently tasked by NATO as a Maritime Patrol Aircraft (like Nimrod). Suffice to say it produced an outstanding picture and the NATO programmers were astonished to discover that this service was being provided by a helicopter. Similarly the massive leap in the capability of both the active and passive sonar fitted to Merlin prompted a beleaguered German SSK Commander during a recent ASW Exercise to declare that 'Merlin was King of the Littoral' (shallow water) after the Merlin found him every time. All of this has prompted us to declare the Merlin as a Maritime Patrol Helicopter and we look forward to developing its capability further.

The Lynx Force remains busy, with 14 Lynx flights currently deployed across the world. The flight embarked in RFA Wave Knight in the Caribbean have been partaking in Counter Drugs Operations and over the last 4 months have been involved in the seizure of 3 multi-million pound consignments of drugs. HMS Endurance is completing her season in the Antarctic with her two Lynx and will be returning shortly.

From the Commando Helicopter Force, 846 and 847 Squadrons are approaching the ends of their tours to Bosnia providing Medium Support Helicopter role and 845 are operating in Basrah, providing lift and are increasingly involved in surveillance tasks.

The RN Sea King force has been combined into 771 Squadron who continue to provide Search and Rescue, Maritime Counter Terrorism cover and training for all Sea King personnel as well as parenting the two Sea King Flights, one of which is embarked in HMS Invincible and being used extensively as a utility aircraft in the Gulf. The Gannet SAR detachment remains based at Prestwick with 3 Sea Kings and I visited them last year and enjoyed some impressive mountain flying.

Apache has conducted flying trials with HMS Ocean and is expected to achieve an Interim Operational Clearance during this Summers JMC before achieving a full capability next year when 8 Apache will embark in Ocean and a CVS, completing the very Joint nature of modern maritime aviation operations.

Some of you may have heard of last years DART study, which looked at rationalizing the UKs, many military airfields. The results have been published and announcements expected shortly. Suffice to say that the RN has for a number of yewars made exceptionally good use of our real estate, with a high operational output per acre and I am confident that our airfields are not under threat.

In summary, the Fleet Air Arm has undergone considerable change over the past few years, with the successful formation of Joint Helicopter Command under Operational Command (OPCOMM) of CINCLAND and the move of the Sea Harrier Squadrons into

1 Group RAF. Although OPCOM and the airframes are now the responsibility of the RAF and Army, those personnel remain Navy, and those that I have met are keen to maintain the very strong ethos of the FAA. Along with the Naval Air Command personnel, they remain rightly proud of their collective Maritime Aviation expertise and it is clear that this will become increasingly important in the future. As recent events during Operation TELEC proved, Maritime Aviation is a key enabler in Joint Operations and I don't have to tell you that it is a demanding and highly specialised profession that requires skills in constant practice. The need for a Fleet Air Arm to maintain core expertise in embarked flying operations is stronger than ever, as we now provide the framework for an even wider range of aircraft from the RN, RAF and Army who will fly at sea.

I therefore see that the future for the FAA is bright. The specific needs of Maritime Aviation have been recognised for many years and despite all the recent changes and developments, the core maritime expertise that we possess has been safeguarded.

From The Editor

In the Sunday Times in 1998 under the heading 'Leviathans that Eat Our Wealth' appeared another of those letters from members of 'the other air force' questioning the need for seemingly expensive replacement aircraft carriers. I felt obliged to respond.

I must take issue with much of the opinion expressed by Wing Cdr Brookes in Letters to The Editor, Sunday 29 March 1998, Section 5, Page 8.

Maintaining a fleet of aircraft carriers is expensive, but so is the cost in lives and material which can ensue from the lack of a balanced fleet. In this respect, Wing Cdr. Brookes appears not to have paid any attention to history, even recent history. Thanks to the pre-war inter-service rivalry where the RAF lobby gained the upper hand, insufficient numbers of carriers and adequate naval aircraft were available to cover all contingencies as the war progressed. The RAF had, between the wars managed to persuade that they could provide fleet air cover from land bases in any theatre of war. The fallacious nature of such arguments was amply demonstrated on December 10th 1941 [as well as during the Greece and Crete campaigns and the Malta convoys] when the modern battleship HMS Prince of Wales and the older (WW1) battle cruiser HMS Repulse were sunk by Japanese aircraft off Malaya. Where was the RAF?

By-passing the Korean War, which incidentally proved the value of sea-borne air-power once again, let us move now to the Falkland's War. The Sea Harriers, and the RAF Harriers, flying from the carriers Invincible and Hermes, proved effective beyond the MOD's wildest dreams, in spite of the small numbers deployed. This effectiveness was in no small measure due to the high state of operational readiness which Sea Harrier squadrons had achieved, a mark of the dedication of maintainers and of the dedication and courage of the aircrew.

Aspects of the air campaign are well documented in Commander Nigel (Sharky) Ward's book 'Sea Harrier Over the Falklands'. The high cost, in flying hours and fuel of 'tanking' Vulcans over Stanley airfield and the, by any standards, singularly poor results are particularly well spelled out in Ward's book (particularly pp. 246 - 247). As is the fact that to mount some of these raids the RAF high command curtailed some activities of the air arm in the interests of preventing blue on blue, resulting in the task force being more exposed to air attack than was desirable or necessary. I consider that the Falkland's War also demonstrated the dire consequences which can ensue from the lack of a fleet carrier such as the then recently decommissioned, Ark Royal. I wonder how successful the Argentine's air attacks on the task force would have been with AEW Gannets to provide more effective radar coverage and the higher speed and more heavily armed Phantoms for CAP and Strike. Not to mention the fact that Buccaneers could have toss-bombed Stanley airfield with a high degree of both accuracy and impunity.

One other thing that carrier borne air power allows is the mounting of campaigns, such as those in the Gulf in 1991 and more recently, without compromising either another nation's air space or the flying range of aircraft. Let us not once again have to learn the costly lessons of history. We are still an island nation which relies heavily on trade by sea. The history of centuries ought to tell anyone that without a strong, balanced navy we can be held to ransom at anytime.

"Empire Winnie" story continued from page 6

... L1045 but being unable to free them we attached a ten gallon green painted drum to the tow wire, slipped the tow from our hook leaving the drum to act as a wreck buoy marking the position of L1045's after end. L1015 had by this time lost [the use of] her engines and steering gear so we now had to attach a tow to her. We had no further towing equipment available so the for'ard end of L1045 was attached to the side of Winnie's weighed anchor and with salvage pumps operating we proceeded towards Arramanches. All went well, with the pumps keeping water in the for'ard end at a reasonable level until we were about two cables from the harbour. Then, for no apparent reason, the for'ard end of L1045 stood on her end and began to slip through the attached wires and sank. We immediately stood on to the SW towards shore with same so as to keep it clear of the harbour entrance, this being extremely difficult because we still had L1015 in tow, she being completely out of control and having lost her anchor.

At this time we were ordered to bring L1015 into harbour, the Salvage Officer now taking responsibility for the wreck of L1045 lying outside the harbour. We suffered damage to our propellers from L1045 with other damage unknown at this time.

Postscript.

On August 23rd 1944 the Empire Winnie towed the SS Louis Kossuth, which had been torpedoed by U-989 at 50°16'N, 01°41'30"W, back to Cowes, IoW. Thirteen of the three hundred and thirty four US troops onboard were injured, the only casualties.

The fate of U-989 can be discovered by visiting: <http://www.uboaat.net/boats/u989.htm>

The Book-Shelf

A selection of books that may be of interest.

Ballantine, Iain (2004) 'Strike From The Sea The Royal Navy and US Navy at War in the Middle East', Pen & Sword, Barnsley, South Yorkshire. England. ISBN 1-84415-059-3

This is a very readable, well researched, written and informed narrative but with a few caveats of which more below.

Although the title of this work defines the time period covered those looking for much detail of RN, or USN, operations in Middle East before 1990 would have to look elsewhere as the bulk of the book concerns operations in the Gulf against Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq.

Everything that comes before; the Abadan Crisis, Suez, the Iran – Iraq conflict and the associated tanker war, familiar to any of our readers involved in the Armilla Patrol, and the US clash with Libya seems purely there by way of introduction. Having written that it should be acknowledged that Ballantine provides a fair overview of events and even describes the way in which US Navy vessels, and even aircraft, nearly came into open conflict with the RN by harassing the latter's ships.

What is surprising is that there is no mention of the sustained Israeli attack, in international waters, by fast torpedo boats, gun boats and aircraft of the USS Liberty, a communications surveillance (Elint) vessel operated for the NSA (National Security Agency) in 1967, leaving 34 dead and 171 wounded from a crew of 297.

That the attack was pre-meditated and not some ghastly miss-identification accident is backed up by the fact that Israeli aircraft circled the Liberty at low level thirteen times on eight different occasions, enough to identify this uniquely profiled vessel flying a prominent ensign. Indeed one Israeli reconnaissance aircraft correctly reported the Liberty's identification letters, painted in large white characters, as GTR-5 to his ground controller. This was not a difficult feat in the crystal clear air.

The fact that Israeli forces were conducting a ferocious assault on the nearby Arab town of El Arish ('Al-Arîsh) could have been motive enough. As James Bamford writes in 'Body of Secrets How America's NSA and Britain's GCHQ Eavesdrop on the World', in the chapter entitled 'Blood' with reference to the Liberty having reached the longitude at which she was to begin her back and forth patrol with the captain using the minaret spire in El Arish as a turning marker, 'Although no one on the ship knew it at the time, the Liberty had suddenly trespassed into a private horror. At that very moment, near the minaret at El Arish, Israeli forces were engaged in a criminal slaughter'. Were the Israeli's afraid of their wireless traffic being intercepted and their secret getting out?

When dealing with the USS Vincennes incident, Ballantine again steers clear of controversy, very much presenting the 'official' version when there is considerable evidence that the vessel was inside Iranian territorial waters and thus not in the position claimed and that it was a certain 'gung ho' attitude that led to the tragedy of an Airbus with 290 people aboard, Mecca pilgrims for the most part, being brought down by missiles launched from the Aegis cruiser.

The ships captain, when interviewed, claimed that the aircraft was outside the commercial corridor and losing altitude in-bound to the Vincennes at 450 knots. In fact the aircraft was slowly turning away from the Vincennes, still gaining altitude at 385 knots and transmitting the proper transponder commercial aircraft identification code. Some consider this incident to be the prime motive behind the Lockerbie affair.

Ballantine also does himself no favours when sticking to the 'official' line that Saddam still had WMD in 2003 and thus had to be taken out to prevent their use on the western allies and/or their Middle Eastern friends. As many suspected at the time, and Scott Ritter and Hans Blix judged (the latter's book is currently being read), this had ceased to be the case. It is now patently obvious that it was well known before the publication date of this book that Iraqi WMD had ceased to be a threat, to anyone.

Overall a very good and informative read providing this isn't the only book one reads on the history of the middle east, particularly since oil was discovered in large quantities and this is where I would quibble with Ballantine's statement in the introduction, 'The roots of the Iraq War, the Gulf War and the Tanker War reach back to the confrontation between the Anglo-American axis and other strong men in the Middle East ...'.

The history stretches somewhat further back than that, going back to the decision to equip the RN with oil-burning warships in place of coal, developments in aviation and motor transport, in industry in general and the commensurate encouragement of Arab revolt against the Ottoman Empire, where Lawrence of Arabia came to prominence, and the way in which the Arab lands were parcelled out as the result of decisions made after the Armistice in 1918 with a view to satisfying the oil needs of Britain and France.

Cronin, D. (1990) 'Royal Navy Shipboard Aircraft Developments 1912–1931', Air Britain (Historians) Ltd, Tonbridge. Kent. ISBN 0-85130-165-7

Sturtivant, R. & Cronin, D. (1998) 'Fleet Air Arm Aircraft, Units and Ships 1920 to 1939', Air Britain (Historians) Ltd, Tonbridge. Kent. ISBN 0-85130-271-8

Sturtivant, R. & Page, G. (1998) 'Royal Navy Aircraft Serials and Units 1911–1919', Air Britain (Historians) Ltd, Tonbridge. Kent. ISBN 0-85130-191-6

This is a brief notice to inform that the above are still available, the latter two at reduced price. Air-Britain (Historians) 01732 838968 sales@air-britain.co.uk

Davies, K. M. (2005) 'The Observer in the Royal Navy 1908–2003', Serendipity, First Floor, 37/39 Victoria Road, Darlington. DL1 5SF. ISBN 1-84394-154-6

This is a well researched and illuminating account that traces not only the emergence of the observer, some would say 'the ballast in the back seat', in naval aviation but also the emergence of naval aviation itself, which will be 100 years old in other three years. To think that only another 100 years before that the Royal Navy was using aerodynamic forces in quite a different way, to propel the mobile artillery batteries otherwise known as 'ships of the line' or 'line-of-battleship' the triumph of which has only so recently been celebrated.

It is whilst outlining the early development of naval aviation that Davies makes a fundamental error, which will hopefully be corrected in later prints, when he states, 'Admiral Sir John Fraser, the First Sea Lord, initiated the use of airships against submarines', which of course, should refer to Admiral Sir John Fisher. Another elementary mistake, which may not be his alone, is that the caption under the picture of a Sea King AEW (with Searchwater antenna) on page 51 incorrectly describes the aircraft as a HAS-5. Similarly the Sea King on page 54 is not an AEW 2 type but is a HAS-5.

A slight discrepancy between Davies and Cronin (see above) appears with description of the damage to HMS Killingholme, a Humber paddle ferry converted to a seaplane tender carrying Sopwith Schneider or Baby seaplanes for anti-Zeppelin patrols. Davies writes that Killingholme was damaged by torpedo on 27th April 1916, whereas Cronin explains that it was a mine that damaged the port paddle box on the night of 28th April 1916. I would not like to judge which is correct.

Touching all the bases in such a long history in just 68 pages, as Davies does, means that detail on each is necessarily brief. This also means that the book is somewhat costly at the published price of £9.95 (although I have noted books of similar size and price in bookshops), although FAAA members are offered a 35% discount.

This book would make a worthwhile addition to the specialist's library and a useful starting point for further research.

Picknett, L., Prince, C., Prior, S. & Brydon, R. (2005) 'Friendly Fire The Secret War Between the Allies', Mainstream Publishing. Edinburgh & London. ISBN 1-84018-996-7

For those who are puzzled by the at times seemingly incomprehensible actions of allied leaders, including Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin during World War 2 then this groundbreaking book could provide some of the answers.

This team has now established a fine track record in investigative reporting with this their third book, the first being the noteworthy 'Double Standards the Rudolf Hess Cover-up', (2001), Little, Brown and Company (UK). London. ISBN 0-316-85768-8

Wragg, David. (2004) 'Second World War Carrier Campaigns', Grub Street. London. ISBN 1-904010-04-0

Writing a fair review of this book is somewhat difficult. On the one hand, Wragg's dedication in providing a written record of the exploits of the sea-going air force is beyond dispute. He has in the past provided useful works of reference, e.g. The Fleet Air Arm Handbook 1939-1945 is also true. On the other hand, he does himself, or the subject, no favours by trying to spread his material too thinly and not covering any particular campaign in adequate detail and what detail there is, is often suspect.

For example on page 71 Wragg states, '... Akitsu Maru was torpedoed ... by the USS Archerfish...', when in fact the submarine involved was the USS Queenfish. Wragg's claim that no details survive of Akitsu Maru and sister ship Nigitsu Maru is unfounded. Indeed this claim is something of a puzzle, such details are in Roger Chesnau's, 'Aircraft Carriers of the World, 1914 to the Present', cited in the Bibliography, which also states that the USS Queenfish sank the Akitsu Maru, not the USS Archerfish as Wragg has it..

As an overview of the subject, and factual errors aside, the narrative may have worked if Wragg had drawn upon, at least some, more up-to-date sources, certainly from more sources of the other combatant nations in the respective campaigns. History is always being revised as the result of fresh material that comes to the surface including that released after time limits expire or in other ways. A recent example is the fresh light that has been thrown on the Nelson story by Dr. Colin White's Nelson Letters Project.

If Wragg had explored more recent material he would have been aware of, and commented on, the use of Ultra, e.g. Enigma decrypts, there is a wealth of information now available on this very topic from the National Archives. Extracts from such would have informed of the influence that lead Admiral Cunningham to make the dispositions that he did in bringing on the success at Matapan in 1941. Although Wragg correctly states that Matapan was a great British success he underrates the effect on the Italian navy which left the Royal Navy with surface control of the sea, although subject to heavy air attack which caused huge losses to the RN and the Army during the Greece and Crete campaigns. With that latter, Wragg again misses the fact that by defending Crete as it did the British caused the Germans to expend their elite airborne forces to the great detriment of German campaigns on other fronts, as more recent sources will inform.

All in all, although Wragg, as ever, produces a very readable story this one is rather like a 'limp lettuce', of little real substance and rather tired.

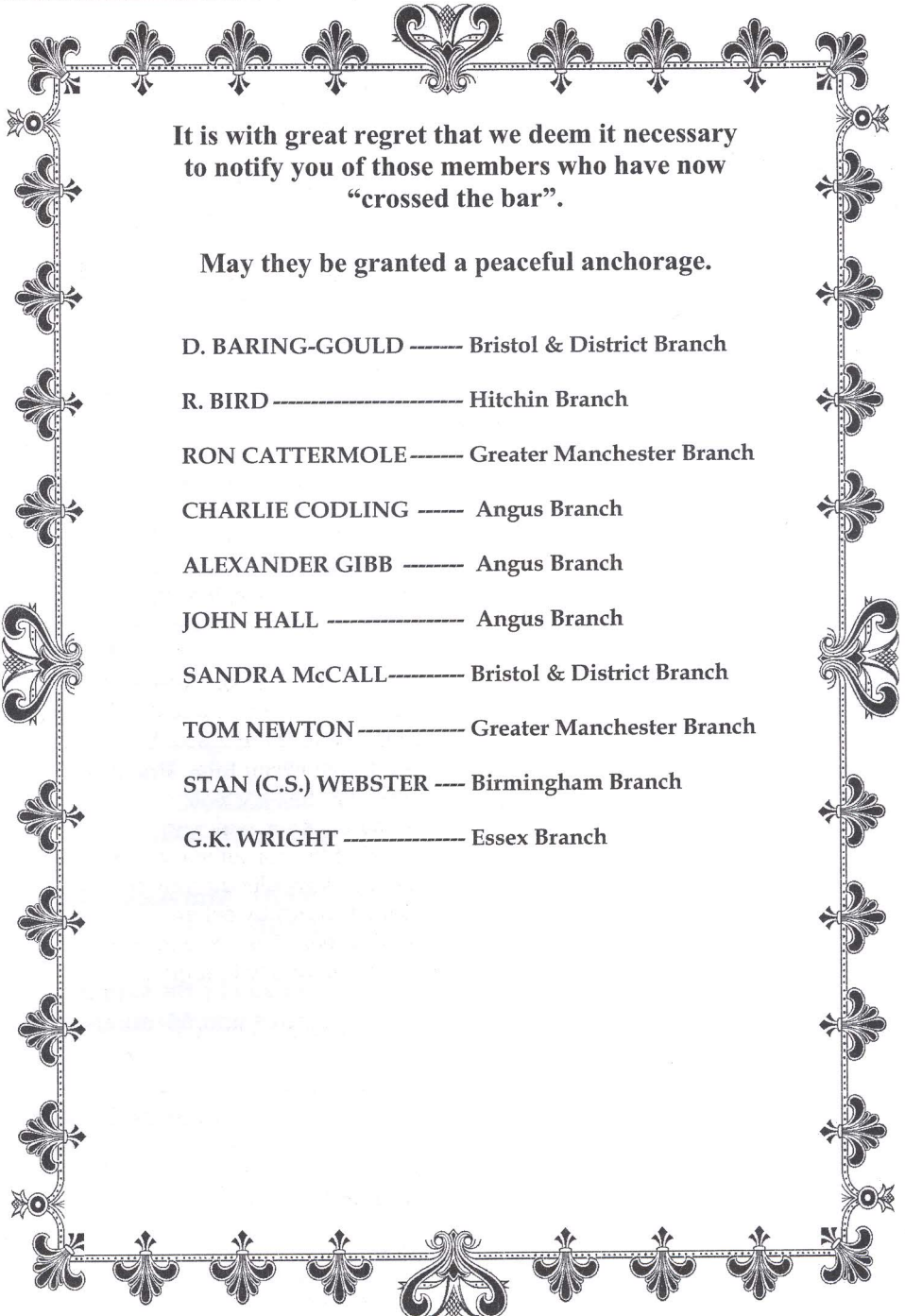
Crossword Answers

Across :

1. gone, 3. overthrown, 10. native cat, 11. vital, 12. layer, 13. oriental, 15. nattily, 17. Etonian, 19. entreat, 21. on theme, 22. farthing, 24 orbit, 27. triad, 28. kings rook, 29. penny stock, 30. star

Down :

1. gunslinger, 2. nutty, 4. victory, 5. ratline, 6. haven, 7. ostracize, 8. Nile, 9. overtime, 14. undertaker, 16. titration, 18. out house, 20. trinket, 21. organic, 23. teddy, 25. boost, 26. step



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to notify you of those members who have now
“crossed the bar”.

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CHARLIE CODLING ----- Angus Branch

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