

## ‘A Right Royal Knees Up’

Earlier this year, 2018, our good friends Peter and Jenny Murray asked Sheila my wife and I if we would like to attend the Royal Garden Party at Buckingham Palace in aid of the ‘The Not Forgotten Association’ which was to be held later in the year. We were delighted to be



asked so they put our names forward and much to our delight some weeks later I received a form to complete about myself and a brief resume of my naval career which I completed and duly sent off. Some weeks later I received the official invite with an accompanying letter to say that I had been selected to be presented to Her Royal Highness the Princess Royal, at which I was

### The Official Invite

gobsmacked as I did not know why at that moment in time. So on the due day in my No 1's and few medals (Blazer for us retired oldies); I mustered at Peter's house along with Mick Wyatt as he was also attending. We then caught the train to London, and duly arrived at the gates to the Palace where we had to queue for about forty minutes along with all the other invited serving and ex-serving guests. At this point I would like to turn the clock back to the previous weekend where I had attended the Royal Navy Gunnery Instructors Association's annual reunion dinner. This year it was held in the Wardroom of HMS Excellent and the guest of honour was Commodore Peter Tribe RN (Rtd) who coincidentally is a director of 'The Not Forgotten Association'. I was able to speak to him and he said I should make myself known to him at the Garden Party. This turned out not to be too difficult because as we entered the palace grounds he was there to greet us. We were directed to the back of the palace where there was a large marquee with tables and chairs inside and out on the lawns.



**Peter, Me, Sheila, Jenny & Mick.**

After settling down at a table I had to seek out a Lt Cdr Mike Bray RN who was responsible for the group I would be joining to be presented. It all became clear why I had been selected as he said you are the one of those who were on Christmas Island,

I had put this little adventure on the form, more about that later. After being briefed about times and protocol I returned to my friends where we lined up in the marquee for our lovely tea. I think there were about 2000 people at the party with a mixture of young and old, members of all three services, ex-service and of course those who had been wounded in action. At three o'clock, as ordered I went to my seat in the group being presented. I was in Group 'G' and it was a long wait, but well worth it. My wife Sheila had to stand behind as



**The EA (Air) being presented**

only the ex-service personnel were to be presented. There must have been about 300 and Princes Anne shook hands and chatted with each one as well. Whilst I was waiting I spoke to the guy on my right, whose name escapes me, anyway it turns out he was an Airey Fairy EA (Air) and his last posting was at Portland on the target pilotless aircraft, somebody might recognise him.

Before he was presented it was my turn and the Lt Cdr introduced me saying I had been at Christmas Island for the nuclear tests. The Princes then asked me about it and I said any fish we caught had the Geiger counter miked over it which in most cases registered. Anyway she said we did not have green peace in those days. She then went onto ask me what I did when I left the services and I informed her I had become Safety Adviser to British Waterways to which she replied "now the Canal and River Trust" as she has a canal at the bottom of her garden in Stroud. She seemed well informed and was interested in what I had done.



**Me being presented**



**What No Strawberries!!**

After this we returned to our friends and had a walk around the grounds to see the rose garden whilst the RM band marched up and down giving us a fine rendition of music. One unfortunate thing happened whilst we were waiting for the Princes they served Strawberries and cream which we missed; my wife Sheila was miffed to say the least when we got back to the marquee

after walking around the grounds the second issue had run out so I was not popular with the 'one who must be obeyed'.

After some light refreshments of tea, the time was nigh for us to leave so we were directed through the palace to the in court yard and then round to the front and out through the main gate to wend our way back to the underground for Pinner then home. A long and lovely day was had by all, my wife and I felt privileged to have been invited.

Earlier I mentioned about my little trip to Christmas Island (now Kiritimati), which is part of the 'Line Islands' in the Pacific Ocean. I was a young able seaman serving in HMS Cossack and we were assigned to be guard ship for six weeks in November 1957 for one of the nuclear test which Britain was undertaking named 'Operation Grapple'. It was a bit of a boring routine patrolling looking for unwanted ships around this atoll and when not patrolling we were



**HMS Cossack**

anchored off the Island which only sported a tented NAFFI canteen, so swimming or fishing was the only other sport. On the due day we steamed off on patrol and all number of foreign flagged ships appeared (No Green Peace), but after trying to chase them out of the exclusion zone we took up our allotted position to watch the explosion. It was an air burst equivalent to 1.8 megatons of TNT (Hydrogen Bomb) what a sight that was. I was sitting on the upper deck along with most of the ships company on a clear sunny day we were ordered to sit down and place our hands over our face, after the explosion we stood up and saw the mushroom rising to the sky it was not only something to behold and also frightening to think of its destructive power. After this we closed down, rigged pre-



**The Mushroom**

wetting, this was just hoses, as we were a WW2 type destroyer with an open bridge, so there was nothing built in or any air conditioning in the ship, it was stifling. Anyway off we sailed to a nearby island called Fanning (now Tabuaerun) to pick up samples of tests etc., and return them to Christmas Island. After a few more days we set sail for safer climes and a Christmas in Hong Kong. As you can see from my pictures I did not suffer any after effects as some who were based there have reported to have.

That's all folks; I hope you enjoyed reading my foray into royal circles and nuclear fallout.

**Ken Satterthwaite (Ex CGI)**