

'Pistol Post'

October 2007



Edited by Paul 'Manny' Cousens

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ROADSHOW –GUZZ

17th November 2007

Ambuscade Roadshow & Committee meeting at Plymouth. All invited. See back page for details

NEXT MAJOR REUNION

Will be in **2009**

at our adopted town **Crewe** in Cheshire—so put it in in your diary and we'll see you there!



2007 has proved to be a very eventful period for the Association and I find myself in the unusual but welcome position of having lots of news to share.

The Ambuscade calendar started back in February with an informal get together in Portsmouth, hosted by John Lippiett & the Mary Rose Trust, all Ambusmen & families were treated to a VIP tour of the old ship and the fascinating museum which apparently pre-dates even the saltiest of sea dogs in our Association! The usual drinking session followed on the "Hard" and continued into the early hours at Gun Wharf Quays.

The good work that was put in at Pompey and the earlier meetings paid off in May when we held our Fourth Ambuscade reunion, returning again to our spiritual home of Crewe. The event was well attended again with a lot of the old faces but encouragingly a good number of first timers made for fresh dits and sea stories.

We again (rather foolishly) took on the muscle bosuns from the local gym in the *Ambuscade Challenge - Fire Engine Pull* and came a not very close second, third and fourth – we live to lose another day, on a good note the Chairman won a magnum of champagne and we raised a few quid for charity.

We also raised a fabulous £800 in the evening auction thanks chiefly to the generous donation by Ray & Chris Taylor for the use of their

French Gite & everyone's generosity on the evening with the proceeds being split between Crewe Sea Cadets and the Mayors local Charity.

Numerous, humorous incidents occurred throughout the weekend but the highlight for me was observing Manny Cousens being held upright only by the assistance of a dozen helium balloons and later trapped in a series of toilet doors – pure vanilla, see the picture and many more on the website.

2007 was also the 25th Anniversary of the Falklands campaign and Ambuscade's participation got great exposure for a number of reasons.

The London march past in June saw a good turnout from the Association members and to coincide with the anniversary a specially designed coin was commissioned with the Ambuscade crest, we still have a few left if anyone wants one please let me know.

War & Peas, intimate letters from the Falklands War did a tremendous job of raising the ships profile, written by John Lippiett who was the Jimmy during the conflict is based on letters between John & his wife Jenny and gives a fascinating insight to life onboard & back home in 1982. Extracts from the book were read out daily on the Radio 4 Today programme giving excellent publicity for the ship 25 years on.



We were also well featured in the Falklands museum displays at both Devonport and Portsmouth with special thanks going out to Jan Criddle for his work in putting Ambuscade back on the map.

With the next major reunion not planned until 2009 we are holding a number of smaller get together sessions at various locations the next being in Plymouth over the weekend of 19th & 20th November, we would be delighted if you could join us for either of the days or even better make a weekend of it, details are available in this Pistol Post or alternatively are posted on the website.

Do try and make it to one of our gatherings, you are guaranteed a good time and get a golden opportunity of reuniting with old mates and making new ones, see you in Devonport.

Yours in all things

Ambuscade

Mark Brocklehurst

Captain's Log

AMBUSCADE CO fills in another S232, Report of Collisions and Groundings

or "Breaking News" By Mike Gretton

I once had to fill in a Report of Collisions in HMS AMBUSCADE after parking rather robustly on Captain F's ship, HMS HERMIONE. I have now had a more recent prang, of which there have been some exaggerated reports, so let me tell you what actually happened!

After an excellent game of Real Tennis at Holyport I was driving home via Winkfield and the M3 – a road I know well. I was going round a bend, possibly rather close to the centre of the road, and unfortunately someone else was doing the same in the opposite direction. The thing was that I had a solid VW Bora but his was a big, black 4 wheel drive – a Range Rover with an 07 registration – so guess who came off worst. The other chap was totally unhurt.

We did not meet head on, thank God, or I would not be here to tell the story. It was more of an oblique angle resulting in a side-to-side blow, and I reckon the main damage to me was caused by my door handle which is proud of the door trim and was adjacent to my thigh. As I have heard from others, it all seemed to happen in slow motion and I have a clear memory of the whole incident. My right forehead did deposit some blood and grey hair on the windscreen but I had no concussion - no doubt due to the solidity of the contents of my head.

I knew instantly I would not walk away from the accident but at this stage suffered absolutely no pain. The Ambulance arrived first and the inmates were very jolly, but their priority was very clearly my neck rather than damage elsewhere. Then came the Police but they kept clear of me and redirected traffic, and finally the Fire Service who cheerfully set about turning my saloon car into a Cabriolet in order to get me out. They did not appear to realise that there was a broken thigh just where they were hammering on the side door, nor was there much finesse in lugging me out through the (ex) roof, so this was the first time I had any pain.

While I was waiting for the Ambulance, I rang my wife Stephanie on the mobile to say that I had had a wee accident and would be a little late getting home (We were not amused. Ed.). In a flash Dr Sophy (daughter No 2) was on the phone to give me A&E advice, and indeed she was waiting for me in Wexham Park Hospital (Slough) A&E when the helicopter got me there. Very reassuring! I rang to warn my guest for the Anchorites dinner that evening and I was sufficiently with it to rescue my new Tom Tom GPS present from the windscreen. Of several onlookers, the one person who came over to check me and chat was a kind 30-something man (and First Aider) whose identity I am still trying to find out so I can thank him.

Well, I had an op next morning with a surgeon of high repute but little bedside manner, and he shoved a pin down the centre of my broken femur, with other screws and pins to hold it in place. One of the drill bits broke in my hip, so I have some extra metalwork there. There is no plaster, and now I just have bandages on the main collision damage and the wounds made the surgeon made. Six days later Steph was able to drive me home.

I was most impressed by the majority of aspects at Wexham Park, and principally by the willing and cheerful staff on the ward. It was useful experience for me as – some of you already know – I am due to start a new job as Chairman of the Winchester & Eastleigh NHS Healthcare Trust as soon as I am fit (the Trust looks after the Royal County Hospital in Winchester and the much smaller hospital in Andover, and is due to become a Foundation Trust next year). I have been accused of taking my Induction/Pre Joining Training a wee bit too seriously, but I suppose there is always a silver lining!

Welcome to all
new members



"The aim of our Association is to keep the name of our ship alive and remain in contact with all who served on HMS Ambuscade or were affiliated with her"



1983 collision– nearly as bad as Mike Gretton's VW

Crewe News

Presentation to Henry Curry – by Peter Mosse

Using the opportunity of the 2007 Reunion, Crewe Mayor's office (led by Councillor Mick Roberts) asked the President (Cdr Peter Mosse) to don his rig and make a presentation to Henry Curry on Friday 18 May. Henry is a distinguished local citizen, recently Headmaster of a local secondary school and prominent member of the community, not least longest serving member of the Crewe Male Voice Choir. However Henry had in fact also had a notable career in the Royal Navy, which was the reason for the request.

Peter Mosse duly mustered in secret at the Mayor's Parlour, accompanied by Honorary Life Vice President and senior Ambuscade Association member Mr Edwin Sadler. Henry had been lured on the pretext of a meeting to find a large number of Councillors and others present, when Peter and Edwin were suddenly ushered into the room. The Borough had prepared a scroll listing all his ships and after a few words Peter then presented it to Henry. The occasion was made all the more poignant because it took place in front of a large copy of a painting of HMS Ambuscade leaving Gritvyken harbour South Georgia. This was specially commissioned by the Borough in 1993 when the ship was granted Freedom of the Borough.



Henry Curry was called up to HMS Raleigh in 1938. His first appointment was as Gunnery Instructor in HMS Wellesley Gunnery School in Liverpool and served in a number of ships as far a field as New Zealand in HMNZS Leander a cruiser based at Auckland, until he became the Commander of HMS Valiant the Dreadnought class Battleship with its 8 x 15in and 14 x 6in guns. Notably he was the man who spotted the lull in the weather that allowed the D Day Landings to proceed in 1944.

Having now met Edwin Sadler, slightly his senior in years, Henry Curry was then invited to join the Ambuscade Reunion Reception and Dinner at the Gresty Road Stadium, where he clearly enjoyed himself as much as we appreciated having him.



Photo: (R to L) Edwin Sadler, Cllr Mick Roberts, Henry Curry, Cdr Peter Mosse

Falklands 25th Anniversary

Goaded, thence led from the front, by Manny Cousens, a dozen or more Ambuscade Falklands veterans fell in 10 deep ("otherwise you will not fit through the 'Orse Guards' Harch Gentlemen!" whispered the GI in a loud clear voice) and marched proudly onto Horse Guards Parade on Sunday 17 June. Overall some 10% of our 1982 ship's company managed to meet up that day, supported by various family and friends.

We met for an ale and a sandwich at the Silver Cross in Whitehall beforehand - a good plan because it got us all together including our serving (uniformed) colleagues who were to march separately. We mustered at 1415 and marched on just after 1500, once the Royal party had arrived - HRH Prince Charles and the Duchess of Cornwall. Prince Andrew was also there and joined the march up the Mall (our 3" Rockets just missed his lynx when he was airborne during the Atlantic Conveyor attack).

The Service was a mix of live music, readings, films (on those huge TV screens), hymns and prayers, all synchronised with a live link to the Falklands Islands. It culminated in gun fire from HMS Edinburgh in San Carlos, 2 minute silence and then wreath laying in San Carlos, first at the Military Cemetery and then on the water, laid by Ardent widow Barbara McAulay. It was a moving Service, which at times left few with a dry eye - "The Craggs of Tumbledown Mountain" played by the Scots Guards Pipers and Kathryn Nutbeam's "Somewhere Along the Road" were unforgettable. (Kathryn was five when her father died in 1982)

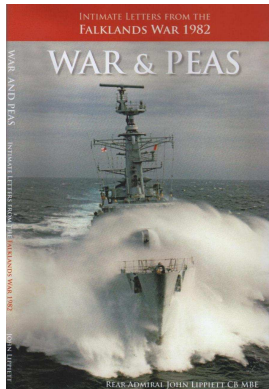
All three services were represented, with the RN numbering almost as many as the rest put together it seemed (2500 odd?). Notably the whole parade was led by Admiral Sir Alan West, in full rig as recent First Sea Lord but in his capacity as Ardent's Captain in 1982 (or more significantly Ambuscade's PWO 1975/77). When the Service had finished at about 1630 we all marched off down the Mall to salute the VIPs outside Buckingham Palace and see the Flypast. We fell out in Birdcage Walk, outside Wellington Barracks after nearly 3 hours on parade, knackered but ready for the washup that followed (flowed).

The day was unforgettable for us all. It was good to meet yet more Ambusmen again but the lasting impression for me was the unrestrained effect it had on such an enormous number of people at once, especially on parade, many of whom (unlike most of us) had apparently not seen each other for 25 years.



War & Peas - Becoming an author and Publisher

John Lippiett



Looking back over the last few months, the publishing of War & Peas has gone in a bit of a blur. I was due to have published it last year through a national publisher but, for complex reasons, that fell through and I dropped the idea - only to be kicked into action by friends and the RN Museum.

Their exhibition on the Falklands War wanted a family element and their encouragement promoted me to publish the book privately. A warning to budding authors: this is not a cheap option and you won't be earning yourself a pension! But it's a fun and interesting exercise and Jenny and I have thoroughly enjoyed the new experiences it has given us.

For a start, it has put me back in touch with a whole number of members of HMS AMBUSCADE ship's company and this, and the comments received from them about the book, has made the whole exercise worthwhile. I have had help from many, with comments and particularly with photographs. I could not have embarked on this without such help and my thanks are enormous. The research, through looking at reports, the ship's logs, the Daily Orders and Captain's

Night Order Book, opened up a renewed understanding of what we got up to. I have tried to do justice to paint a picture of our operations, the weather, and the life-style onboard. And my whole theme was to put the family aspect central to our life, rather than an afterthought.

Publishing privately had its ups and downs! It was intriguing but hard work. I gained a close rapport with our local printers and particularly the designer and typesetter, but it took countless hours and much reworking. Costs precluded using colour photo-

graphs inside the book, but I felt the numerous black and white photos from the ship's company actually gave it a more interesting aspect. Choice of the cover photographs was paramount, I learnt, to the marketing of the book. I had painted a dramatic picture of AMBUSCADE down South and intended to use that - until I was advised that it would make the book look like fiction! I needed something to grab the immediate attention of the casual browser. The photo of "Rougher's" seemed eye-catching, but I was also advised to get photos of the family (to appeal to potential female readers) on the back cover too.....our son hasn't forgiven me yet for not air-brushing out his sandals! All-in-all, we were very pleased with the end result in terms of quality of the whole publication. We printed 1000 and have now sold nearly all, so a smaller reprint may be in order. If you would like a copy, please visit our website

www.falklandswarletters.com .

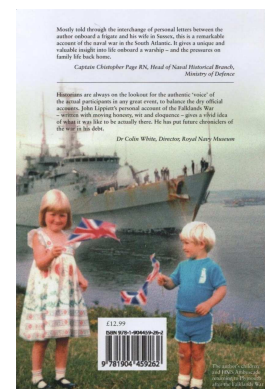
Marketing the book has been almost absent, which was a mistake. I created this website but then sat back and did nothing. A professional publisher would then have pushed it further; oh well, that's how it goes. 'Word of mouth only'.

How did we end up on the BBC Today programme? A press release went out from the Portsmouth Historic Dockyard about the RN Museum's forthcoming exhibition and the publication of War & Peas to support it. The BBC saw this, got a copy of the script one day, rang us the next to say they wanted to record all the letters to play them through the period of the war: the next day we were recording for an hour in the BBC studio at Gunwarf, Portsmouth, and the following day they were being broadcast! I guess there were 3 recording sessions - and it was the first time we had read them through in front of each other. We found ourselves on a number of local radio stations across the country, and also a lengthy slot on BBC World Service's Outlook programme. We've had lots of lovely feedback from individuals and some good reviews from national and local papers and a number of naval and military magazines. It was rather pleasing to have some famous authors read it and comment, and we are chuffed to get this quote from Claire Tomalin, who won the Whitbread Prize for her biography of Pepys:

"War & Peas is a wonderful book and hugely enjoyable. This is the real thing, a proper historical record, including men and women... I like the self-portraits with growing beard - and also the serious bits about fighting, and the home front and children. There should be more books like this."

Thank you to AMBUSMEN who have taken the trouble to get in touch having read the book; we are grateful for your comments (and to those who spotted my deliberate mistake in a caption; yes, it's a Sea king and not a Wessex hello!). And thank you also to those who have emailed me further photos to see and use in the future - please keep them coming, and also send to our webmaster perhaps to go on this site. The broadcast of the letters has prompted a number of talks around the country this and next year (on behalf of charities such as the RNLI), and even one theatrical group who are going to use the letters for their Festival of Remembrance this November (in Tonbridge for those living anywhere near). So AMBUSCADE's exploits continue to be reflected across the country in this form as well as on our excellent website. We were also privileged to have lunch in Nelson's cabin onboard VICTORY with Maggie Thatcher when she came to view the exhibition - great fun and she was in grand form and really relishing the Falklands commemoration. She was given a copy of War & Peas and seemed amused with my letter reporting what I actually thought at the time of the politicians who had overseen the war! Above all, this has enabled some of us in the ship's company to get that much closer: that is the joy of such a project. The Falklands march at Whitehall was a splendid part of the process.

Best wishes to all,
John Lippiett



An Engineer's memories of an early deployment Mike Townson

We sailed from Devonport on the 31st May 1978 for a Group Deployment with the 5th Frigate Squadron, of which Ambuscade was the most recent (and junior!) member. We sailed in company with Captain F in Hermione (it might have been Minerva! memory???) and the half leader in Leander. In those days the squadrons were mixed classes of ships. After passing the breakwater an RAF Vulcan came to bid us "bon voyage". We had got to know the Squadron Leader who was driving it during a preceding JMC. He did several fly pasts and on the last (falsely!) declared an emergency and requested permission to land on our flight deck. Well, we were both Olympus powered!! That we accepted and accelerated gave Captain F a few heart stopping moments.

On the 1st of June we were back in Devonport having had a fire in the Starboard Olympus which we had to change. We sailed again 2 days later to catch up with the Squadron in Brest and on that passage the starboard Olympus module was found to be over a foot deep in fuel with the engine running. An unhappy state of affairs with a big bang and major fire a definite possibility. However, we sorted that out and joined the rest of the group in Brest.

The passage across the Atlantic was, from an engineering point of view, pretty straightforward. The only problem that I remember was of replacement Tyne engine fuel filters. Ambuscade was the first ship to have the Tyne RM1C engines fitted and the ship's fuel filtration system didn't clean the fuel sufficiently for the engine's filters. We had to change them daily at that time and consumed all the deployment stocks on the passage to Cartagena in Colombia.

A good run in Cartagena, but HMS Blake, who was leading the deployment, had dreadful problems getting some essential spares out of the customs there. We sailed for the Panama Canal with everybody on board ill. The heads were on overload! We decided that the probable cause was mercury poisoning from some delicious clam chowder that most of us had had ashore!

We passed through the Panama Canal uneventfully and made our passage up to Long Beach, California, where we had an AMP. This was carried out by Devonport FMG who based

themselves on the Queen Mary.

On sailing from Long Beach we carried out some exercises with the US Navy and broke our Starboard Tyne clutch which put the starboard shaft out of action because it was spreading metal about in the gearbox. We went in to San Diego and were tied alongside HMS Birmingham to carry out the clutch change. This was a long and complicated saga that eventually both CinC Fleet and the Chief of Fleet Support became deeply involved in.

However, the ship's company (tiffs apart!!) enjoyed the extra time there. When we eventually got ourselves fixed, the rest of the Group had gone North so we raced off to Vancouver where we rejoined the Squadron. Some good visits and more exercises then saw us on our way back down the West Coast with no further problems. We visited Acapulco, where the frigates were alongside, but Blake was anchored off because of the large swell that came into the harbour. It was here that we first met Richard Baker from the BBC. He was a Lieutenant Commander in the RNR and had come out to do his annual two weeks training with the Group, complete with camera crew! It was raining, and they looked very miserable and bedraggled as they waited on the jetty for a boat to take them out to Blake. Being Ambuscade, we invited them to wait on board. By the time their boat arrived, they had formed a great liking for Ambuscade and wanted to stay!! However they had to go across to Blake, but Richard was determined that they would be back!

On sailing from Acapulco, Leander had a main lubricating oil failure and Ambuscade was detailed to tow her all the way down to the Panama Canal where spares would be waiting. So, an AA relay flag was made and hoisted. Leander complained, so we floodlight it at night!

After passing through the Canal, Richard Baker and team rejoined us for passage to Trinidad, our next port of call. A great deal of filming (and even more socialising) went on, and Richard enjoyed his short visit to the ship. Our visit to Trinidad coincided with Trafalgar Night and the Trinidad Defence Forces invited us to a Trafalgar Night Dinner in Port of Spain. Richard became the principal speaker and proposed the toast to The Immortal Memory.

He left us, and we left Trinidad, the following morning. He to fly home and we

to Key West in Florida. His film was shown on TV on Christmas Day.

From memory, it was a pretty uneventful trip back home apart from a weather induced low fuel crisis only resolved when we got into shelter near the Azores.

We arrived back in Devonport on 12th December having overcome some interesting problems and uncovering some weaknesses in the support organisation and in ship design. I was fortunate to have been given the opportunity to try to redress some of these in later appointments

Mike Townson



Ambuscade, Birmingham & Blake
San Francisco 1978



Cover of the Monthly family
Newspaper 78/79. Some examples
on the website soon
thanks to Sam Potts

A WORD FROM YOUR WEBMASTER GRIFF

Our website www.ambuscade.org is about to go into its 4th year and is approaching 20,000 hits. It has proved to be an excellent tool for communicating with our globetrotting oppos who have settled in all corners of the globe from Brazil & Argentina to Australia and Thailand.

Proof of this is that our contact list has grown from 194 in 2004 to 463 today. There is still a lot of web space that we can use so I am counting on everyone to send in photos & dits etc so that we can continue to keep it interesting.

A lot of e-mails to Ambusmen have 'bounced' recently, so please update your address/e-mail information via the form on the website.

I am especially interested in **personal accounts of events** that happened during our travels – dits about the lynx that crashed in '82, the collision with the RFA during the Falklands war, Nubian colliding into us in '79 (Ambuscade had her share of bumps!) and I am sure that there are many more adventures. They are usually forthcoming when we have had a few pints at our get-togethers, but seem to be forgotten in the morning. Maybe I should bring along a tape-recorder!

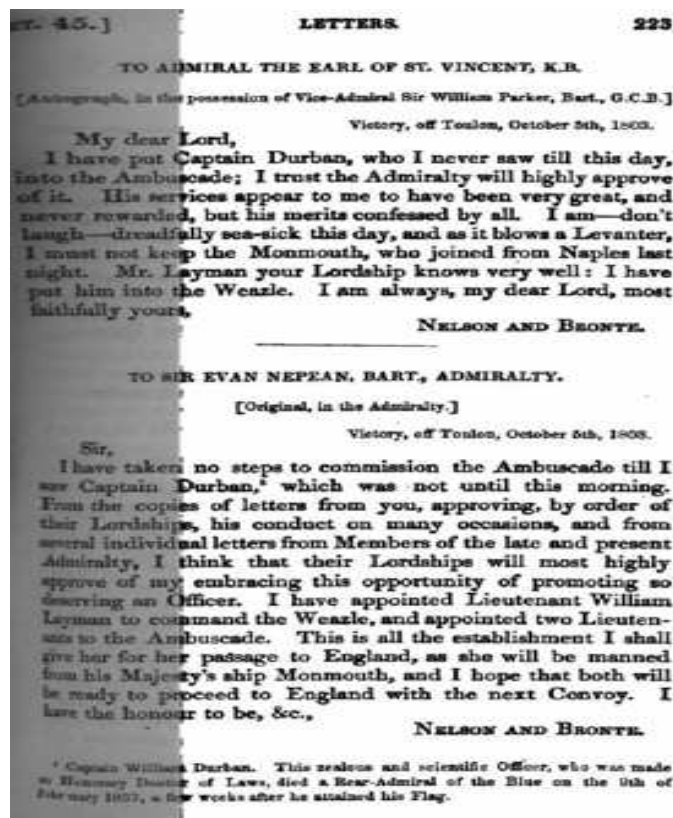
Please support our Association by renewing your membership. It is very easy to put it off but every £5 is important to keeping our Association healthy.

Don't forget to update your address/e-mail information via the form on the website.

Best wishes and I look forward to meeting you at our next Road show or Reunion.

LORD NELSON'S REFERENCE TO HMS AMBUSCADE

This was found on the internet by Mike Townson's son Paul.



Plymouth November Roadshow

The Ambuscade Association will be meeting up in Plymouth on the weekend of the **17th November** for an informal get together and mini reunion.

The Association Committee holds meetings twice a year at various venues and this November is the turn of our "Home Port" Devonport!

We want to see as many ex-Ambusmen from any commission and there are a number of opportunities to meet up with your old shipmates.

The invitation is extended to partners and you are welcome to join us for a part or all of the weekend activities. If you are interested please email mark@sharplesgroup.com and we will ensure you are kept up to date with all the details.

Friday 16th November 2000 - Informal get together at the St Levan Inn, Devonport

Saturday 17th November 1230 - 1630 Association Committee meeting at the Senior Rates Mess HMS Drake
(General bi-annual meeting to plan for the main reunion and discuss all matters Ambuscade, a relaxed meeting open up to all with liquid refreshments)

Saturday 17th November 1930 - Evening meet up at Wetherspoons on Union Street followed by pizza/pasta meal/drinks at local restaurant & bars tbc

Accommodation A wide choice of accommodation is available in Plymouth which caters for all tastes and budgets, please make your own arrangements accordingly, however a number of the committee will be staying at the Travel Lodge situated at Drakes Circus whom can be contacted on **0870 191 1752** for bookings. No special room rate is available as yet but nearer the time they have agreed to provide a much reduced rate so I will pass on these details when available. If you have any queries or would like more information please either email me (Mark Brocklehurst), at mark@sharplesgroup.com or I can be contacted on 01925 839592 (working hours only). I do hope you are able to join us and look forward to what will be another great Ambuscade weekend. Best Wishes Mark Brocklehurst

Once again a really big thank you to everyone that has put forward all the articles in this edition of the 'Pistol Post'.

Please, Please, Please – if you have any good sea dits or any interesting ideas; send them in, for the next

edition.

Manny Cousens