

# 'Pistol Post'



September 2006 Newsletter

Edited by Paul 'Manny' Cousens

September 2006

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## Remember

16th September 2006

Committee meeting at Chester. All invited. See website for details

## Next Major Reunion

19th May 2007

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

## Messages from the chair

Welcome to the summer 2006 edition of the legendary "Pistol Post". Having glanced over one of the early issues from 1982 for inspiration, it struck me that all the contributions seemed to be written anonymously! This initially seemed a little strange until I started to read the articles in more detail, it became quickly apparent that the nature of the newsletter was to take the "Michael" from anyone in authority without incurring the penalties this would normally carry!

I can't unfortunately follow this editorial style for two reasons; firstly with this being the "Chairman's Corner" it's a bit of a giveaway who wrote it and secondly the primary role for me and the committee is to increase the Association membership and not cheese off old shipmates from 20+ years ago!

The last edition we published was in the spring of 2005 in which we promoted the "30<sup>th</sup> Birthday" reunion in June. Everyone worked hard to ensure that the weekend was a success and it provided a great opportunity for catching up with old mates and making new ones.

We all took part in a "Fire Engine Pull" with only the

one casualty (no names) and the Saturday culminated with the reunion dinner at Crewe FC with once again only the one casualty (no names). As well as having a great evening we raised a significant amount of money split between the Sea Cadets and the Mayors adopted charity. We also strengthened our relationship with the Cheshire Regiment which as already proved invaluable.

Looking forward there are two events that I would ask you to consider putting in your diaries.

We are holding our next committee meeting in Chester on Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> September and as is now customary are inviting non-committee members to attend and take part in the social aspect of our Bi-Annual get together. If you fancy joining us please follow the instructions in this edition, alternatively give me a call on 01925 839592 for more details.

The next big event will be our main reunion over the weekend of 19<sup>th</sup> May 2007. We will be returning to our spiritual homeland of Crewe which was



unanimously voted as the world's best run ashore at our last AGM! It should also be mentioned that a particular GI wanted us to march through the borough with bayonets fixed and flags flying – the committee thought long and hard on this one but in the end decided to stick to the Guinness drinking competition.

In summary, I would appeal to all of you to commit to at least one of our reunions; they are tremendous fun, invoke some amazing memories and are special occasions that as we get older should be treasured. If you are one of the many who consider but never get round to committing, make this next reunion the one you attend – I guarantee you won't regret it!

Mark Brocklehurst

**Association Chairman**

## Secretary's Soapbox

There is still a slow but steady stream of enquiries about the Association from old Shipmates, this is very good news, thanks largely to the information on our website.

Since the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary reunion last year, the following people have contacted us and shown an interest in becoming a member:

*Andy Winfindale Phil Auty  
Pete Bannister Stuart Bailey  
Gary Cherryholme  
Charlie Docherty Chris  
Springett Dave Edwards  
Stu Elliman Albert Downard  
Evan Davies Ian  
Dugmore*

*Wayne Edwards Stu Gaskell  
Chris Gore Chris Hoy  
Gary Hughes Dave  
Howells John King*

*Grant King Chris  
Macindeor Billy Macnamee  
Dave Marchant Jim  
McGregor Andy Marshall*

*Paul Marsh Graham  
Netherton Russell Plant  
John Ronald Pete Ballinger  
Eddie Sykes-Blyth Gareth  
Simkins Mike Green Polo  
Minter.*

One or two more have been in touch to say hello, but would rather not join for various reasons.

Everyone has received a reply back, either by welcome letter or email. If there is anyone I haven't replied to, please accept my apologies, it doesn't mean you're not welcome!

However, with one or two exceptions, there is a noticeable lack of membership fees forthcoming, and as you all know, it is this small token that ensures we can run the Association, and therefore meet up for beer and dits.

We currently hold the contact details (email and/or address etc.) for approximately 200 ex shipmates, and of course there are our WW2 members.

There are currently 65 members who have paid (now lapsing), 13 of which have paid for a five year period, and a small handful that have started standing orders for £5 per year.

As it has been roughly a year since most people paid their annual membership (in order to attend last year's reunion), I am now welcoming renewals to the usual address.

Many thanks for your continued support. Now - get your cheque books out and help keep the Association going.

Yours Aye  
Ian (George) Thoburn  
Membership  
Secretary

*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”

## Crewe News

The Association were kindly invited by the Mayor of Crewe and Nantwich to participate in their **Trafalgar 200 Celebrations**. Members of the committee made their way to Crewe on Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> October. Karen and Pete Snowball, Mike Townson and myself met at the council offices and then made our way to the square in the town centre. The council had cordoned off an area of the square in order for the Sea Cadets to parade and had also erected a display caravan. The caravan contained a huge amount of information about the Battle of Trafalgar not to mention other posters etc of the more modern Royal Navy. They planned also to hold a competition for the local children, which included drawing, colouring and quiz questions. We were able to contribute a significant number of prizes as well general PR material, kindly donated by the RN press office in Devonport.

After a somewhat slow start, interest from the general public soon started to grow once the Sea Cadets started their first performance. Their musical and marching prowess soon had the crowds gathered round. Interest in the RN from the crowd had us testing our memories and general naval knowledge (GNK) for those who can remember basic training in order to try and answer their questions. Following a display of excellent knot tying from the ca-



During lunch we were able to present the Mayor with a cheque for £450. As many of you will know the money was raised during the Reunion weekend in June. A further cheque (again for £450) was forwarded separately to the Sea Cadets. In addition to the cheque, the Mayor was also presented with a commemorative plate of the Trafalgar 200 celebrations and a programme of the fleet review, which had taken place earlier in the year. The Mayor expressed her sincere thanks and hoped that the links between the AMBUSCADE and the Borough would continue and hopefully grow.

Presentation by the Association to the Mayor, The Worshipful the Mayor, Councillor Maureen Grant, pictured with her husband and Richie Killick



*Trafalgar 200 Celebrations  
In Crewe  
By Richie Killick*

### *The band begins to play*

dets, we all retired to the council offices for a well deserved (sea cadets that is) spot of lunch. This was at the kind invitation of the Mayor.

After lunch and a short tour of the council offices we all returned to the square to carry on with the celebrations. Further displays by the sea cadets were very warmly received by all who watched.



It is evident that the name of AMBUSCADE lives on in Crewe, with the sea cadets, the council, and with the general public. It was a thoroughly enjoyable if not a little exhausting day and definitely worth the effort.

Pete Snowball (centre left), proving an "old dabber" never loses it!

# Falklands Dit

CDR Peter Mosse Association President

*Please Note : this is based on an article originally written for a collection of RN anecdotes called "Hearts of Oak" edited by P McLaren, to raise money for King George's Fund for Sailors.*

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## A SALTY DIT

On 3 May 1982, **HMS AMBUSCADE** sailed from Gibraltar at best speed to take over duties of Ascension Island Guardship. At the same time Admiral Woodward's Task Force sailed further south to retake the Falklands. The next night the reality of war came home when we heard SHEFFIELD had been hit by Exocet with 20 killed. I had been on CO's courses with Captain Sam Salt only 5 months before: the news affected us all deeply.

We arrived at Ascension Island 10 May, but after greeting our Type 21 sister ship HMS ANTELOPE with her load of prisoners from the recaptured South Georgia, we were soon ordered to join the Task Group and after fuelling on 14 May we sailed south together.

We were proud of our Type 21 with her two large Rolls Royce Olympus diesel gas turbines, 26,000 shp each, giving her a top speed of 35 knots. But Olympus engines are thirsty and at high speed they could exhaust our fuel in just 20 hours, so for cruising we also had 2 Rolls Royce Tyne RM1A/C engines which gave over 18 knots, and a single Tyne could steam for 13 days, over 4000 miles, with 25% fuel to spare. So AMBUSCADE and ANTELOPE now sailed south for the next tanker rendez-vous at maximum speed on 2 Tynes - 18 knots plus, in fair weather. As the Task Force hovered off the Falklands still 4000 miles away, the big push was evidently coming soon, but none of us knew exactly when or where.

However, on 15 May one of our Tynes suffered what the engineers call "catastrophic failure", it broke down irreparably. Further, if we kept up speed with an Olympus instead we calculated we would not only fall below the new statutory minimum of 40% fuel (in peacetime it was 70%), but barely have the 29% needed for stability.\* Yet if we slowed to just one Tyne alone we could jeopardise the tanker's

programme and it would seriously delay us joining the operation, now at a critical stage.

After much deliberation, ANTELOPE (Cdr Nick Tobin, my senior) decided they should go on ahead while we slowed down. We met the tanker, BRITISH ESK, with 28% fuel left (!), although this proved just enough because of the ballast from extra stores and ammunition we were carrying. But.... we had run into our first South Atlantic gale - Force 10 - and when we connected up to the merchant tanker's astern rig she reported that she was unable to put pressure on the hoses. This was a serious blow, we were now rolling badly and I became concerned.

I slept little that night as we hove to using little power and minimum headway to keep us upright with the stabilisers but come morning the hoses were still not ready. The best estimate was 1400, we had barely 20% fuel and we were in real danger of capsizing. I had a final word with the Master (who was most apologetic) on VHF radio, talked to my MEO and gave the order to ballast 15% of the fuel tanks with salt water to regain stability. This was a serious decision for, while it gave immediate relief, it contaminated the tanks and reduced our usable fuel capacity to 85%. We were a touch dispirited.

But the gloom was suddenly broken when the VHF started chattering again as a new, cheery voice addressed me - "Hi Peter, ....sorry to hear your problems, we're working as fast as we can over here, ...it'll soon be fixed...." Short pause: "...at least you've got a bloody ship!"

It was Captain Sam Salt. He and his team from SHEFFIELD were on their way home in BRITISH ESK. They had been up all night helping to fix the hoses which had apparently had their seals fitted back to front in UK. In my evident plight, \*\* his jovial

reassurance was just the tonic required, and what was a percentage or so of fuel after what he must have been through!

He was right too. Things did improve. We fuelled at last at 1600 and, probably against all the rules, my gallant stokers scrubbed out the dirty tanks with soap and water, not a pleasant job even if it had moderated to Force 8. Then late next day we fuelled right to the top again and joined the Task Force, in time, on the day of the amphibious landings.



Attempting to RAS with British Esk

\* RN marinised aircraft engines need clean, water-free fuel but Type 21s did not have a fuel stripping system to remove water and so the fuel tanks could not be kept topped with sea water (water compensated) to maintain stability like other classes of ship.

\*\* In a letter afterwards, Captain (now Rear-Admiral) Sam Salt commented, "I remember it well, from BRITISH ESK you looked highly unusual and bloody uncomfortable, and your boot topping was nearly halfway up the ship's side".

## *The Pakistan Navy and the Type 21s* by Mike Townson

In about 1983 (it may have been 1984!), the PN was looking for some ships to replace their ageing American destroyers. They approached Vospers (VT) for an updated design of the RN Type 21s. VT duly produced a design for them together with a detailed specification. The PN wanted assistance to assess the design and approached the UK MoD for this help. A team consisting of a Captain E, ME, a Commander E, ME, a Commander E, WE and a Naval Constructor was offered by the MoD and accepted by the PN. Following a series of meetings between this team and the PN technical staff in PN Naval HQ in Islamabad it was decided that the design had both merit and shortcomings. It was decided that both sides of the team reassemble in the UK MoD engineering offices in Bath to finalise the specification with VT. Whilst this produced an excellent ship (on paper!), contract terms could not be agreed between the PN and VT and the project failed.

I was the Cmdr ME in that team and learned to have a great respect for the ability of the officers of the PN during the process. Some months later I was invited to return to Islamabad to give an illustrated lecture on the lessons learned from the Falklands war. I had been pre-

senting this lecture to the British Shipbuilders for some time. I gave the lecture to the PN both at their HQ in Islamabad and in the Naval Base in Karachi.

Some time later, after I had left the RN, I was managing the HQ engineering function for all the RN steam powered warships under an MoD contract with YARD, for whom I then worked. The PN at that time operated the ex RN County Class destroyer PNS Babur (ex HMS London). They also had a couple of ex RN Leanders and were in the process of buying two more. I went again to Islamabad as part of the UK MoD team selling these two Leanders. Whilst there one of the PN admirals who I knew told me that the UK MoD were putting HMS Amazon on the disposal list for sale. He said that they were interested, but only if they could buy all the remaining six!!

I explained that was not how the MoD's sales organisation worked and suggested that if that was what the PN wanted then it needed their Prime Minister (Mrs Bhutto) to talk to the UK Prime Minister (Mrs Thatcher).

The next thing that I knew was an invitation from

*The next thing that I knew was an invitation from the PN to join the PN negotiation team that was being set up to buy all six ships!*

the PN to join the PN negotiation team that was being set up to buy all six ships! After much teeth sucking from the Directors of my Company, it was agreed that I should join the team which I duly did! I was well acquainted with most members of both teams and the MoD were somewhat surprised, as was I, to be sat across the table from them alongside the General leading the PN team! As is now history, the negotiations went well and the ships were all bought by the PN.

The PN liked the Type 21 design from their earlier negotiations with VT. They wanted ships that they could manage, that had some life left in them and whose weapons and sensors fit they could change as necessary for their needs. Six was an acceptable number to them (eight would have been better!). The only thing that they appeared to be less than happy with was the material support package that was negotiated as part of the deal, but that is another story!

There is no doubt that the PN were very happy to get the ships and that they have the ability to manage, look after and operate them. They should have a long and successful life with the Pakistan Navy.

## *Webmaster News* Steve Griffin

An encouraging year for [www.ambuscade.org](http://www.ambuscade.org) with good response from our request for content for the website. A large amount of missing visits information has been supplied by people like Tony Mizen, Dave Marchant (all the way from Hungary), Richard Knight, Ben Way, Eddie Greer and Mick Davidson to name a few.

Thanks to all of you who sent in your photo albums. There is room for much more, so please e-mail them to me or contact me and arrange to post them to me. I will return the photographs after I have scanned them. The previous Ambuscades section has been uploaded and we have several pages of infor-

mation of the WWII ship.

Burt Lancaster sent photographs of the Falklands memorials and we finally, managed to get good up-to date photos of PNS Tariq and have expanded that part of the website. Links to all the above can be found on the 'what's new' link on the home page

As always, we are on the lookout for photos/dits/facts from Ambuscade however insignificant they may sound. I know some of you are still serving and it may seem anchorfaced, but the longer we leave it, the more we are likely to forget or the more inaccurate & unbelievable the dits become!

A big welcome to all Ambusmen who have sent in your information and/or joined the Ambuscade Association.. We hope to meet you at our forthcoming meeting in Chester or at the 2007 reunion next year.

Please keep supporting us 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.

We are constantly being congratulated on having an excellent website and it is thanks to all of you who send in content. So keep sending stuff in!

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## Editorial

I would just like to say a really big thank you to everyone that has put forward all the articles in this edition of the 'Pistol Post'.

Hopefully we will have another edition before the ship's re-union in 2007.

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

Manny Cousens