



# Submariners Times

March/April 2009



## Merseyside Branch

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**Vice-Chairman:- Sam Price**

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## Secretary's Locker

Hello Sailor,

Well you have to admit the days are now getting a little longer and the promise of spring is definitely in the air. For those of you who have been suffering from the winter's cold let's hope things are looking up for you; for those who have been one degree under in the health department, I trust you are feeling better as the weather and hours of daylight improve.

I am happy to report that the branch's calendar of activities is much improved as this year looks set to be a busy one on the social front. From all the feedback, our Annual Dinner proved to be a success (see report opposite) and we can't wait to repeat the occasion again next year at the same venue. I must say a special word of thanks to our shipmates from the **RNA Crosby** who attended and threw themselves into the party spirit of things on the evening. Our special appreciation and thanks go to **Fred Pilgrim** and **Bill Roberts** for helping out with the raffle and the all-important rum issue for 'Up Spirits'.

Though a little late getting into print, here is no less sincere mention for **John Crisford**, one of our branch members from Australia who crossed the bar in December last year. A floral tribute was sent at the time of his funeral prior to Christmas and a lovely card to the branch was received from his daughter, Jane. John was the last surviving member of the crew of the legendary 'Fighting 42', *HM/SM Unbroken*, which as part of the 10<sup>th</sup> Submarine Flotilla, regularly ran the gauntlet out of Malta during its siege by the Axis powers in WWII, to inflict great destruction on Rommel's supply lines to North Africa. I am informed by **Tom Oates**, a member of Merseyside, and Secretary of **Australia SA**, that a Memorial Service was held for Johnny at the Naval Chapel, *HMAS Sterling*, Freemantle, on the 27<sup>th</sup> February to commemorate his life and to pass custody of his ashes to RAN Submarine Command for later committal to the deep by one of their boats. The service was well attended by the shipmates of this distinguished submariner who will be most sadly missed by us all – **Resurgam**.

The **2009 AGM** was well attended and proceedings went smoothly with all committee members being re-elected to office. The Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer covered off our progress over the past 20 months which has seen our original objectives of improved transparent finances and accountancy, new and regular newsletter communications and better services to the membership all being achieved. This has resulted in the branch once more becoming healthily solvent with improved attendances at meetings by members now better informed than was previously the case. The committee can only set the course of the branch with your approval. The rest has been achieved by you, the membership, who have provided the vital support, donations, and your regular attendance at the meetings and social events to reach these targets. Bravo Zulu to all hands for such terrific teamwork in getting Merseyside branch firmly back on its feet once more. You can be justifiably proud of yourselves and your efforts. That's all for now, folks - pull the plug and take her down deep.

**Yours Aye**

**Pedro**

**Front cover: Bow on shot of an 'O' Boat**

***When I die, cremate me in my beloved white woolly pulley, adorned with my beautiful golden dolphins, sprinkle my ashes into a tin of non-skid and paint me onto the casing so I may forever sail with my oppos and shipmates"***

## Annual Dinner Goes Down a Treat



*Admiral Paul ensuring the raffle is all above board and not a 'fiddle'*

The 2009 Annual Dinner was a grand occasion that brought back many memories of those halcyon days of the Merseyside Branch, which we at long last seem to be gradually recapturing. **Admiral Paul, our new President**, was resplendent in full dress rig and he proved to be a charming, humorous and engaging character as he actively and wholeheartedly involved himself in all aspects of the evening's proceedings. These ranged from his most complimentary after dinner speech, to picking the lucky raffle draw winners, and by circulating and making a point of talking to every group of the 85 guests present. He was also reunited with his Uncle Roy, better known to us as 'Bungy' Williams, a founding member of this branch, who had travelled up with friends from Teignmouth, Devon, for the evening.

**Melba Fraser** graciously attended looking as lovely and bubbly as ever, in company with her daughter Nikki and son-in-law Will; during the course of the evening Melba was presented with a bouquet of flowers by **Les West, our Vice-President**. The branch presented the Admiral with a v-neck sweater embroidered with the SA badge surmounted by dolphins with Merseyside printed beneath it. Also presented was a sculptured Liver Bird that really intrigued the Admiral, who was proudly displaying it to one and all, indicating that he would be using it as a paperweight on his desk at the MoD. Our honoured guests also included Father John Williams, and Canon Bob Evans, our chaplains and personal friends for so many years; they respectively gave us Grace and the toast to the Merseyside Submariners Association.

Barry and Angie Jenkins from Lee-on-Solent, Bobby and Marilyn Calder from Bristol, Jimmy Green from Welwyn all made long journeys to be there on the night. Good to see them meeting up with old friends joining in the evening's fun. It was a treat to see our old pals, Jim and Elsie Bellew, with their daughter Sharon again. As hands to dance and skylark commenced, Jim reprised that old *Ballet de Scouse* number 'Sweetheart Aloha', with a little help from his friends, to very enthusiastic participation and some questionable hand gestures from the audience. Thanks to John Arnold who gave up serious drinking time in taking photos of the evening; a selection will be available on CD. Special thanks go to **Pedler Palmer** for his meticulous planning and organisation of this function and his fine attention to detail. Thanks to the **Eldonian Village** and their fantastic chef **Rose** and her staff for a wonderful dinner and making it such a superb event with their excellent service and friendly hospitality.

## Diesel Dinosaurs Corner



### The Ping Bosun's Log

by Mick Jones

Dear Friends and Members,

On hearing about all those snow blizzards and brass monkey weather you have been having over the past months, I felt a wee bit guilty about relaxing in all this celestial sunshine we enjoy here, but I have to admit I didn't feel bad for too long. The flowers are always in bloom and the grass never stops growing, so with the rainbows and unicorns all over the place it makes Heaven almost too beautiful for words to describe. Mind you if you are on the gardening work party it can be a bit of a drag as **Fred Fullerton** and **'Pusser' Hill** always keep reminding me. They spend most of their days weeding and mowing the grass; the rest of the time those two skates can be found knocking up batches of home brew in the potting shed with **Arnie Kittelsen**, their Viking partner in crime. I tried some the other day and I have to say they make a pretty mean pint of bootleg beer between the three of them. The sign seen opposite is a piece of this skiving trio's latest handiwork – the cheeky wee devils!

Hope that this little missive finds you all keeping well and happy. For those of you not feeling too good, keep your chins up and get better soon, okay. Chins up, spring is just around the corner and the warmer weather is bound to make you feel much improved and even frisky.

Going back to WWII days, things were pretty grim for the British population with the food rationing and all, but the scran on our submarines was pretty good for the times; let's face it - nobody ever went hungry. The American servicemen, on the other hand, seemed to have a surfeit of everything when it came to grub. We were anchored in Alexandria close to an American destroyer and some friendly rivalry went on at a hailing distance between the two warships. One Sunday morning two American sailors were on their quarterdeck waving two huge frozen chickens apiece at us shouting "I bet you Limey SOBs won't be having anything as good as these for your dinners today will 'ya?" Our quick-witted cook-of-the-mess, who had been standing on the casing watching all this banter, swiftly went down below returning with two eggs in each hand. He held these up and shouted back, "Oh! Yes we will, and I bet you b\*\*\*\*\*s can't pack them as small as this can you?" Ha! Ha! - Royal Navy - 1 – US Navy - 0.

Here is a skimmer tale just told to me and it's a cracker. Michael (Tarzan) Heseltine, the then Defence Secretary, was on a visit to *HMS Nottingham* at Portland during Basic Operational Sea Training, and was taken into HQ1 to be given a "brief" by the CMEM, a very acerbic Irishman with a wicked sense of humour. Enter Tarzan, FOST, Skipper, Jimmy et al into HQ1; I was on watch in the MCR next door. Chief Stoker gives his spiel to a very interested politician (honest), but then ends by saying "In fact being in HQ1 at action stations is a bit like being in the House of Commons." Cue Skipper and FOST starting to look a bit nervous.... Chief Stoker continued, "When the s\*\*t hits the fan, there's lots and lots of shouting and nobody knows what the f\*\*\* is going on!" I was biting my lip with the rest of the watch as we painfully tried to subdue our desire to burst into laughter, as FOST and the Skipper glared at the CMEM. To his credit, Heseltine grinned and said "Chief Stoker I bet you have been waiting years and years for a politician to say that to!" It didn't seem to harm the skipper's career at all though, as he eventually went on to become First Sea Lord.

I see that the Branch has a new President in **Rear Admiral Paul Lambert CB** and that surely has to be great news for everyone. It reminded me of one my own past encounters with Admirals, of which there have been a few, as this little ditty of mine will prove.

T'was on re-union Saturday in the junior ratings bar  
Fred and I were sitting with a noggin and a jar  
Knocking back the whisky as if it were on the house  
I'm sure we drank a bottle and a half of Famous Grouse

A tall chap then approached me and gave to us his name  
He said, "My friend is Richard, and you can call me Ian."  
I said, "Sit down and have a drink, I'll get them in a tick  
My fat friend here is Freddy and you can call me Mick."

And so we sat and chatted of how we'd won the war  
We told each other dirty jokes until they shut the bar  
I asked him what his rating was, his face was torn with grief  
When I said, "Were you a seaman? I'll bet you were a Chief."

He said "Well I was seaman branch, to that I must admit  
But right now I am an Admiral, you stupid Irish nit."  
But next re-union day, we'll have another drink again  
I said, "You can call me Mick." He said, "Just call me Ian."

Oh! My lads! You should have seen us there boozing  
Sitting down beside the bar, it was just so amusing  
Me and Freddy Cunliffe and the bloke who talked so posh  
My old drinking mate, the Admiral, Sir Ian MacIntosh

It is my firm belief that this kind of social interaction can only happen in the Submarine Service where respect and professionalism between officers and men is the mutual glue that binds them together due to the nature of their work and shared experiences. Long may this tradition continue just that way. My old oppo **John Crisford** from Oz is up here now and we have had some great sessions, rolling back the years talking about our days out of Malta on *HM/SM Unbroken* as 19 year-old kids who thought we were immortal way back then. John is now the very last of the old 'Fighting 42' crew to make it up here so we had a rip-roaring re-union bash with **Jeff McTeare, Jan Cryer, Pedro Fenton**, and the all rest of our original crew members when he arrived. What a cracking shindig of a run ashore that was with quite a few hangovers the next morning I can tell you. Well, folks that's all till next time - God bless to you all and be sure to take good care of each other.

**Mick**





## Chinese Song Class Boats



*A duet of Song-Class boats on exercise off Taiwan*

A submerged Song-class attack submarine shadowed Japan-based aircraft carrier *USS Kitty Hawk* in the East China Sea near Okinawa without being detected on 26 October 2006. The boat surfaced within five miles of the carrier, in deep waters off Okinawa, and only then was it spotted by one of the carrier's planes on a routine surveillance flight. The encounter was something of an embarrassment to Adm. William J. Fallon, Commander of US forces in the Pacific, who had engaged in an ambitious military exchange program with China. Anti-submarine defences for the carrier battle group were reviewed as a result, the US Navy said. "It was not detected," said one Navy official of the encounter with a Chinese diesel-powered attack submarine. "And we're concerned about that, obviously." The Chinese Song-class attack submarine was armed with wake-homing torpedoes and anti-ship cruise missiles. The Americans had no idea China's fast-growing submarine fleet had reached such a level of sophistication, or that it posed such a threat. A further unconfirmed report suggests a similar incident occurred yet again in 2007.

Two and a half years on and China continues to build and add this class of ultra-quiet diesel boat to the fleet of PLAN (Peoples Liberation Army Navy). The Song is China's first new-design, conventionally powered submarine. The Song is a blend of Chinese and Western technology and has several key features that point to a major shift in diesel submarine design philosophy. It is the first Chinese submarine to have a skewed propeller. The Song also is the first Chinese submarine designed to carry the developmental YJ-82, China's first encapsulated ASCM capable of launching from a submerged submarine. Songs are probably fitted with flank-array sonars of French design. Chinese diesel submarines are fitted with German MTU diesel engines. The Type 039 Wuhan C-class submarines, also referred to as the S20 Song-class, are China's most modern, indigenously built diesel attack submarine.

The Song-class, produced at the Wuhan shipyard, is 75 meters long, and 8.4 meters wide, giving a length-breadth ratio of 8.9, about the same as that of the 035-type. The submarine is equipped with a seven-blade, large slanted propeller and shock-absorbance for the main engine. The hull of the submarine is tear-drop shaped and it has a wrap-casing rudder, although it has now dispensed with the earlier stepped conning tower similar to the old Ming/Romeo class. Its overall performance may be constrained by the use of 1980's technologies, but it was still highly successful in getting within striking distance of a major US naval unit on the high seas completely undetected. Maybe they just happened to pop up for an emergency recharge; what a coincidence that would be to consider and accept as even a remote explanation for their timely presence in the battle groups exercise patch.



### Barrow Dit from the Brush

If Mick Jones can find the time (between cloud hopping and spinning St Peter dits) to keep us amused, then it's high time some of the rest of us recalled some of our dits from the good old days. I was lucky enough to serve two commissions on *Sceptre* (1978-82) and was even on board for the 'iceberg incident' (Oops! Official Secrets Act - say no more). Well, the Admiralty were that chuffed with the crew they sent most of us en-masse (together that is) to join the new boat *Tireless* at the start of her build in Barrow. It was 1983 and the "advance party" was the Grocer, the Jimmy, the Engineer, a couple of Jack Dusties and half a dozen back aft tiffies, plus a couple of "dab-toes" to make the tea! In those days, the Navy paid you a 'couple of bob' extra to find lodgings in Barrow. I found a nice little terraced house in town, moved in with Pete Dismore, Ron Vickers, Taff Evans and Sweeney Todd (my God what a line-up...talk about boy bands)! The street was narrow and lined on both sides with small terraced houses, a pub on each corner and a Chippy in the middle! Think 'Coronation Street' (X-rated version) and you're close to the mark.

The boat on the slipway ahead of us - yes we used to launch in those days - was *Turbulent* and she was nearing completion and her commissioning ceremony was imminent. As the social Secretary of *Tireless*, I was asked to organise a charity raffle and auction for their commissioning do, so we went round town - well we went round the pubs and clubs in town collecting donations (bottles), travel agents, jewellers, health spas, etc - and we did very well. Along came the big weekend and the big day. It was suggested by some bright spark (with 3 rings) that we wear fancy dress to sell the tickets and take the auction so we managed to get a Sylvester and Tweety-Pie costume to add a bit of a giggle to the occasion. Me being the more manly had the cat suit, Sweeney being a short arse had the yellow canary outfit, I'm reaching for the mop just thinking about it!!!

The big do was in the Civic Centre and we'd planned to drive there in "costume", make a big entrance and so put people in the mood to part with their sheckles!! Picture the scene; I'm in the Sylvester costume in the street, cat's head under my arm, just getting into the car; Sweeney didn't want to be recognised so he was wearing the full kit including the little yellow beaky head and the red chicken feet. Shame the eye slots didn't line up with his eyes or he may have seen the 3 Dobermans coming up on him fast. I was in the driving seat and I couldn't reach the passenger door lock because I was rucked up eyes shut. The owner of the 3 snarling Gestapo canines was also out of control laughing and he had let go of their leads. Sweeney tried to climb a cast iron lamp post but the plastic feet were too slippery; at one point he was even flapping his little yellow fluffy wings but that didn't work either!! He entered the car through the sunroof and called me some "un-Tweety-Pie-like" names, I thought I saw a "puddy tat", but I definitely did see 3 f\*\*\*ing big Dobermans. When he'd stopped swearing we made our way to the Civic Centre. The plan was we'd make a crazy entrance - just like a cartoon - Sylvester chasing Tweety Pie - so we lined up and ran at the double swing doors - Sweeney (Tweety) in front, me chasing and cursing. Wrong doors - wrong room. The Lord Mayor was presiding over a Council Meeting and our entrance brought the house down but all the councillors bought tickets off us anyway. I always wondered if our untimely intrusion was minuted. More Barrow dits next issue! - **Ray (Brush) Bruchez**

## The Ditty Box

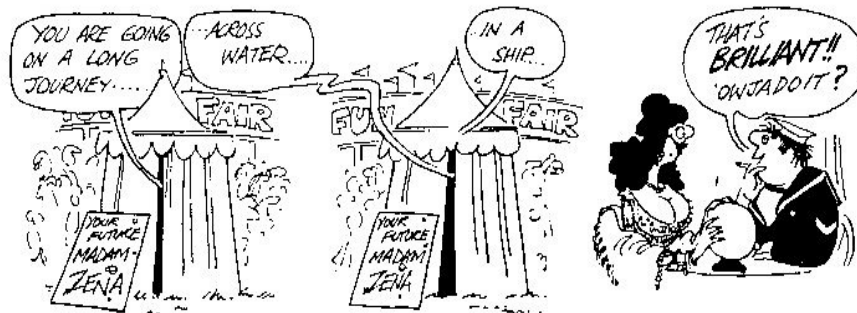
It was good to see **Alan Fitton** and '**Rattler**' **Morgan** at the **AGM** after a long time no see. The buzz is Alan has been sitting on the bottom for bit before slowly making his way up to periscope depth, and that Rattler had just dropped in to give his Burberry an oil change. Seriously lads, it was great to see you both there and we look forward to more appearances from you both in the future as circumstances permit.

### The following remark was overheard from a Naval Analyst:

Let's put it this way, anyone who's crazy enough to want to live in a submarine is welcome to do so as far as I'm concerned. And don't worry about illicit sex. If women are added to crews, the only place there'd be enough room for anything more than a pat on the \*\*\*\* (unless you're both yoga masters) is the bridge, and then the duty watch keepers would have to pretend you weren't around. (**Ed.** He obviously hasn't taken into account the sheer creativity and adaptability of submariners then.)

### This classic was overheard at HMS Raleigh Divisions:

Cunningham 37 Starboard getting inspected by the Parade Sergeant Major. The class leader makes his report to the PSM who turns to the PO and says. "What do you think of your class leader?" The PO says "Well sir, I think he looks very smart and will make a good class leader." PSM says, "He's got his f\*\*\*ing jumper on the wrong way around."



### The Northern Ireland Run - 27/29 March 2009

The branch run to **Bangor, NI**, was a magical experience for all those of us that made the trip. **Davy George**, the NI Branch Secretary, and his committee members are to be applauded for giving us such great time with true Irish hospitality that was second to none. Of course, the prime reason for going to Bangor was the **SA National 2009 Conference**, which went smoothly enough, but the rest of the crew went for the crack and the drink. The **Bangor RNA** venue, their lovely welcome, the cracking entertainment provided by the club and our Irish oppos was superb in every detail; from the local Dance School girls and young ladies with their fantastic traditional Irish dancing; to the artistes who played our kind of music; to much audience sing-along participation and jiving over the two evening shows. **Sam Price**, our Vice-Chairman, as a returning prodigal Irish son, made the presentation of a Merseyside SA crest to the NI Branch Chairman, **John Erskine**. The **Marine Court Hotel** was absolutely great and the staff most accommodating. Even the mismusters for scan in the mornings were being served gigantic full Irish breakfasts at 1030-1100 hrs by the friendly and very obliging restaurant staff. Try getting that kind of treatment in a mainland hotel where they start wiping down the galley at 0900 hrs sharp. **Bravo Zulu to the town of Bangor, its RNA and all the NI submariners** for a truly wonderful weekend of pure fun.