

Issue 53 Spring 2018



Ahoy There!

Happy Easter to you all.

We hope you enjoy our bumper newsletter with some very interesting stories. Thank you to Ray Pogson, Jan Larcombe, Steve Thompson, Bill Lowe and Brian Jackson for their contributions, really appreciated and we need more for our next issue in 3 months so please send them in they don't have to be large but all helps.

Hope you have all received details of the reunion in Plymouth on 12 - 14th October 2018 from Ray Whitehouse we have attached details at the back of this newsletter please send in forms to Ray Whitehouse. Looking forward to seeing you all in lovely Davenport.

Hilary & Steve King



HMS OCEAN LEAVES SERVICE WITH A ROYAL FAREWELL

On 27th March Her Majesty The Queen arrived at the Naval Base Plymouth to bid farewell to HMS Ocean. A 21-gun salute was made in her honour to mark the occasion and to welcome her to the Naval Base.

The Royal Navy's largest operational warship, HMS Ocean affectionately known as the Mighty 'O', has been de-commissioned in a military ceremony.

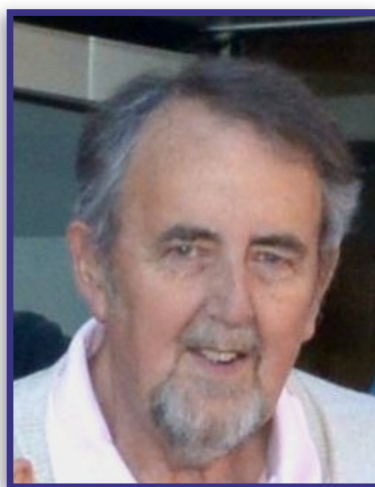
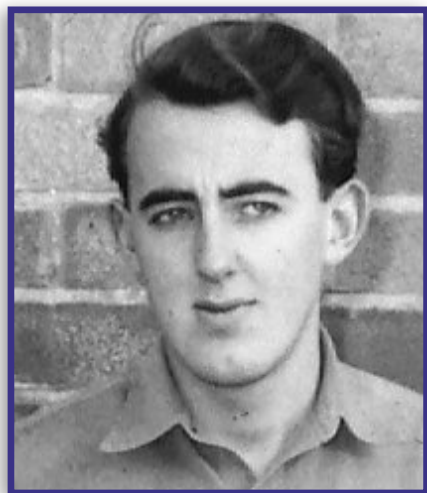
The Queen, who launched the ship as the ship's sponsor, was guest of honour at the ceremony, along with head of the Navy, First Sea Lord Admiral Sir Philip Jones and more than 500 of the ship's company, their families and affiliates of the ship.



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Farewell to Shipmates



Mike McKnight 1945- 2018

Mike was from County Down, Northern Ireland and was hoping to become a doctor but family circumstances meant that he had to leave university studying medicine and so he joined the Navy instead. Completing his photographic course at Lossie in 1965 he went to Singapore and then returned to Lossie in 1969 and a Phot 1s course in 1970. An instructor at RNSAP from 1973 to 75 he is remembered with affection as warm, kind and helpful by all the "baby" wrens he helped to train. Following drafts to DPR(N) (where he played a major role in the production of the BBC record "Sailor, a picture in the sound of The Royal Navy") and CGRM he left the Navy in 1978 and followed his future wife Janet to Tokyo where she was working for the MOD. Returning to the UK Mike started a photographic business in Trowbridge before joining British Aerospace managing their in house film unit. He was diagnosed with cancer in 2009 but in spite of this he was still willing to help and, as a "wiz" with anything high tech, he spent five years helping the Bedfordshire branch of SAFFA with their computer problems before moving to Shrewsbury in 2017. Mike died in a hospice on 19th February and will always be remembered for his good humour, gentle manner and care for others.

by Jan Larcombe



Farewell to Shipmates continued

Russell (Russ) Whalley

FORMER Chief Petty Officer Russell Whalley has died at his home in Talke, Stoke-on-Trent aged 76.

Russ, as he was generally known, was, at one time, responsible for carrying out the preliminary assessment of candidates from other naval branches who wanted to retrain as photographers and join the photographic branch. And he had a very particular way of deciding who would – or wouldn't – fit in.

Steve Dargan, who served with Russ in the 60's and 70's, recalls Russ explaining that he went through candidates' documents looking for reprobates and rebels - people with personality and a bit of spark - because that was what he felt was necessary to be a successful photographer." He added: "I couldn't criticise his approach, even if I wanted to, as I'd seen the inside of a navy cell myself at that stage!"

Steve continued: "I took over from Russ as Flag Officer Medway's PR photographer in 1973, and what an intimidating experience that was... He was a hell of a character who'd built up what I can only describe as an awesome reputation in the Medway towns. When we did the rounds of the local media it was if they were losing a family member. The local papers all did splashes on his departure and he was also interviewed on radio."

Russ joined the Navy in January 1958, and after qualifying as a Phot 111 at the Royal Naval School of Photography, RNAS Ford, moved to the Fleet Photographic Unit (FPU) at Tipner before being drafted to HMS Albion in October 1959 for a commission that went to the Far East. In 1961 he completed his Phot 11's course at HMS Ariel, Lee-on-the-Solent, and after a short stay at Fraser Gunnery Range, was drafted to the submarine depot ship HMS Adamant.

He returned to HMS Ariel in 1964 and qualified as a Phot 1 while still a Naval Airman. This was followed by a draft to HMS Drake, RN Barracks Devonport. He then went out to Singapore for two years, working out of the FPU in HMS Simbang, RNAS Sembawang.

Russ returned to the UK in 1966 and spent two years at FPU Fraser Gunnery Range, then was drafted to the light cruiser HMS Blake, before joining the public relations team at FO Medway based at HMS Pembroke. He spent a further three years in PR at HMS Warrrior, Northwood near Watford before returning to the FPU at HMS Excellent.

His final two drafts included two years in the USA with SACLANT at Norfolk, Virginia, followed by a spell as an Instructor at the Joint School of Photography, RAF Cosford before his retirement in May 1981.

He was made a Leading Hand in February 1967, qualified as a Petty Officer in January 1969 and was promoted to Chief Petty Officer in May 1973.

A talented footballer, Russ had a life-long love affair with Stoke City FC - 'The Potters' – and he particularly relished playing for the Navy under the floodlights in Singapore. He also threw a mean dart.

The many tributes from RNPA members recalled his easy-going manner, ready smile and a willingness to help others. He will be remembered as a good friend and as an accomplished photographer.

The Requiem Mass took place on Monday, February 26th at St Joseph Roman Catholic Church, Goldenhill, Stoke, followed by a private committal service.

Although Russ wasn't a current RNPA member, the Association and Photographic Branch were represented at his funeral by Danny Du Feu, Ian Hooper and David and Olga Price. Danny also arranged for a tied sheaf with a small RNPA logo and message of condolences to be placed with family floral tributes.

Russ is survived by wife Mary and his five children, Jill, Gerard, Sean, Siobhan and Vanessa.

BILL LOWE'S NEAR MISS....

I was enthralled by my friend Paul Yockney's graphic account of his brush with death in the line of duty, and I fully understand his modesty in not mentioning it to me before – probably in case he frightened me! Then Ray Pogson trumped this with his death-defying effrontery before the Gunnery Branch on Whale Island – a brave man to do that ! Such risky encounters with fate are thankfully rare, but I then thought, (not to be outdone), that my own qualification for this special gathering of heroes within the Branch might be of interest....

In 1966 I was sent to the coldest location on earth – yes, Chatham – to join the survey ship HMS “Vidal” as the ship's photographer; in reality chiefs' messman, ship's postman, wardroom washer-up, right-wing for the ship's rugby team, and proprietor of the rabbit firm... versatile if nothing else. We pitched and rolled our way across the Atlantic, pausing in the most forlorn wastes to survey the watery depths, and then spent six gruelling months surveying in Trinidad (Mardi Gras), Guyana (rum), Jamaica, (more rum) and lastly Washington Navy Yard (very rum), before “Vidal” made her sedate progress back down the Potomac River for the open sea - and home.

On the way out the Jimmy had announced that there would, at any unannounced moment, be a ship's emergency stations drill - which we took to most likely be around tot-time! In the event, after all our banyaning and surveying out there, no such inconvenient muster had been called, and the ship's company..(officers, men, the ship's dog and a motley population of press-ganged parakeets) thankfully headed east for Chatham with our work done. Eager for home, we settled into the relaxed, easy routine that characterised the survey navy, all notion of such a drill now highly unlikely as the ship set her head eastwards and then it happened... at four a.m. one morning, some idiot broadcast “all hands to emergency stations... all hands to emergency stations”!

... to which one of the stokers in the next hammock proclaimed “What a bloody stupid time to call a practice drill ! So naturally we responded slowly, still heavy with sleep, merely contemplating how short a lie-in we could grab before having to get out and up on deck, and having to comply with this stupid order....

then CRASH !!.. the ship cannoned into something solid, lurched back and spat us out of our cosy hammocks.. I was pitch forked into the sugar canister on the mess table, various other bodies were sprawled beneath me on the deck in a vortex of knives, forks and tomato ketchup, and we at last woke up to the fact that – God -this actually was a REAL EMERGENCY !! Scrambling aloft, we mustered on deck - to see a large cargo ship, lying off to port with a dirty great hole in her side, punched in by the most unwarlike Vidal.

What on earth (or at sea) had happened ? In the cold light of an Atlantic dawn, roughly 40N & 40E (look it up... a long way to swim), we had been closing with a ship which was heading straight for us - highly unusual, because we were way off the shipping lanes. When called up for identification, this cargo ship had signalled “Queen Mary”.. as good a reason as any to be wary ! As she headed for us, the young sub lieutenant on the bridge finally summoned the skipper (an Australian Navy four-ring Captain) up to the bridge to “have a look”. The skipper immediately put on full astern, which retarded Vidal's progress, and thus it transpired that we hit her with our bow, instead of her slicing us in two, which would have undoubtedly happened; she was three times our size. Her name really was the SS “Hong Kong Fair”, and I have never forgotten it. Miraculously, nobody on board was hurt; Vidal's for'ard paint locker in the bow (immediately for'd of my mess) had taken all the damage, so the Buffer stuffed the battered compartment with cement, secured the watertight door and we proceeded, more slowly and somewhat cautiously, back to Chatham, arriving more or less on schedule. The photographs expanded the rabbit firm's finances no end ! The parakeets on board must have had a premonition of all this, as they had previously elected to fly back to the West Indies !



Damage to HMS Vidal



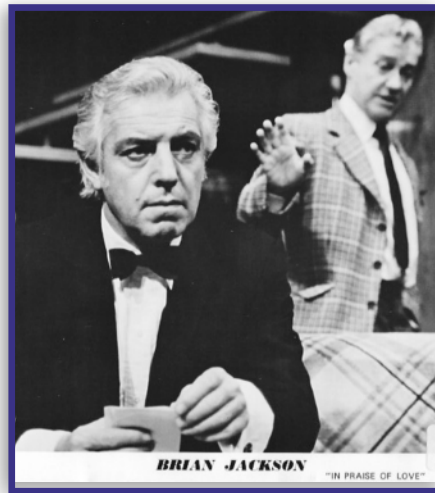
Queen Mary

There was an amusing sequel to this episode... when on a luxury cruise with my lovely wife Carol, years later, we attended the compulsory emergency drill. Standing there with our life jackets on and answering the roll call, four people missed it and rolled up well adrift. “Can't see the point of all this bleeding fuss” moaned some portly passenger... whereupon Carol spun round with fury on her face.... “You bloody fool.. it CAN happen- my husband was in a collision at sea, and it was only a split-second decision by the Captain that saved him and the ship”. She got a round of applause for that – not least from me !And I am not “swinging the lamp”!!

A Reminiscence

by Brian Jackson

Brian joined the branch at Ford in 1949 and after leaving, created Hampden Gurney Studios, a complex of photographic, film and music recording studios and headquarters for his film and distribution companies: he also became an actor.



Front of house still and press release



Best known as, "The Man from Del Monte" in the long running series of commercials; Brian has also appeared in many films, stage and TV's productions, most recently 'guesting' in an episode of Casualty.

"As I write, December 3rd. 2017, *The Dam Busters* is being shown on television, the day also happens to be the anniversary of the death in 2009 of the film's star actor, Richard Todd.

I remember well Richard tagging me along with him on an invitation to visit RAF Scrampton, the airfield being just a few miles north of the City of Lincoln, where I was on a theatre tour with him and Virginia Stride in a Charles Vance production of Terence Rattigan's, *In Praise of Love*; I played the couple's best friend, Mark.

As we arrived, blasting out from the P A system came the evergreen, Dam Busters March, which is probably even more famous than the film. Naturally, because of Dickie's memorable association with *The Dam Busters* film, the Brylcreem Boys at Scrampton gave us the VIP treatment. The highlight of our visit, well for me at any rate, was to sit in the cockpit of an original Avro Lancaster, this was 1977, with Richard in the pilot's seat and me alongside as his number 2. Yes, the press was there but neither Richard nor I had thought to take a camera: really smart thinking for an ex-Naval Airman Photographer, eh?

As we were leaving the airfield the theme music for 617 Squadron X was again played, but this time, so faintly we could only just about hear it. It was quite a moment.

Richard 'Dickie' Todd was a quiet man, almost a shy, I thought.



Do you recognise anyone?.....
..... need a clue or two?.....

Name of the group he played with
- The Cruisers
He is the drummer on front row
- white jacket
He has less hair & is on the RNPA
Committee!!!!

Answer page 11.

A PHOTOGRAPHIC CHALLENGE

by Steve Thompson

In May 1983 I was happily ensconced at DPRN Photographic Section in Old Admiralty Building, Whitehall, when the Head of Branch came over from HAD(N) for his regular visit and coffee. His opening gambit was, 'Hi Steve! I've dropped you in it.' It turned out he had spent most of the morning on the phone to Draftie. They had a new photographic billet which had been dropped on them both at short notice. The boss had to find the equipment for it and Draftie had to find a photographer but they wanted

one with an engineering background. (I was an Air Mechanic before the first re-tread course.) The boss said, 'I know just the person. He's at DPR.' Draftie could not find me on his planning board; it seems my card had fallen off it; hence my spending nearly four years there when everyone else was changing regularly.

The draft turned out to be HMS CHALLENGER, the new diving ship that was to replace the long-gone HMS RECLAIM. But this was a state-of-the-art, super-duper, all-singing, all-dancing, do-it-all-in-one-package diving ship except that she was called a Seabed Operations Vessel and I was to join her in five weeks having begged, borrowed and half-inched all the Phot Stores for it.

HMS CHALLENGER, pennant number K07 (K for miscellaneous vessels) was built by Scott's Ship Builders at Port Glasgow (Build 753) and the yard made a good job of her. Most of the first crew had taken her through the build and knew every rivet and weld. She was a one-off apart

from being painted ship-grey and having some standard Navy Issue kit fitted, she was completely different from any other Pussers vessel and this is how the first photographic task was formulated. There would be no shore training facilities so it was to be on-board training. To aid this we were to produce interactive training videos.

Today this would be second nature and routine but video had only just come into use and computers had only reached the BBC/Atari stage. But we were promised one of the new 286-computers which were fabled to achieve standards only to be found 20-odd years later. So two PORELs and myself were sent on a programming course to learn about making training programmes. We were all fired up to go but when the 286 eventually arrived it could not do the things needed and there was never the time to access equipment or people to make the videos. The work that was completed was great fun and we worked ways around various shortfalls in the systems to get the job done. This was one of the jobs that needed a technical background so the phot did not have to keep asking questions about the work being filmed.

When commissioned, CHALLENGER was the Royal Navy's fourth-largest ship after the carriers, but only had a crew of around one hundred and so you can see already time and people are in short supply. She was 134.1m (440ft) in length with a beam of 18m (59ft 1in), a draught of 5m (16ft 5in) and she displaced 6500 tonnes standard (7185 full).



HMS Challenger



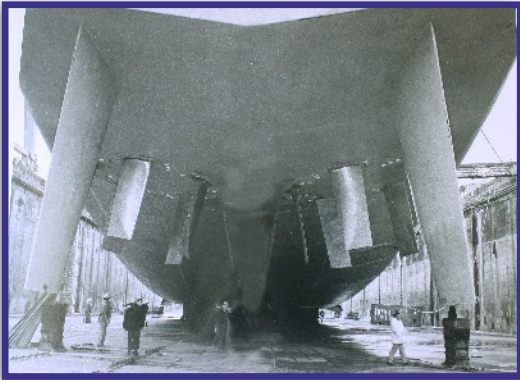
Stern shot showing layout A frame lowered in flying stations.



In Norwegian Fjord plus boat crew

This is where the fun starts. She has 5 RKC Ruston diesel engines, 16 cylinders producing 6200 shp (4623 KW). These are coupled to 3.3 KW alternators, which is a lot of wiggly Amps to play with and everyone had to recognise these systems. Especially the fire-fighting parties!! (That is another job for the phot. Did I mention short staffing?)

All this power was used to drive the propulsion system. No screws or propellers on this beastie: we had two Voith-Schneider propulsers aft and three bow thrusters up front. This system was used because when divers are deployed, and especially the diving bell, the ship must stay in a stationary position over the target. The VS props are rotating discs on the bottom of the hull. Hanging from the discs are five large blades that are shaped like aerofoils. As the disc rotates the blades change angle so that when flat against the water they push the ship along and when rotating to the drive position they turn so they just cut through the water. This means that the thrust can be applied in any direction (360°) instantly when the controls are adjusted. The bow thrusters would only turn the nose left or right, either slowly or in steps up to Fast. Each disc or thruster was driven by a huge electric motor located on top of its gearbox. This is why 3.3 KW is needed: this is a big motor!



Drydock stern :showing
Voith-Schneiders propulsers



Showing propulsion ,turning on a sixpence

This station keeping was achieved by a somewhat Heath-Robinson affair. On arrival at the target the ship moved sideways a short distance and hovered whilst lowering a block of concrete on the end of a cable to the seabed. Then the ship moved sideways to the opposite side of the target and lowered a second block. Once this was done the ship moved back to the central position. At the ends of the derricks deploying the blocks were electronic sensors that measured the angles of the cables (now held taut with automatic winches): fore/aft, port/starboard and up/down. This information was monitored by our super computers (two of them the size of an average front room but with less capacity than a modern laptop) and when the ship's control was switched over to the computer it could keep the ship to within a metre in a sea state 6.

Having mentioned divers: what do they do? Over twenty of the Seaman division were divers. They would carry out standard diving duties but we were a specialist ship so we had special equipment. In the Diving section a large hydraulically-operated door on the port mid ships would be opened. This hinged down to just above water level and acted as a handling platform so free-swimming divers with aqualung tanks could be supervised. In addition divers on umbilical leads could be deployed which could dive deeper. Here was another phot task: I had to teach the divers to use the standard Nikonos underwater camera and also the new underwater video cameras that were being tested. This involved a free-swimming diver handling a camera in an underwater housing.



HMS Challenger showing diving section door
open & Sea King on flight deck A frame
lowered for A/C safety

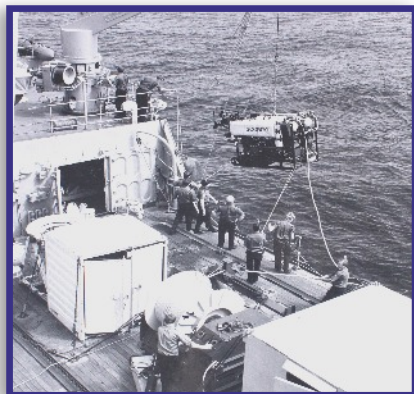
Footage obtained was viewed when back on board. There was also an umbilical system where we viewed and recorded the pictures on a monitor set-up in the control room. Any film shot on the Nikonos would later be processed back in the Phot section which was adjacent the Diving section.

The biggest job for the Bubbleheads was the Saturation Diving System. This comprised two giant tanks in each of which up to six divers would go into compression for up to two or three weeks. This time starts several days before the dive as they have to adjust to the helium breathing mixture and compression. At the end of the dive they go through decompression to return

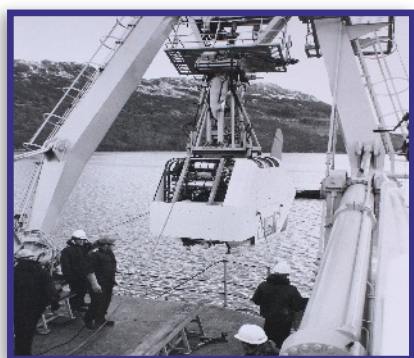
to normal air pressure. When being deployed the divers open a hatch into a central chamber which is at the pressure and atmosphere of the living tank and then climb up through another hatch into the diving bell. When ready, the bell is disconnected from the ship system and is moved forward **7**



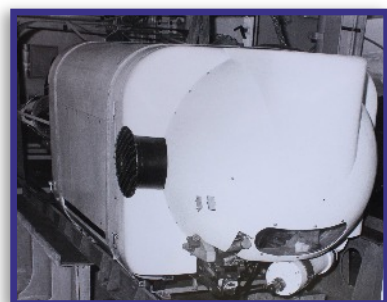
View forward showing Boat deck and Diving Bell on trolley



ROV being deployed



TUMS garage section on A frame before hinging aft and lowering mini sub.



Rover ROV part of TUMS



on a motorized trolley to the moonpool. This is a large hole down through the middle of the ship. The bell is then lowered to the water on a large umbilical cord, then out through the bottom of the ship down to the seabed. The saturation system allows divers to operate at greater depths than ordinary diving equipment and for longer periods. However this was not to be easy and it was an own goal. The Sat system was Cheapest Quote and it failed to work and was not up to the job. The system required a massive rebuild which put an already over-budget budget even further over budget and at a time when budgets were being cut. The death knell had sounded.

What is behind all this deep-diving lark? Well, this was the 1980s and the Cold War was still going full speed. On the seabed are lots of things that different people have put there or 'lost': some need maintenance, others need a good look at!!!! "Know Wot I Mean, John?"

Keep Positive. What other wonderful toys did we have to play with? Once again we were on the cutting edge and Remotely Operated Vehicles (ROVs) were being developed. These are like bedsteads with electric motors and camera/light systems and grabbie things to pick bits off the seabed. We tested several types and it was fun trying all these new techniques. They are now two-a-penny but at that time this was the Biz. But we were not just messing about with small fry. We had a BIG one to test: the TUMS which is Towed Unmanned Submersible and it occupied most of the aft end. It was effectively a large garage which is towed behind the ship on an 8-kilometre cable which is paid out to whatever depth is required. Once at operating depth, a second vehicle (like an ROV) is deployed from the garage. This is on an 80-metre umbilical and is flown around by a pilot back up in the control room using a video link to see what is out there. So Snaps has another toy to play with but it gets better. There is another camera on the Rover, in this case a converted F95 reconnaissance camera, which was supposed to be loaded with 70mm colour film.

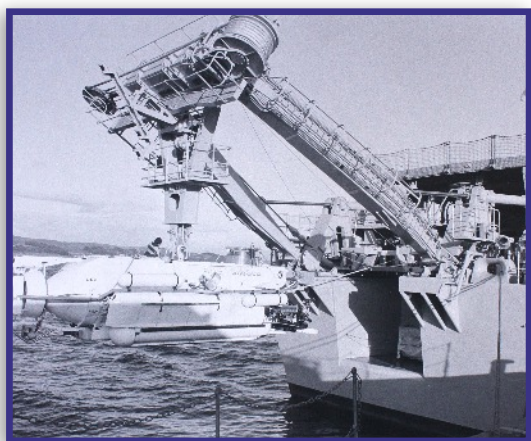
This takes us back to the Phot Section at first glance it was wonderful. A second look showed a nice-sized space but badly laid out. Had the branch been consulted earlier it could have been laid out to take Pussers equipment and be ergonomic. It was planned as a darkroom but by an amateur using his bathroom. It may have been his dream but in use it was our nightmare. I spent three days with the shipwright and an electrician trying to get Pussers gear in and working but it was a struggle. The film dryer had to be bolted on halfway up a bulkhead and the mounting press on the back of a door. How did 70mm colour film get us back to the darkroom? To process the film, a Colenta film processor was obtained but where to put it was the question. Luckily this was noticed during the build so the X-ray darkroom for Sickbay had its door cut into the Phot Section instead of Sickbay and



The Phot section

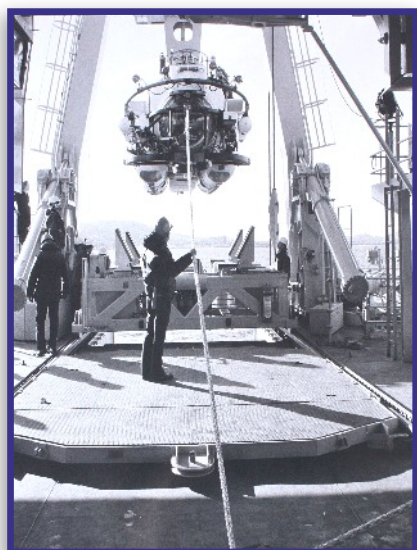
I had extra space but I had to process all the X-rays for the doctor and POMA as payment. I can hear you saying, 'Ah, but the Colenta reels only hold a metre length of film and F95 films are a little bit longer than that.' (A hundred foot for those too young to know F95!) True, but this was just one of the Naval planners *faux pas* with CHALLENGER.

I mentioned we only had a crew of 120 and being a big ship being run on Naval lines. This meant all non-watch keepers had to do other jobs. I was among a number of senior rates to be selected (!) as a bridge watch keeper with the duties of Second Officer of the Watch. This turned out to be responsible for navigation and plotting our position on the chart (which I took great delight in calling a map which drove the Fishheads mad.) Ah, the joys of being the only Waffoo on board, more of which later. Actually, I quite enjoyed the job but I didn't let on, though some of the Watch Officers could be a pain. Another diversion from photographic work was to assist the MAA with his office and to run several ship routines including producing Daily Orders. It also meant covering for the Joss when he was absent and the first time I ran Captain's Table I'm not sure who was most worried, me or the Defaulters!



LR5 on A frame during alongside handing trials, A frame fully out, When inboard it passes vertical by about 10 degrees to off load.

Still we have another toy to play with. The LR5 was our star piece of engineering. She is a mini submarine. She was built and operated by BAE Subsea Systems and joined the ship as required for operations or training. A special trailer would pull up alongside on the jetty and the LR5 would be craned aboard where we had a special motorized trolley similar to the one for the bell. This operated on the same rails as the bell and they ran from the moonpool aft to a large A-frame on the stern. Between the forward superstructure and the twin funnels was a large open deck area used to recover objects. Here the trolley would receive LR5 and work on the sub could take place. In bad weather the trolley and LR5 could be driven aft into a 'garage' which sat between the funnels and was covered-in with other ship paraphernalia (mostly the TUMS operating equipment). The flight deck sat over the top of this. For deployment, the trolley would continue aft and then the A-frame would lift the LR5 off the trolley and then hinge rearward so that the sub was suspended over the water into which it was lowered and released.



LR5 lifted off trolley by A frame before hinging aft & lowering mini sub.



LR5 being lowered into water, safety diver ready to disconnect winch cable and make sure nothing fouls lines.



LR5 disconnected from A frame, diver to disconnect tow before diving.

As the Phot I had to be acquainted with its camera set-up and I was lucky enough to go down on a trip. Around the mini-sub is a number of camera-and-light pairs. They are switched on and off from a panel on the starboard side of the cabin. The pilot flies the craft but I ought to mention at this point that the two crew in the cabin have to lie back-to-back on the deck. The engineer attends to his panel on one side and I was dealing with phot equipment on the other side. Sitting is not an

option: try lying on your side for two or three hours! The pilot sits in a glass bubble at the front and can see ahead and control his forward lights. If he wants to go sideways or rearwards then the crew in the cabin select the relevant camera/lights and switch them to one of four monitors beside the pilot so he can see where he is going. When observing a target on the seabed the pilot would fly over and around it and the various cameras could be used to film the subject and be recorded on two U-matic tape decks. At this date fancy video selection was not fitted so it was in-flight crash editing but it worked. Back on the surface recovery was the reverse of launch.

Another function that LR5 was testing was rescue work if a major submarine had an accident. On the underside of the mini-sub a hemispherical dome could be fitted with the top surrounding a hatch which opened into a small compartment in the centre of LR5. The idea was to land on top of the stricken sub with the dome positioned over their main hatch. Two cameras are fitted on the underside of LR5 for this operation as it needs to be very precise. Once in position, the dome is pumped full of air and the outside water pressure seals the dome round the hatch. Then a crew member from LR5 can open their hatch and the main sub opens their hatch and can transfer some of their crew over. The main problem is that LR5 can only transfer four at a time though I gather some bubbleheads got eight people in. Details not available but 'form a circle' was mentioned. After I left CHALLENGER I've heard that a proper transfer system was made. You may have heard of LR5 when she was sent to aid the Russians when they lost the KURSK.

Amongst all this fun all the usual photographic work was undertaken. It was slow at first as nobody had worked with a Phot before and naval personnel thought they would have to pay for my work. (If only!) Once that was explained, work began to come in, no problem, but I rarely had to buy a beer. For me, a prize job was to spend two days crawling around inside the Voith Schneider gearboxes photographing the wear on the gears. The clarity of the pictures surprised the engineers and the makers and cemented my relationship with them, leading to many similar jobs. Like when the super computer started playing up and the fault appeared to be from salt crystals building up on the PCBs. So much for the Clean Room Filters. Once again it was, 'Don't suppose it'll show up but could you——?' How big do you want your crystal?



**Chinook landing
on flightdeck.**

Most of the time I spent on CHALLENGER we were doing trials but we did get one operational job. Unfortunately it was the Air India Jumbo bombing. We were on deep sea trials in the Atlantic and we were the closest ship. We spent a long time finding floating wreckage and hauling it in. We also heard the black boxes pinging but to no avail. During this time a RAF Chinook (or Wokka-Wokka) called up and asked for fuel. He landed on our deck which was a bit of a tight fit. I duly recorded the event and ended up taking photographs on the flight deck, only to be called over to the aircraft. Out jumped a Crab Phot (from DPR RAF) and we chatted. Never heard the end of it, Bl——y Waffoo: We are in the middle of the Atlantic and his mate drops in for a chat!



Tank crews on Fallingbostal Range Germany

This was further compounded when we visited our Twin Regiment at Fallingbostal in Germany (11/13th Hussars). The link was that they drove Challenger tanks and we were invited to have a go. When I had my drive the Sergeant commanding the tank told me to floor the pedal and go flat out down this forest track. So I did. We burst out of the forest onto a large opening with a big tump in the middle. 'Drive towards it!' he shouted so I did, hitting the tump with much speed. At the top we continued the trajectory without the aid of supporting soil. I drove up to the parking area and got out only to be greeted with a chorus of, Bl——y Waffoo! Give him a tank and he has to FLY it!

My two years aboard CHALLENGER had to come to an end and that was during its major refit for the Saturation Diving system. Peter Simcock came to replace me but as I earlier said budget cuts were looming and CHALLENGER was costing too much. The trials continued for a while and many systems worked as hoped. But she was decommissioned and laid up in Pompey. Eventually all her equipment was sold off and then she was also sold. The first buyers' plans did not come to anything and she was sold again. This time she underwent a huge rebuild and came out as a diamond recovery vessel and works in the seas outside river estuaries in South Africa dredging for precious stones and metals for De Beers. She is now called the MV Ya Toivo.

The first crew were dedicated to making a reality of a super idea, whilst not exactly hand-picked, they exceeded that expectation. The Senior Rates' Mess were the most professional team I worked with during my twenty-four. It was sad that their dream was not backed up.

Steve Thompson

Things Historic

The usual plea to start. The history of photography in the Navy project is nearing its end but I am still short of material post 1984 when the records at the National Archives dried up. Something to do with the 30 year rule but it's a bit past that now.

If you go to Hist 1235 on the historical site you will see what I mean and any input to increase the content would be gratefully received.

If you did not catch the BBC film on the 25th March "RAF at 100" there were some interesting shots. Apparently they could not get hold of a British aerial camera from WW1 so they showed a German one instead. Also shown was clip of a Sea Harrier instead of a GR5 but they did not mention that. Anyway the camera interested me and it was obtained from the part of the Medmenham Collection displayed at [the Defence Intelligence and Security Centre \(DISC\)](#) at Chicksands.



Photographs courtesy of Tim Fryer and the Medmenham Museum



The camera is of wooden construction covered in green hessian type material. It has no lens but is obviously not more than about 10 inches focal length. The magazine holds 6 glass plates. The plate on the front says: "ICA Akt – Ges Dresden N" and the one on the top at the back "FKI 667 1916"

No known history except that it was in the historic collection at The Joint School of Photographic Interpretation from the late 1970s until it was transferred to the Medmenham Collection in the 1990s

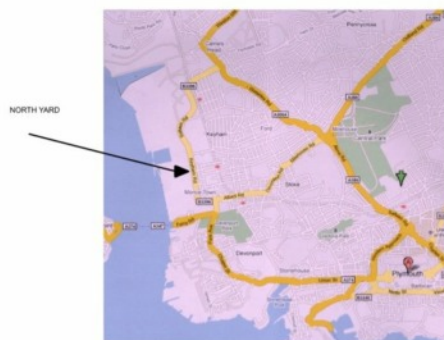


Friday

- 1400 onwards Check into hotel
- 1615 Meet in the hotel lobby & walk (5 mins) to the Barbican
- 1630 Private Visit & Tour Plymouth Gin Distillery
- 1830 Sampling & pre-dinner drinks in the Refectory Bar



Saturday - Day



0900 to 1500

Own car transfers to:
 The Royal Naval Heritage Trust & Plymouth Dockyards
 Coffee on arrival
 Presentations
 Museums & Galleries
 Visit HMS Courageous (Not suitable for the disabled)
 South & North Yards (Bus transfers included between Yards)
 Oggie Buffet Lunch

Saturday - Evening



- 1700 Meet in hotel lobby (shared taxis to venue)
- 1730 RNPA Annual Reception
- 1900 Dinner & Dance at the Dome Restaurant Hoe Park
- 2330 (onwards) Return to hotel (shared taxis)

Sunday

- 1000 RNPA AGM (Hotel)
- 1230 Meet in hotel lobby - walk to the Barbican
- 1245-1500 Private Boat Tour - Harbours, Sound, Dockyards
- 1830 Hotel lobby - Barbican for Dinner



Monday

Depart after breakfast - in your own time