



# NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 7, NOVEMBER 2010



*ML 1939 Fairmile A 110ft*

This is an important Issue for two special reasons. Firstly, it has to report a change at the helm of the CFHT. Outgoing Chairman Sir Derrick Holden-Brown has been succeeded by John Ascoli, a Trustee of many years standing. Sir Derrick has also stood down as a Trustee. Secondly, this issue contains an extra four pages in order to introduce the long awaited historical documentary DVD film entitled "A History of the Royal Navy's Coastal Forces". A cover picture and summary of the contents of the film are on pages 15 & 16, together with details of how to order your copy. Supporters should note that a special price is on offer for them **so long as they place their orders by 31 December 2010**. AND you may order as many copies as you like.

As usual, this Issue reports on those CF boats from WW2 which can still be seen by the general public. Two, MTB 81 and HDML 1387 (*Medusa*), are now based at Gunwharf Quays in Portsmouth and it is hoped *Medusa* will be at Hornet for the Remembrance Service in November. It is worth remembering that *Medusa*, MTB 102 and *Gay Archer* each

depend entirely upon the support of individual donations. Anyone wishing to contribute can contact the Trust office for details.

A detailed analysis of those receiving copies of this Newsletter has shown that there are still a number of recipients who have so far been unable to make a donation to support the work of the Trust. There has been an enthusiastic response to the newsletter and many readers have said how much they enjoy reading it. So the Trustees would just like to gently remind all who receive it to check that they are also financial supporters of the Trust. The future of the newsletter depends on that **total** support.

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RIGHT MTB 1939 Thornycroft 74ft

## CHANGE OF CHAIRMAN

Many members of the Coastal Forces fraternity will be sorry that Sir Derrick Holden-Brown has stood down as Chairman of the CFHT. He has been a tireless worker for Coastal Forces for many years, even before the Trust was founded. Anyone who has read "Gunboat 658" will know he served with distinction as Navigator and 1st Lt in Dog Boats in the Med, first with the Canadian CO Tom Ladner, in MGB 661. Eighteen months later, after 661 was mined south of Venice, he was appointed CO of MTB 655, only to be mined once again in the Dalmation Islands. Wounded and invalided home, he finished the war in the Coastal Forces section at the Admiralty.

In spite of an exceptionally busy and successful business career culminating in a knighthood for services to the food and drink industry, Sir Derrick gave a great deal of time to Naval affairs as Chairman of both the White Ensign Association and the Portsmouth Naval Heritage Trust. The CFHT has been extremely fortunate to benefit from his leadership and unstinting efforts to further the history and memory of Coastal Forces and to ensure its heritage will not be forgotten. He is succeeded by John Ascoli, who has been a Trustee for ten years and is the Trust's current representative on the Council of the Royal Naval Museum. As the son of a distinguished wartime Dog Boat CO, with his passion for CF history, well known to former CFVA members, and having done his post-war National Service in coastal forces at Hornet, he is ideally placed to take on this demanding role.

Euan Strathcona & Len Reynolds



LEFT *John Ascoli*

BELOW *Sir Derrick Holden-Brown*



## CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

This is my first letter as Chairman of the Trust, having taken over from Sir Derrick Holden-Brown in July. As a founding member of the Trust Sir Derrick made a major contribution over sixteen years, both as a Trustee and for several years as the Chairman, for which all those involved in the Trust are immensely grateful.

It is a great privilege for me to take over the reins of a successful and ambitious organisation with the intention of moving forward to meet clearly defined objectives with the

same determination as my predecessor. Many will have met me as a Trustee over the past ten years and I hope to meet others as we go about the Trust's business. You will read in this Newsletter both of our recent achievements and of the objectives which lie before us. It is without doubt a time of change but, above all, we desperately need your support to meet new and quite exciting goals and I thank you in anticipation of that continued backing, both moral and financial.

## DIRECTOR'S REPORT

I must start by thanking all those who attended the Commemorative events at Falmouth and Dover. Both went well and are covered in detail in this newsletter. None of our activities would amount to much without the vital support of those who can make it to these occasions. These two last Plaque dedications, the eleventh and twelfth, mark the end of this particular project. Also coming to completion is the DVD documentary on the story of Coastal Forces which, although long overdue, is now available and you will find ordering details

on pages 15 and 16. Please give particular attention to this, as a special offer is available for the purchase of the DVD for a short period, and you can have as many copies as you wish.

Now for the future. As you know, the main aim of the Trust is the establishment of a permanent exhibition of Coastal Forces. Our intention that this should be in the Royal Naval Museum is at last moving forward at a faster pace. It has been a difficult period for the RNM while it has been establishing itself within the new structure of The National Museum of the Royal Navy.

Now that has been achieved and the Museum has re-bid for a development Grant for its Twentieth Century naval exhibition. The cost of the whole project is estimated to be £4.186m and the Heritage Lottery funding requested is £1.25m. The Museum has much work to do over the next few years but the focus is on having the new exhibition open by 2014. We expect to be a part of that exhibition and will work closely with the Museum to achieve this aim. We are meeting regularly with the Director General of the National Museum of the Royal Navy, Dr Dominic Tweddle, and will keep you informed of our progress. Meanwhile we are developing detailed plans for our own involvement.

Both the commemorative plaque programme and the DVD production have been expensive for the Trust and we must now bolster our resources for the future. We have a core of very solid supporters who keep the Trust afloat financially, for which we are extremely grateful.

However, this support currently comes from just under half of those who receive the Newsletters. As mentioned in the Editorial, I hope that the reports of our achievements and future objectives in this Newsletter will stimulate everyone to lend their support.

My thanks in advance.

## PLAQUE PROGRAMME

### FALMOUTH

The commemorative plaque at Falmouth has been placed in a particularly splendid location. It is sited on a rock plinth on Discovery Quay, adjacent to the National Maritime Museum Cornwall, a much visited site. The dedication took place on a beautiful summer day and was well attended by both veterans and many local people. The event coincided with the Sea Shanty Festival also being held adjacent to the Museum, which offered an added attraction for those attending. Lady Mary Holborow, Lord Lieutenant of Cornwall, unveiled the plaque commemorating HMS *Forte IV* and Coastal Forces at Falmouth during the war years, and a very moving address was given by Andrew Lyle, son of a distinguished Coastal Forces veteran. Both the Mayor of Falmouth, Councillor Geoffrey Evans who welcomed the guests, and Jonathan Griffiths, the Museum Director, had been unstinting in their support for the event. A most enjoyable reception was held afterwards in the Museum. Local supporters



*Lady Holborow unveils the plaque*

included both sons of the late Lt Cdr Robert Hichens (Hitch), the Naval Regional Commander, Commodore Jamie Miller CBE, the Commanding Officer of RNAS Culdrose, Captain Graham Mackay, and the Sea Cadet Unit, TS Robert Hichens. All in all it was a splendid occasion.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF DAVID BRENCHLEY



LEFT *Great Veterans turnout!*



*'We will remember them'*

## DOVER

On 10 July 2010, the commemoration of HMS *Wasp* and the Coastal Forces presence at Dover was a successful and enjoyable occasion. This was despite the long delay whilst overcoming a number of planning difficulties. Planning and Listed Building consent were necessary to have our commemorative plaque placed on Lord Warden House, previously the Lord Warden Hotel and World War 2 Coastal Forces headquarters. When this was eventually forthcoming, we found the commemorative event could not be held in front of Lord Warden House itself due to commercial activity in that area, and so had to be held on Dover Promenade. Nevertheless, we were blessed with a beautiful day and extremely privileged to have Admiral Lord Boyce, Lord Warden and Admiral of the Cinque Ports, unveiling the plaque and giving the Address. He was supported by the worshipful Mayor of Dover, Councillor Susan Jones, the Chairman of the Council and senior management from the Dover Harbour Board. As always, it is the support of Coastal Forces veterans and members of the local Royal Naval Association and British Legion which make the day. This particular occasion was made more memorable by the very sincere and professional inputs of individuals participating;

the Rev Grahame Berridge who officiated, Lt Charlie Nunn our Parade Commander, Heidi Watkins our Trumpeter and, as on many occasions, George Chandler, who gave the Words of Remembrance. All helped to make a memorable day.



*Rev Berridge & Admiral Lord Boyce*

## SUPPORTERS' CORNER & FEEDBACK

### MTB 243

Prompted by Dennis Scutt's article in NL 6, Ted Hind has written to add detail to the 'hospital ship' incident.

"At the time we were operating from the only Allied held island in the Dalmations, Vis. MTB 243 had had her tubes removed and was operating as a special service boat. This trip was for two boats to land agents on Krk, no less than 360 miles away, so they could report shipping movements from Fiume (now Rijeka). This was well beyond our range so extra fuel had to be carried in barrels on the upper deck. At sea on the first night we stopped and topped up from the barrels, having to filter all the fuel through chamois leathers to ensure no water reached the tanks. To leave no clues of our presence, the casks had to be refilled with water before being ditched.

We then sought daytime shelter in a bottle-necked cove on the island of Ist, where we secured between the sunken schooner and a jetty, with camouflage nets over all. Here we had an engine breakdown and so the other boat went on alone to complete the operation that night. She returned successfully early the following morning and we settled down for a second day under camouflage. It was this day the hospital ship appeared, and although we wondered if she was illegally carrying troops, we could only have used depth charges in an attack, our other armament being too light against such a target. We both returned safely to Vis the following night."



*The crew of MTB 602, Weymouth, August 1943*

### J. DUDLEY ROBINSON

Miles Robinson, the son of Lt Cdr Dudley Robinson, DSC, RNVR would like to hear from anybody who served with his father in the Dog Boat MTB 602 operating principally out of Newhaven with the 51st (formerly 18th) Flotilla from 1943 to 1945. Please contact him on **01435 883338** or **Miles@MilRob.plus.com** or at Meeching, Burwash, E. Sussex, TN19 7JP.

### 15TH MGB FLOTILLA – The Shelburn Freedom Trail

The thriving WW2 Escape Lines Memorial Society (ELMS) seeks contact with any more members, or their families, who served with the 15th during that flotilla's operations visiting the occupied coast of France. In addition to large annual re-unions, the Society organizes regular annual walks re-tracing the steps of many 'evaders and escapers', and the late Charles Milner DSM (*see* page 13) was not only a member but also laid the 'flotilla' wreath at their annual Remembrance for many years. Will anyone interested please contact the Hon Sec Roger Stanton on **01423 508667** or **rogerstanton.elms@tpiz.co.uk** or at 5 Tansy Road, Harrogate, N. Yorks, HG3 2UJ. Further details can be obtained from Captain Trevor Robotham at the CFHT office.

### 'PODDY' PODD

After asking to hear from anyone who had served with her father in MTB 469, Susie Podd writes she has heard from several people who knew him. Derek Pigott was 1st Lt of 468 in the same flotilla based at Lowestoft in 1944/5 and remembers "he was an efficient officer, well liked and popular with his crew and a good footballer to have in the team for inter flotilla competitions". By coincidence David lives close to a printing company founded by Lt Podd's brother. He met Poddy by chance in London some years after the war but had not seen him since the 1994 D Day Re-union. Peter Davis, also of 468, has been in contact, as have the widows of crew members Reg Southcombe, Jim Short and Don Gray. Susie is very grateful to everyone who has been in touch.

## BOATS ROUNDUP

### GAY ARCHER P1041



*Gay Archer off Cardiff*

After a major rebuild this year of one engine, Paul Childs and his helpers hope to complete sea trials by the time this newsletter is published. Lying at Watchet in Somerset, the owners hope to open her as a floating museum by the end of the year, hopefully berthed close to the local Museum which is alongside the harbour. Any loan or donations of suitable memorabilia would be much appreciated.

All being well, in the future it is intended to run some 24 hour trips to Cardiff and back. The plan is to sail to Cardiff in the morning, berthing there in time for a good run ashore, staying on board overnight in Cardiff and returning to Watchet the following morning. A hearty breakfast, tea/coffee and a tot of rum will be available – all for the sum of £125. Actual dates will of course depend on the tides.

Anyone interested in supporting this well restored FPB is encouraged to join 'The Friends of HMS *Gay Archer*' so that these plans can be achieved. Starting donations from £5 (which gives free access to look round the boat) would be gratefully received. The Friends can be contacted on **01278 429233** or [rhian.childs@yahoo.com](mailto:rhian.childs@yahoo.com)

Cheques should be made out to 'The Friends of Gay Archer' and sent to 39 Bayford Road, Bridgwater, Somerset, TA6 4QW.

### MGB 81

MGB 81 is now firmly under the ownership and management of The Portsmouth Naval Base Property Trust (one of the principal operators of the Portsmouth Historic Dockyard), who will decide how to operate the boat for the best public benefit. She can be seen at her berth alongside Gunwharf Quays shopping and leisure centre in Portsmouth. The boat has already been used for BBC filming and opportunities for charter are being pursued, one of which might be to support the 2012 Round Britain Race. With one of her three engines currently U/S, her new managers are coming to terms with the true costs of operating and maintaining such a vessel.

### MTB 102 – Dunkirk Return

70 years on from her most glorious past in 1940, 102 sailed down the North Sea to Ramsgate, in a gentle following sea and wind, to take her place in the Dunkirk 70th Anniversary Return Cruise. Joined by numerous other 'Little Ships' in spite of the Northerly gales outside the harbour, her RNR crew from HMS *President* were embarked before the fleet set sail, escorted by HM Ships *Monmouth* and *Raider*. The wind had died away, bringing rain and a calm sea for what proved to be an excellent crossing to Dunkirk. MTB 102, under the command of the Vice Commodore ADLS was the lead vessel of the so-called 'fast fleet' – at a rather frustrating 8 knots. So she secured permission to break away for a time to give her high performance diesels a clean-out, and judging by the large clouds of exhaust smoke produced, she had really needed that spell at full throttle!

The welcome by Dunkirk folk was tremendous and the many events laid on for those of us lucky enough to be present were much enjoyed by all, including our new Honorary Admiral, HRH Prince Michael of Kent. On Saturday morning the whole fleet slipped and proceeded to sea to form a circle off the beaches. With ensigns at half mast and to the sounds of the Last Post, *Monmouth's* helicopter lowered a wreath to the sea and the ashes of several Dunkirk veterans and ADLS members were spread – a most moving moment. Back in port the RNR organized a commemorative cocktail party before Evening Colours brought the official event to a close at 2000.

Our return to Ramsgate was not so lucky. The strong Northerly had re-appeared and sailing had to be delayed by 24 hours. But this did have the advantage that *Monmouth* had to sail before us, so a shallower course plotted to Ramsgate cut an hour off the return crossing the next day. 102 safely delivered her charges to the Ramsgate approach channel and then carried straight on up the North Sea and so to Lowestoft and home.

Bearing in mind that every vessel had to be at least 70 years old, and the tough conditions faced, this Return of over fifty boats throughout such a challenging event speaks volumes for the care and attention (not to say finance) lavished upon them by their mainly private owners and supporters. Long may the 'Dunkirk Spirit' prevail.

Throughout, and proud to fly the Vice Commodore's flag, MTB 102 was her usual well-behaved self.

Richard Basey  
(*Vice Commodore, Association of Dunkirk Little Ships*)



*102 and Monmouth*

### **THE REFIT OF HDML 1387 (*Medusa*)**

Following a lottery award of nearly £1m in 2005, the Medusa Trust took a lease of the recently closed (but still fully equipped) Hythe Shipyard – our second piece of luck! The tender was won by The Maritime Workshop from Gosport. Rather than employ a project manager, trustees Alan Watson and Mike Boyce agreed to manage the work, the former the finances and the latter the ‘nuts and bolts’.

On 30 January 2006 the job started. The vessel was hauled out, a protective shelter constructed, chartroom and engine hatch removed and the engines lifted out and transferred to the main workshop for volunteers to rebuild. Deck, deck beams and beam-shelves were removed. New shelves and beams were laminated in teak, and the superstructure rebuilt from recycled teak from the decks of old ocean liners.

To ensure it was 100% watertight and completely authentic the new deck was fashioned from a ¾in membrane of plywood covered with a diagonal skin of teak planking, the whole bonded with a strong, flexible adhesive (Arbokol), so that fewer fastenings were required. On the hull, old planking was removed and defective timbers replaced with laminated teak. Three thicknesses (with a horizontal layer between the diagonals), rather than the original two, were bonded with Arbokol, which again reduced the number of main timber fastenings required.

30 October 2007 brought near disaster when a fire swept through the yard. *Medusa* herself was undamaged on her slipway but many fittings and furnishings were lost in the yard buildings. Worse, the almost rebuilt boat’s machinery was seriously damaged. Fortunately, full insurance allowed for that situation to be recovered. A specialist firm in Canterbury was able to effect the rebuilds, even using cannibalized spares from donor engines. With each of the engines weighing 3½ tons (8x24-litre cylinders apiece) this was a major operation!

By mid-2009 the rebuilt engines had been installed and connected to new stainless-steel shafts, enabling the new chartroom, bridge structure and 18 stainless-steel fuel tanks to be fitted. Finally, all the hatches were replaced and painting ship could begin. Early in 2010 the shelter was removed and the boat was eased into the water for immersion and engine testing.

On 1 March 2010, precisely four years and one month after hauling out, the fully restored *Medusa* was formally launched. Moving under her own power, she left Hythe, crossed Southampton Water and proceeded up the River Itchen to berth at Saxon Wharf.

The thanks of the Medusa Trust for work and other services during the refit are due in particular to the volunteers of the Medusa Support Group, The Maritime Workshop, Hythe Marine Services Ltd, Tubeform Technology Ltd, Gardner Diesel Engines Ltd, the General Estates Co Ltd, Hampshire Fire Service, and Wessex Petroleum Ltd.

Mike Boyce



*Medusa saved from the ashes*

## NOTICE BOARD

### DVD DOCUMENTARY

The long awaited documentary entitled "A History of the Royal Navy's Coastal Forces" has been completed and is now available for purchase. The one-disc documentary comes in ten sections and is just over 3 hours in length. Pages 15 and 16 tell you more about this very comprehensive history of Coastal Forces, the possession of which is a must for all those with an interest in this field. As a special concession to Coastal Forces veterans and recipients of this Newsletter, the DVD is obtainable from the Trust office, details below, at a special price of £13.50, inclusive of VAT and postage. Multiple orders are welcome. Cheques should be made payable to the Coastal Forces Heritage Trust. We regret that credit and debit card facilities are not available.

ORDERS UP TO 31 DECEMBER to:-

The Coastal Forces Heritage Trust,  
The Royal Naval Museum,  
HM Naval Base (pp66),  
Portsmouth PO1 3NH.

**There is a tear-off ORDER FORM ON PAGE 16.**

You must order by 31 December to benefit from this special offer. From 1 January 2011 all orders will be processed through Maritime Books at an expected price of £14.99 per DVD, inclusive of VAT and postage. See page 16 for details of how to order after that date.

## QUICK QUIZ

What on earth is this?



### MODELS OF COASTAL FORCES BOATS

Whilst the Trust is still awaiting a permanent base for a full exhibition of Coastal Forces history, it is important to keep up to date the records and memorabilia collections which will form major elements of that exhibition. It is hoped that models of several classes of coastal forces boats will feature in such a display. Accordingly, the Trust wants to update its records of what models are still in existence and where they are held. Anyone who reads this Newsletter and who knows of the whereabouts of any such model is therefore asked to send this information to the Trust's Office at the RN Museum. (Address on page 14.)

Additionally, the Trust already holds a number of models which require some restoration work. If there are any model makers out there who live not too far from Gosport and would like to help with this important job will they please get in touch.

### UK MILITARY CEMETERIES

From time to time a UK National Military Cemetery is proposed but there are no current plans for this. The present situation is that the MOD supports the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, which maintains 1.7 million graves from both World Wars. For later deaths the Government has responsibility for 40,000 graves and details are on the Roll of Honour on the Armed Forces Memorial website at [www.forcesmemorial.org.roll-of-honour.asp](http://www.forcesmemorial.org.roll-of-honour.asp). Next of kin of those who die abroad are given the choice of repatriation or a Service funeral overseas. Although most opt for burial locally, there are still 27 Service cemeteries in Britain (maintained by the MOD) at Aldershot, Arbroath, Beachley, Bordon, Brookwood, Chatham, Colchester, Deepcut, Faslane, Fulford, Gillingham, Haslar, Helston, Henlow, Hipswell, Honington, Ipswich, Peterborough, Plymouth, Portland, Sandhurst, Shorncliffe, Stirling Lines, Tidworth, Watchfield, Yarmouth and Yeovil.

*with thanks to Terence Mills*

### CFHT WEBSITE

Occasionally supporters have found difficulty in raising the website. If you cannot raise it using [www.coastal-forces.org.uk](http://www.coastal-forces.org.uk) then you can either google Coastal Forces or use [www.dameland.org.uk](http://www.dameland.org.uk)

## MAKING HISTORY

### PORTSMOUTH TO MALTA 1937

At 0750 on the 22nd of June 1937, six boats comprising the 1st MTB Flotilla sailed from HMS *Vernon* at Portsmouth bound for Malta and the Mediterranean Fleet. They had been sent for by the C-in-C, Admiral Sir Dudley Pound, who felt his fleet needed training in the tactics for dealing with possible attacks from fast torpedo craft. (At the time it was appreciated that the Italian Navy, a prospective enemy, had more experience of their development and operation than any other major nation).

The flotilla was accompanied by their ex-trawler tender, HMS *Vulcan*, the whole unit being under the command of the flotilla's SO, Lt Cdr Guy Sayer. (The name *Vulcan* had been chosen to follow in the footsteps of a previous *Vulcan* who had acted as support ship for the early torpedo boats of the late 1890s). The Sailing Orders, although including planned calls at nine ports on the way, made it clear that "...the timed schedule is a guide only. Times and dates of arriving at and sailing from intermediate ports are to be arranged as necessitated by weather conditions...fuel and repair requirements". There was also the careful note that *Vulcan*, due to her inferior speed, should normally be sailed so as to be at the next port before the arrival of the flotilla in order to be ready with any support needed.

With six new 15-ton boats only 60 ft in length and virtually no previous experience of long passages, this was some undertaking in those days, and it was decided they should be escorted on the first leg, some 250 miles to Brest, by the destroyer *Skate*. They had to ship deck tanks to ensure



*1st Flotilla 1937*

fuel did not run short, but on this first leg, accomplished in fair weather, their only problem was some dirty fuel in two of the boats, probably due to those very tanks. They arrived just under 12 hours after sailing, carried out minor maintenance and fuelling during the 23rd of June and sailed at 1800 for the longest leg, 350 miles to Corunna.

At just after 0800 the next morning, after a night at 24 knots aided by a following wind and sea, near disaster threatened when MTB 5 struck a submerged object, believed



*Flotilla Ships' Companies*



*Stern lifting*

to be a baulk of timber, which damaged a shaft and propeller. Luckily *Skate* was still in the area and MTB 5 was taken in tow, arriving in Corunna about midnight, 10 hours after the rest of the flotilla. After being lifted by the stern galleys of *Vulcan*, by 1800 repairs, trials and fuelling had all been completed and she was ready to sail with the rest at 0800 on June 26th. So *Skate* left for home.

Arriving at Oporto later that day proved a mixed blessing. Due to the fair weather since leaving home, the flotilla was two days early, much to the consternation of the large British community, who had laid on a major hospitality programme for both officers and ratings. They had been looking forward to this visit by the Navy for months. But in order not to delay the flotilla, they sportingly re-arranged their plans and all parties enjoyed such splendid hospitality that Sayer recommended the RN should visit more often! The flotilla sailed for their 175 mile leg to Lisbon at 0800 on the 28th.

Increasing wind and swell from astern made continuous adjustment of the throttles necessary for the whole trip. Nevertheless, with only a minor engine problem in one boat, they arrived in Lisbon at 1430 and, after another busy shore programme, left for Gibraltar on the morning of 1st July. With freshening winds causing some bumping, course had to be altered to make things more comfortable. During the afternoon they were closely inspected by a Fascist seaplane with machine guns trained on the boats – happily not fired. (It will be recalled the Spaniards were in the midst of their Civil War). As they neared Gib the weather worsened from dead ahead and with all the Spanish shore lights out, frequent position checks were necessary, for which the boats had to stop. Some became separated, and many minor leaks appeared at deck level. Nevertheless by 0200 on July 2nd all boats were safely in harbour.

This 315 mile leg had been testing. Checks showed deck joints and gun rings had been distorted by the bumping, one engine

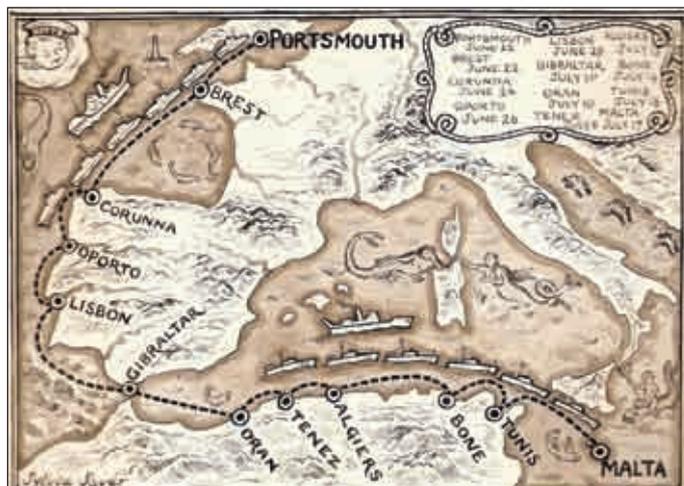
needed changing, and many copper pipes had fractured with the violent movement. With *Vulcan* in attendance, however, all repairs were complete by 5th July, so all hands were able to take some rest before sailing for Oran at 0800 on the 10th, arriving at 1800 after a 240 mile trip in calm, if wet, conditions.

Next morning they were off to Algiers, but at 1400 the wind got up so fast they had to divert to Port Tenez, arriving at 1630. MTB 4 reported her engine room Stokers taken ill due to engine room fumes. The CO took over down below while the Coxswain steered into harbour. A hastily summoned doctor diagnosed possible carbon monoxide poisoning, which could have come from either a cracked exhaust or a leaking fire extinguisher. Happily, recovery was rapid. Once again the weather had caused problems with engines and copper piping fractures.

But such was the expertise now provided by *Vulcan* the repairs were completed by the following evening and the group sailed early on the 13th for Algiers, a short 90 mile hop. This enabled another early departure for the 237 mile leg to Bone and in excellent weather they arrived at 1700 on the 14th. The next day came a new experience, fuelling by hand from drums! Although a lengthy process, all went well so that they were able to sail early on the 16th. It had been decided not to go up the canal to Tunis because it was felt the slow speed would not be good for their engines, so they stopped off at La Coulette for final fuelling before the home run to Malta. Leaving at 1700 for a night run ahead of a foul weather forecast, the flotilla anchored in St Paul's Bay early on the morning of 17th July, and finally entered Grand Harbour at 0900.

It had been an epic voyage over a distance of some 2323 nautical miles at average speeds ranging from 17.5 up to the swiftest leg at 22.5 knots. Remarkably, no major defects had been experienced, engine problems had been “minimal”, and they had cut a whole week off their original planned timetable. They certainly deserved the congratulations they received.

*with thanks to Captain Geoffrey Sayer OBE RN*



*Mrs Sylvia Sayer's drawing of the voyage*

## SPECIAL FEATURES



*Capt Whisky and crew*

### **POLISH FREE FORCES**

Providing probably the smallest of the Allied Navies' contingent of coastal forces, the Polish Naval contribution made up for it by having the fiercest fighting reputation. There was an unwritten agreement when operating with British boats that any enemy survivors after an engagement would be picked up by the British. Hardly surprising when considering the appalling conditions faced by their countrymen in their occupied homeland.

When General Sikorski called for volunteers to join the Polish Free Forces, the Admiralty agreed to return a Sammy White boat to be manned by Polish sailors, followed soon by two BPB craft originally ordered by Norway. Each Polish boat had a prefix 'S' meaning 'fast-hunter', and S.1 (Greyhound), S.2 (Alsation) and S.3 (Pointer) joined the cosmopolitan 3rd MGB Flotilla operating out of Fowey, made up also with British and French crews. The Polish Division was commanded by Lt Wcislicki, (known throughout coastal forces as 'Captain Whisky') and it was he who led them to build up their fearsome

reputation. After a move to Ramsgate, a fourth boat was added but it was Captain Whisky himself in S.2 who was involved in a remarkable solo action in June 1942.

On patrol with S.3 off Dungeness, the latter experienced engine trouble and the patrol were recalled. But S.2, knowing E-Boats were in the area, 'misunderstood' the signal from C-in-C Dover and went flat out for the enemy. On arrival she went straight through the E-Boat line with all guns firing. Finally having run out of ammunition, she retired leaving her opponents firing wildly at each other! True to RN tradition, C-in-C Dover turned a blind eye to the failure to follow instructions and Captain Whisky was subsequently awarded a DSC. At war's end he joined the RN in the name of Westlake and finished up as a Captain.

Meanwhile as more crews became available the Poles formed the 8th MTB flotilla based at Felixstowe in 1944 and operated in the North Sea for the last few months of the war.

*with thanks to David Jefferson*



*Adml Bräuning received at Beehive*

### **E-BOATS AT FELIXSTOWE – May 1945**

As far as I cautiously remember, three boats from our 1st Flotilla, highly honoured by their leading part of the “escort”, were to take up a position – I think about 40 miles East of the Sunk Lightship – one mile north of the declared westward approach course of the two E-boats carrying the German minefield charts. The leader flew a large White flag for recognition purposes and Lt Cdr Peter Scott, (Senior Naval Representative – he spoke perfect German) on the bridge. We comprised Lt Ted Thornycroft RN, (SO) in MTB 489, Lt Paul (Daddy) Beck RNVR (Half-Leader) with me (temp. CO) and Bob Gubbins as my No 1 in MTB 415 and Lt James Shadbolt RNVR, (CO) with MTB 483, whose Number One could have been Bob Hickley – previously a civilian Works Manager at British Power Boats, Hythe. Perhaps Lt Cameron Gough DSC RNVR in MTB 414 made a fourth boat. Anyway, of all these named, only Jamie Shadbolt and I have survived... to date.

Three or four more boats from other *Beehive* Flotillas, forming the southern half or section of the “escort”, took up positions, in line abreast, slightly to the south of the E-Boats’ line-ahead advance. Both halves of the escort then lay stopped, facing each other inwards, with engines idling, all crews at “action stations”, providing a channel through which the E-Boats would slowly proceed “under their guns” until coming abreast of our western-most escort boats, at which point all the escorting MTBs would turn simultaneously westwards on the E-boats’ flanks and all three columns (2 white-painted, Black

Panther insignia E-boats and our flanking escorts) proceeded on a direct course, maintaining open station while increasing speed to 20 knots, through to Felixstowe Harbour (*Beehive*). The whole evolution until the E-boats docked alongside was done with impeccable and impressive Naval decorum – so all went well.

Jamie Shadbolt enviously remembers that the E-boats rode comfortably dry and streamed through any kind of a seaway while we, as usual, bounced, plunged and shattered about, only just on the plane, requiring greater control while close station-keeping, spray-soaked and miserable as usual.

From the middle of a fairly rough North Sea to “docked alongside” probably took a couple of hours, during which I did manage to take a few photos between maintaining station and exchanging a few excited comments over the R/T. It seemed a rather semi-sacred event. We were able to closely contemplate our very competent antagonists over the previous years and considered them worthy opponents, well meriting our respect in allowing them dignity in defeat.

Once alongside however, matters were considerably different, and some shore-based powers-that-be had apparently decided that the whole dignified Naval evolution would now be hi-jacked and interpreted as a full-scale propaganda exercise in which THE FIRST ENEMY FIGHTING ELEMENTS OF THE GERMAN NAZI NAVY were seen to be SURRENDERING to us – something which would “stick” in the public memory.

The result of this ill-considered decision was that once on land and properly received with due courtesy salutes by *Beehive*’s CO, No 1 (the one-armed, highly impressive Lt Cdr Sidebottom RNVR) and the *Beehive* Duty Officer, our very own Flotilla’s dour Sub Lt John Shaw RNVR, the German Admiral and two German Naval Officers on his staff were quickly whisked away to Harwich, I believe, accompanied by a very junior officer.

I don’t know what happened to them then, but I have a feeling that they were treated as suspect POWs who had surrendered, rather than contributing to future peacetime safety for all sea-goers now their own fighting role had ceased. Peter Scott’s account may enlighten on this.

Then the E-boat Officers, (whose ship-handling had been superb) and crews were all taken away leaving our technical boffins to swarm and crawl over both E-boats, as indeed so did I soon after berthing, examining torpedo sights, German Search Receivers, guns, controls down to torpedo firing and reloading and, finally, to the two engine-rooms and their installations of three magnificent 2500 HP Daimler Benz-V20-cylinder diesels, Lurssen-effect rudders and all the rest... I continued to take photographs.

Ashamedly, I surreptitiously managed to purloin an E-Boat’s wardroom framed photograph which I treasure to this day. It was an earlier version of these two latest types.

Had we had these highly-developed (over 20 years) toys to play with, I think we would have made a better fist of it than they did against us. Their's was surely the better weapon.

Paul Beck was given command of the senior E-boat (Lang) and I went along as his No1 to take both E-boats down to Westminster Pier. In the overheated spirit of those days, my Sparker – a peace-time sign-writer – painted a symbolic dagger plunged through the heart of the black panther adorning each side of the bridge, with thick goutts of black blood dramatically “plopping into the ‘oggin”. Our primitive instincts had finally surfaced.

Two E-boats went later to the Baltic for clandestine operations under “fishery protection cover”. More about this is now public knowledge. We had to get submarine engineers

from Dolphin to teach us how to even start their diesels and then learn to manoeuvre them in restricted waters. The trick was to enter harbour with the centre engine running in astern, while still pushing ahead against its braking effect on the two outer engines, thereafter playing only on the throttles – never actually changing gear – until all engines were shut down: hard to explain – yet really quite simple to perform.

The Germans handled their boats so faultlessly, with non-egg-shell breaking precision that we could but gape and admire – as one skilled professional appreciating another. Subsequently, I read that thirty-four E-boats were handed over, in all.

*Eye witness account by Robin Coventry*

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## LIVES IN BRIEF

### **CHARLES WILLIAM MILNER DSM**

Charles Milner was borne in Middlesbrough and joined the Royal Navy in 1941 as a Telegraphist. He served in Coastal Forces in various MLs and MTBs in Home Waters before joining MTB 718 in the Spring of 1944. 718, which was not fitted with torpedo tubes, was involved in clandestine operations as part of the 15th MGB Flotilla. She operated from both Shetland, on Norwegian operations, and from Dartmouth on voyages to occupied France on various tasks ferrying agents and collecting escaped POWs. He had many fascinating experiences, always fraught with danger. Charles was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal in December 1945 for his service in MTB 718. He maintained contact with the crew throughout his life and he detailed accounts of his experiences in a thoroughly well written book. After the war Charles married his girlfriend Betty in August 1945 and returned to his career on the railways. Many postings and much travel followed, including Station Master at Hull Paragon and then Area Manager Doncaster. Railways were an environment which he loved and in which he was hugely successful. He was universally popular and well respected, being known as a person of great integrity and high principles. Charles was a founding member of the Coastal Forces Veterans Association and was the association's Treasurer for more than 20 years. He and Betty were great supporters of the social occasions and Remembrance events. Charles was charming, courteous and made friends wherever he went. Those established with several Norwegian and French people, through his wartime connections, were maintained throughout his life.

### **RAYMOND TRIGGS**

Ray was born in the Isle of Wight and joined the Royal Navy in August 1943, before training as a Telegraphist. After volunteering for Coastal Forces he served in MTB 479 in Home Waters, operating mainly from Lowestoft. He was next transferred to ML 588, first escorting convoys and then protecting the naval force during the Normandy landings. His boat was at Ostend in February 1945 and so he witnessed the disastrous fire and explosions which resulted in the loss of 15 coastal forces craft and 64 Canadian and British lives. He was de-mobbed in September 1946 after several months serving in Australia. Returning to live in Portsmouth, he then worked for the Portsmouth Evening News for 36 years as a Composer and Editor until he retired in 1982. A very keen golfer who also enjoyed a game of bowls, he was a long standing member of Stokes Bay Golf Club, eventually serving as Captain of the Club and then as Vice President. He was one of the early members of the Coastal Forces Veterans Association and became an extremely active supporter, particularly with the Southern Branch. He and his wife Eileen seldom missed a Coastal Forces event and Ray was always at the forefront of the organisation. Always willing to help with anything associated with Coastal Forces, he became a strong supporter of the Heritage Trust and his voluntary help with cataloguing memorabilia was invaluable. His company and fine sense of humour will be sorely missed by all who knew him.

## IN MEMORIAM

### WE SAY FAREWELL TO:

(CFVA No)			
L. J. Airbright	(3089)	J. L. Lee	(2524)
Sir Colville Barclay		E. G. McPherson	
W. C. Bloomfield	(1419)	R. W. Meynell	(291)
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T. P. G. Brown	(53)	C. Milner DSM	(324)
T. J. Collins	(3311)	J. D. Rickinson	(234)
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E. P. Humphreys	(495)	R. H. Triggs	(2811)
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### STANDARD LAYING UP

On 19 September at Christ Church, Lowestoft, the East Anglian Branch of the CFVA laid up their standard during a Service at this most friendly and welcoming church and its congregation. Close by lies the former CF base, HMS *Mantis*, where the commemorative plaque was dedicated in 2008. In a moving ceremony the Vicar, Rev Matthew Payne, accepted the standard from its loyal bearer George Lesslie, and poignant addresses were given by Rev Grahame Berridge and George Chandler, reminding all those present of the gallant activities of Coastal Forces off the East Coast during WW2. After the service the Vicar and his congregation invited everyone to coffee in the Church Hall. A cheerful gathering of about 50 veterans and their guests then adjourned to a buffet lunch followed by a Reunion Weekend at Gunton Hall.

**President:** The Right Hon. Lord Strathcona and Mount Royal

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#### Objective of the Trust:

The object of the Coastal Forces Heritage Trust is the advancement of the education of the public in the history of Coastal Forces by restoration and permanent display, for the public benefit, of Coastal Forces craft together with relevant artefacts, records and memorabilia relating to such craft, and those who served therein.

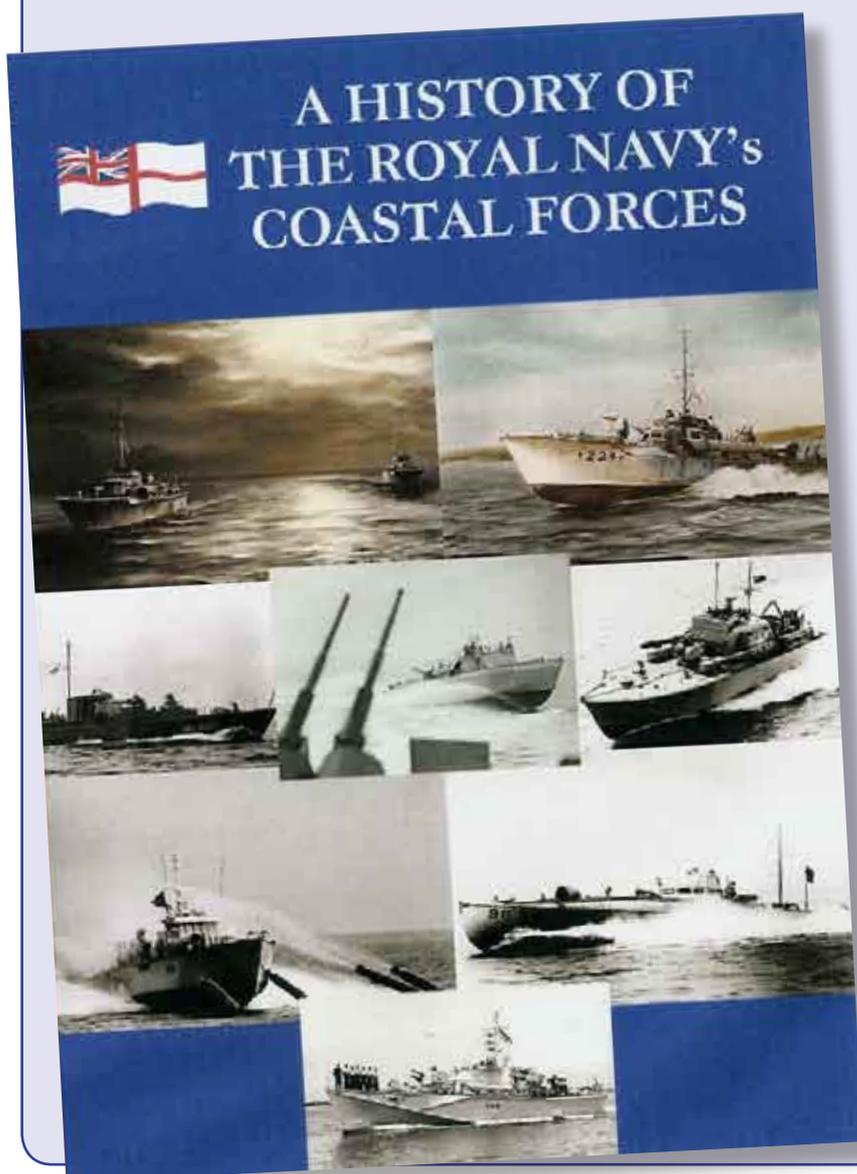
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## DVD SUMMARY

This DVD is presented as a record of the Coastal Forces of the Royal Navy during the 20th Century. First brought to prominence in World War 1, then discarded for cost reasons until the very late 1930s, these 'little ships' proved their worth many times over during World War 2. After the war, history sadly repeated itself, and since their final de-commissioning in the late 1970s the Royal Navy has been without fast strike craft.

From their early days with Coastal Motor Boats (CMBs) and WW1 Motor Launches (MLs), the men of this specialist branch of the sea-going navy have fought many fierce battles, suffered many casualties, and won an amazing number of awards and decorations. Their activities reached a peak in WW2 when some 750 Motor Gun Boats and Motor Torpedo Boats, plus 1,000 MLs, were involved in over a thousand actions.

During this period 25,000 men and women served in Coastal Forces, operating from over 50 bases in areas which stretched from Iceland to the Far East. The essence of service in these boats was one of a highly trained, and highly tuned, team of men who took the fight right to the enemy's doorstep. Indeed, it included the nearest thing to hand-to-hand fighting experienced within the Royal Navy. It also spawned an exceptionally high '*esprit de corps*' within individual crews and flotillas. Discipline was based on complete trust in the man next to you, and the worst thing that could happen to you was to be 'returned to general duties.' This level of morale also led to a very high standard of support from those, which included many members of the Womens' Royal Naval Service (WRNS), who managed and worked in the shore bases from which the boats operated.

Operationally, the tasks entrusted to Coastal Forces were many and varied. At one time or another boats could be found hunting enemy warships, attacking enemy convoys and defending our own, acting as anti-submarine patrols, laying mines, sweeping mines, landing secret agents on enemy shores, delivering arms to resistance fighters, rescuing shot down air-crew, picking up escaped air-crew from enemy territory, carrying reconnaissance teams to and from potential landing areas, guiding landing forces to their objectives, guarding the flanks of amphibious landings from both sea and air attack, harrying the retreating Japanese Army in the creeks of Arakan, and even, with Merchant Navy crews, carrying cargo to break the blockade of neutral Sweden. In all of these activities the Royal Navy was supported by the countries of the Commonwealth and from the USA, France, Holland, Norway, Poland and Yugoslavia.

By their very nature many of these tasks had to take place by night and often in very brief, hectic bursts which usually required instant decision taking. It follows that film and photographic records cannot be anywhere near comprehensive. However, this DVD film attempts to tell this inspiring story in such a way that viewers will be able to appreciate at least some of the debt which the United Kingdom owes to those, almost all of whom were volunteer reservists or 'hostilities only' sailors, who served in all these 'little ships'. It is also hoped it will serve as a fitting tribute to those who designed, developed, and built these wonderful craft.

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