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ISSUE 9, NOVEMBER 2011

NEWSLETTER



MGB 1940, Camper & Nicholson's, 117ft.

There has been a really positive response to the request in the last Issue for more regular financial support for the activities of the Trust and so the Trustees wish to record their grateful thanks to all those who responded. Well done!

It seems there is still some confusion over the photos which appear regularly on the front page of each Issue. These pictures are provided as a record of each Class of Coastal Forces craft ordered by the Admiralty during the history of Coastal Forces. The legend beneath each picture records:- the TYPE of boat, the YEAR it was ordered by the Admiralty, the name of the parent BUILDER, and the LENGTH of the boat. In this Class Identification List there are 30 classes altogether, of which 16 have been featured in Newsletters so far. So there is some way to go before the list is completed.

The Trustees are pleased to announce the addition of two new members to their ranks. Alan Watson

(Chairman of the Medusa Trust) has rejoined. Commander Rodney Agar RN, whose Uncle was the subject of an article in the last Issue, became a Trustee in July this year.

For the first time within this series of Newsletters, the vital part played by the various types of ML in World



MASB 1940, British Power Boat, 63ft.

War 2 at last begins to be recognized. With over 1000 of these craft built – about a third more than MGBs and MTBs combined – their role as the acknowledged “maids of all work” is self-evident. So it is appropriate to be able to record some of the highlights of their activities, many in the words of those who crewed them. It is also worth emphasizing how their contribution to the history of Coastal Forces reflects great credit upon those who designed and built these incredibly sturdy craft.



MTB 1940, Vosper, 71ft (19ft beam).

IN THIS ISSUE

IN THIS ISSUE			
Chairman's Letter Director's Report	2	Making History An Unusual Night For MIs	8-9
Boats' Round-up 1st Patrol Boat Squadron Gay Archer	3-4	Special Features ML 197 On D Day Lt Richard Gallichan DSC RNVR United States Navy	9-13
Notice Board CF History – Lecture/presentation DVD – Sales CFOA Dinner	4	Life In Brief Lt Cdr Pat Edge Dsc Rnvr	13
Supporters' Corner & Feedback Vis – The Last Official Visit CFVA Final Events Coincidence Or Fate?	5-7	In Memoriam Stop Press	14
		"Give A Gallon" Campaign	15-16

CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

Whilst I have been closely involved with the Trust for over 10 years, it is the last 12 months as Chairman which I look back upon as the most busy, demanding, enjoyable and rewarding. I am immensely grateful to all the Trustees for their support, wise counsel and very active interest in all Trust business. I echo the Editor's welcome to Commander Rodney Agar, a name synonymous with one of Coastal Forces' most daring and successful operations and our highest award for gallantry, and to Alan Watson who has achieved remarkable success in founding the Medusa Trust and restoring *Medusa* to her immaculate, sea-going condition. We are, indeed, fortunate to have them both "onboard".

I said in my last letter that the finances are finely balanced – this is still the case, but I have been greatly heartened by the constant flow of donations and messages of support. As

charities go, we must be one of the most successful in terms of the proportion of supporters who actually give, but the membership is still small and the Trust has set itself ambitious targets. In planning our new museum, I am mindful that we have to depend on much larger organizations, but I do feel that, after many uncertainties and much discussion, we may at last be able to move forward in planning a permanent museum; a museum which will do justice to the remarkable achievements of Coastal Forces and the memories of those who served with such distinction in this small branch of the Service. I am constantly encouraged by the genuine interest shown by the younger generation in their fathers' or grandfathers' wartime experiences. I can only ask again that you take any opportunity to introduce new members – of whatever age.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

The chairman has touched upon the Trust's plans to establish a permanent museum or exhibition. We have, of course, a remarkable story to tell; it is a story which needs to be brought to the public with imagination and flair and with all the benefits of modern technological presentation aids. We want to both provide detailed, accurate and interesting information in the conventional museum way and to be able to use all modern aids to create a Coastal Forces "experience"; in short, we want to show through all the senses what it was really like to go to sea in these small, fast, often lightly armed craft and to go into action at night and at close quarters.

I have been here since March; I can honestly say it has been an immensely interesting and satisfying 7 months. I have found one of the most rewarding aspects of the job is to meet those who served in Coastal Forces and to hear their accounts. I hope that as our museum plans mature, we will be able to ask those "who were there" for their experiences. I hope also that we will be able to keep you fully briefed on our plans through future editions of this publication. We are always very open to ideas and suggestions; in fact, the more the better.

BOATS ROUNDUP



1st PBS Manoeuvres.

1 PBS EXERCISES 15 APRIL 2011



For the first time in several years, Patrol Boats of the URNU Squadron gathered together at Portsmouth for two days of squadron exercises. In addition to other guests from the Universities to which these boats are attached, a party of three Trustees and three Veterans were invited to spend the final day at sea on board HM Ships *Explorer* and *Smiter*. After a morning of complex manoeuvres followed by lunch taken at anchor in Spithead, the Squadron was reviewed by the First Sea Lord before returning to their berths in the Naval Base. Following tea in the Wardroom of HMS *Nelson*, an evening reception was hosted by the Officers and University Midshipmen of the Squadron on the upper deck of HMS *Victory*. All concerned at the CFHT wish to thank the Squadron both for the invitation and the superb hospitality provided, as the Veterans recorded:-

“I hope these words will convey the tremendous pleasure that we three old codgers got from being part of the day out with the 1st Patrol Boat Squadron of the Royal Naval University Units on 15th April.

Wow!!! Friday the 15th turned out to be a very special day in the lives of three veterans of the wartime Coastal Forces of the Royal Navy. Along with Reg Ellis and Ken Barfoot, I was invited by the Heritage Trust to join the Officers and crew on board HMS *Smiter*, one of the boats of the 1st Patrol Boat Squadron taking part in a series of exercises at sea involving 11 of the 14 boats of the Squadron. Although not the MTBs, MGBs, or MLs of the war, nevertheless, to be aboard again and to watch them carrying out manoeuvres took us back to ‘evolutions’, as we called them more than 65 years ago.

One of the highlights of our time at sea was the lovely beef casserole (or was it old-fashioned ‘potmess’?) cooked by the XO for lunch. I’m going to keep an eye out for him on Master Chef! At the conclusion of the exercises, having been reviewed by the First Sea Lord, Admiral Sir Mark Stanhope,



1st Sea Lord’s Review.



‘The Old Codgers’

the Squadron returned to Portsmouth where we were entertained in the Wardroom of HMS *Nelson*. The day was brought to a close with an evening Reception on the upper deck of HMS *Victory*. Despite the gold lace and mayoral dignitaries in attendance, the attention we received from the Midshipmen and their Officers, who showed so much interest in our wartime experiences, made us feel like the real VIPs. The memories of that day will be stowed away in our ditty boxes and remain with us for the rest of our lives.”

George Chandler/Reg Ellis/Ken Barfoot

GAY ARCHER

2011 began on a sad note with the death of a major contributor to the *Gay Archer* project, my father-in-law Bob Lockwood. He has been a tower of strength from the beginning and will be sorely missed.

With the new engine fitted and connected up, we had to wait until Easter before tides and weather became favourable for sea trials. The engine went well but a minor oil leak had to be fixed before we could successfully complete our trials on a second trip. Next we have to seal the engine with full power on for about an hour or so and that will be done as soon as the weather permits. Meanwhile we have been finishing off down below with a refurbishment of the galley and sleeping quarters.

In July my wife and I were presented with an award by Prince Michael of Kent, on behalf of the Transport Trust. We

felt very honoured and feel a real sense of achievement and appreciation.

As we come to the end of the summer, the boat is almost finished and we are pleased to say we have been able to open her up for the public to see as a 'museum tour'. The response has been encouraging, with some very pleasing comments and even a few donations! To those who have supported us in the past we express our grateful thanks – long may it continue.

In 2012 *Gay Archer* celebrates her 60th birthday and we are hoping to be able to visit Portsmouth (or even the very slipway where she was built at Porchester), but only if we can find the sponsorship for our fuel costs. Meanwhile if any readers of the Newsletter are near Watchet, please come and look us up.

Paul Childs

NOTICE BOARD

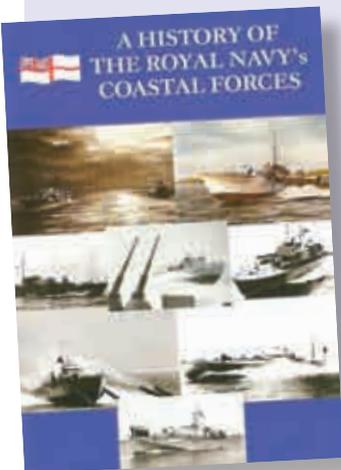
CFOA DINNER.

There is still time to book in for this enjoyable occasion on Saturday 12 November, held in the clubhouse of the Hornet Sailing Club, Gosport, the evening before the annual Hornet Remembrance Service. Please contact Peter Cunningham on **02392 589731** to reserve your place.

DVD SALES

After the initial surge, sales of "A History of the Royal Navy's Coastal Forces" are now at the fairly steady rate of about 25 a month. With Christmas coming up supporters may like to be reminded copies are still available via Maritime Books, Lodge Hill, Liskeard, PL14 4EL. Tel **01579 343663**. Email www.navybooks.com

– at the excellent value for a 3-hour film of £14.99 (P&P included). If you have any difficulties at all with getting in touch with Maritime Books, do not hesitate to ring the Trust office on **023 92 724715**; we will be pleased to help.

**COASTAL FORCES HISTORY PRESENTATION**

From time to time the Trust is asked to provide a speaker to give a talk on the history of Coastal Forces and, in particular, the part the 'little ships' played in World War 2. The Trust has therefore decided to provide a package for a standard presentation of about 45 minutes. There will be a script with accompanying Powerpoint presentation, as most audiences now expect illustrated talks. This package will be on discs available on loan from the Trust for anyone who is asked to give a talk. The discs can be copied and the script and Powerpoint pictures edited and amended to meet a particular audience. Any Supporter who is approached by a Rotary group, a School, a Club, a WI group or whoever; should contact the Director, who will provide the Presentation. Equally, any Supporter who would like to become such a speaker please contact the Trust for a briefing. For practical reasons, it will not be possible to lend out a laptop or projector. Most organizations expect to make a payment these days but the Trust will leave that to the individual presenters. This is not a fund raising initiative, but the Trustees regard it as an important element in achieving one of their main objectives, namely of "the education of the public in the history of Coastal Forces history".

SUPPORTERS' CORNER & FEEDBACK



FINAL CFVA EVENTS.

The twenty fourth and final Veterans luncheon was held at the Cooden Beach Hotel on 7 April 2011, when Association members were pleased to welcome Captain Trevor Robotham (who retired as Director of the Coastal Forces Heritage Trust on 1st March) as Chairman once again. The gathering of over 30 also welcomed as their guest the Deputy Mayor of Hastings, Councillor Alan Roberts. Prayers were said by Rev Graham Berridge in remembrance of those who had 'crossed the bar', in particular Geoffrey Hiner, who had been the oldest member. What was expected to be a rather sad occasion, turned out to be a happy and enjoyable re-union over a three course meal with the appropriate lubrication! Presentations were made to those who had made a special contribution over the years, including the luncheon co-ordinator, Ralph Kirby and his wife Mary. Finally, the Chairman recorded that the lunch had added well over £1000 to the coffers of the CFHT during the years and, on the Trustees behalf, thanked all concerned.

Ralph & Mary Kirby, 2011.

About 40 Veterans gathered at Bracklesham Bay for the final Re-union late in April. The occasion was marked by the presentation of a Plaque by the North Midlands Branch to John Ascoli, Chairman of the CFHT. The plaque will eventually go alongside the North Midlands Standard in its final laying up position, along with the other Branch Standards, which will be part of the permanent Coastal Forces Exhibition within the Museum of the Royal Navy. Presented by Terry Armes, son of the late Jim Armes who served as Telegraphist in MTBs 232 and 387, it reads: "The Standard of the Coastal Forces Veterans Association North Midlands Branch 1979-2010."



N. Midlands plaque presented

COINCIDENCE OR FATE?

The last issue included a 'Life in Brief' of the late Kenneth Lloyd DSC. His son David has written from Australia:- *"I couldn't let this pass without thanking you for printing the article....and by providing a remarkable postscript to it . The article mentioned he took command of ML356, based at Leros and Casteloristo, from where they undertook night operations rescuing personnel from the islands. The postscript is that in 1983 I met my wife DESPINA in Townsville, North Queensland..... and discovered that her mother and sisters were one of the families rescued by ML356 in 1943!..... After all those years, and at the other end of the world, it must have been an amazing coincidence – or was it fate?"*

VIS – THE LAST OFFICIAL RE-UNION

This final official occasion took place in mid-May with a full programme of events. In addition to the usual Services of Remembrance, Receptions hosted by the British Embassy and the Croatians, plus a concert put on by local schoolchildren, CFHT Supporter Miles Robinson had arranged some special events to celebrate the co-incidence that this last Re-union fell in the same year as the bi-centenary of a famous sea battle in these very waters, way back in 1811.

“MISSION COMPLETED”

At 0500 on 21 May 2011, as the ferry left the jetty in the port of Vis and passed the British Cemetery, we bowed our heads with pride. We had achieved our mission to include, within the refreshed cemetery, the Memorial to British forces during the 1943/45 Island Campaign, and to ensure their sacrifices would not be forgotten. Now, in the open waters on the way to Split, the ferry's wake conjured up thoughts of the purr of those Packards, the lift of that crystal clear water into a foaming wake, and memories returned as to how, when very young seaman returning to the safe haven of Komiza after an all-night patrol, we welcomed the relief from that element of fear – at least until the next patrol. But in those days the fear was tempered with the admiration we all felt for the courage of Tito's Partisans in their fight to rid their country from the invader.

Now, after a memorable week, we Veterans finally leave the people of Vis with lasting memories of a relationship, matured now to one of lasting friendship and affection, and deeply honoured by the dedication of our plaque at the Mariners Seat Memorial on the jetty at Komiza.

Peter Bickmore BEM & Veterans of Vis June 2011



History Talk and Q&A Session.



British Ambassador with Veterans and Official Representatives.



Dinner at Miles Robinson's.



Veterans enjoy their Memorial Bench and Plaque.

ABOVE *Jetty Memorial.*LEFT *Memorial Service.*BELOW *Bench Plaque*

THE FINAL VISIT

I am a little ashamed, as the son of a Dog Boat CO from WW2 and a regular visitor to the island of Vis, that it was only in May 2010 I discovered the importance of the island to Coastal Forces Veterans, although I was already aware this was the second time in Royal Naval history that the islanders had been grateful for British intervention.

The first was in Napoleonic times, when Captain Sir William Hoste beat the French in a famous frigate action in 1811. (He and Nelson are the only naval officers honoured with a statue in St Paul's Cathedral)

However, on the jetty at Komiza last year I met Reg Ellis and his co-Veterans, and subsequently became a CFHT supporter. Noticing 2011 was to be the final veterans visit, and by coincidence the bi-centenary of Hoste's victory, I wondered if this special occasion deserved some special treatment. Firstly, we



had to get the locals involved, second we needed a local historian to tell the story, by word and picture, and third we needed as many interested parties as we could find, to come for what was beginning to look like a week-long 'celebration'. – All, hopefully for not too much money!

So I ordered 'slow ahead', contacted the Embassy in Zagreb, and engaged the support of the CFHT and the Veterans.

Slowly but surely, and not without a number of sleepless nights, the ideas gathered momentum: a historian was hired; prints of the 1811 action were obtained; the Embassy were interested; the locals were supportive; the press (local and UK) were alerted; some CFHT supporters booked their tickets. So when the Embassy finally confirmed the dates (as late as mid-April!) we were able to move to 'full ahead'.

For me, the highlight of the week was to experience the tangible respect and honour shown to the Veterans by so many people. And there were lots of them. They included the Croatian Minister of Defence and senior Admiral of their Navy, the British Ambassador, his Defence Attache, a Royal Marine Colonel representing the RN, all the island dignitaries, school teachers and their children. Plus of course the press.

Personally, I much enjoyed making new friends amongst the CFHT supporters, renewing contact with the Veterans and not least their speed of thought when answering questions on their experiences at a live Q & A session. eg. Question – "How did you keep clean when not allowed out of your boat for many months?" Answer – "Not much of a problem!"

For me, it was a privilege to be involved and I would like to thank all those who attended for making it so worthwhile.



Farewell to Vis.

Miles Robinson

MAKING HISTORY

AN UNUSUAL NIGHT FOR MLs

Sailing from Lowestoft on the evening of 24 September 1943, Lt Jimmy Thomas in ML 150 and Lt Ronnie Seddon in ML 145 (both Fairmile Bs of the 6th Flotilla) contemplated yet another “*very monotonous*” night of “*never getting caught up in anything of interest whatsoever*”. Worse, after reaching their defensive patrol position East of the convoy routes, the weather turned foul and they “*settled down to the usual night of heavy rolling and monotonous waiting*”. But just after 0100 a signal arrived telling of E Boat attacks on a convoy further South and they were sent off to see if they could intercept the enemy on his way home.

A few minutes later, out of what had become a very black night, they sighted two parallel wakes (probably torpedo tracks) on the starboard bow followed immediately by the bow waves of three E Boats at high speed. It was too late for their guns to catch the enemy before he was out of range. There was no time for thought – only instinctive reaction. As the leading E Boat flashed across his bows, Thomas in the leading ML knew at once he was going to ram the second enemy craft (S 96). “*This is it*” he thought “*this is what I have been waiting for*” – so – “*I just made straight for him. We hit him just forward of his bridge, there was an awful rending crash and bits of metal and wood flew around my head and the Cox’n’s. The E Boat bounced clear and my port gunner got in a crack at him. He vanished in a cloud of smoke and I stopped my engines because my bows were then not all they should be*”.

Meanwhile, from astern, Seddon in ML 145, who had been engaging with the only gun that would bear, roared past the damaged boats and “*thought I might be able to ram again before he knew what was happening*”. But he was going too fast and missed. Afraid of hitting his SO in the chaos now reigning, he was thankful his gunners were using their own initiative to



Lts Thomas and Seddon.

ensure their targets were the enemy. So when a third E Boat appeared he redirected fire on to this fresh target. The boat turned away and disappeared into the night. Now was Seddon’s second opportunity to ram the already damaged S 96. Further, “*it now seemed that if the ramming was successful there was a good chance of boarding, so the boarding party was closed up*”. But as he manoeuvred into position the enemy boat turned towards him so that the impact, though at a relative speed of perhaps 25 knots, was a glancing blow - bow on bow. “*We seemed to climb on top of him, then heeled over as we fell clear and scraped right down his starboard side*”. As they fell apart the E Boat fired some tracer into the air, at which Seddon wrongly thought he was surrendering, “*but when I stopped firing he suddenly opened up again and one of my gunners shouted he didn’t think that was cricket! So I told my gunners to let him have another magazine full.... This was apparently too much for the E Boat and the crew started jumping into the water*.” Almost immediately there were a few minor explosions as the scuttling charges fired, and the E Boat went down “*in a shower of sparks*”.

The situation with the two MLs was now pretty dire. 150 had lost almost a quarter of her length but the forehead bulkhead, now shored up, was holding, aided by the ship’s pumps. The rudders had jammed at hard-a-starboard so that under way the ship just went round in circles. Finally, Thomas found he could steer, but only with the engines going astern, and this only gave him a meagre 3 knots. ML 145 had been holed forward below the water-line and her forepeak and forward messdeck were flooded. But the bulkhead, aided again with the pumps, held fast, although a leak into the W/T office meant the Telegraphist having to operate with water up to his knees. The boat was well down by the bows and steering was “*minimal*” as the rudders were nearly clear of the water. Notwithstanding these conditions, and in spite of the rough sea running, over the next hour the two boats picked up 13 survivors* from the sunken S 96*, provided medical aid where required, and set off for home. Around 0600 two MGBs arrived to escort them on the last leg. 145 managed to return under her own steam but 150 had to be towed in stern first, and reached base at last at 1800 on the 25th.

By any standard, it had been a remarkable and successful interception and particularly so with most of the crew members experiencing action for the very first time. As Seddon said in his RoP: “*this was the first time the Ship’s Company has been in action and their discipline, efficiency and will to fight were*



MLs 150 & 145.



inspiring...". Subsequent awards included a DSC for Thomas, a Mention in Dispatches for Seddon, DSMs for the Cox'n and Motor Mechanic of 150 and the Cox'n and Telegraphist of 145, plus two further Mentions in each boat for other crew members. It could also be regarded as fine tribute to those who designed and built the boats concerned.

(It transpired the prisoners not only included the CO of S 96 – which had sunk two armed trawlers earlier that night – but also the SO of the 4th E Boat Flotilla, on board as a passenger.)*

Anti E Boat patrol.

SPECIAL FEATURES

ML 197 ON D-DAY

Although seldom written about, the role played by the ML navigation leaders in the D Day landings cannot, in my opinion, be over-estimated. I was lucky enough to be the Navigating Officer of ML 197, one of the two boats who guided 'Force S' into Sword Beach. I had been trained in all the high-tech navigation aids we carried, so extensive that the funnel had to be removed. Unusually, we also carried a reserve Navigator in case something happened to me.

We were briefed on 1 June, issued with the Top Secret orders and chart (which I still have), 'sealed to ships' and, somewhat disconcertingly, informed "*some of you will not return*"! After an inspection by the King we began assembling on 5 June, a slow progress with many landing craft managing only 7 knots. I had a nasty moment when my equipment became subject to jamming, but managed to get rid of it by changing the RF unit. Otherwise the crossing was uneventful save for the onset of DMS (Dry Mouth Syndrome), an affliction well known to all navigators, caused here by the realisation that a mistake might result in the whole invasion fleet ending up in the wrong place.

In fact we arrived in eerie silence off Sword Beach at daybreak, finding the freshly surfaced X23 (the mini-sub acting as marker) dead on cue as he waved us cheerily on. A history book later noted that "*Force S arrived in exactly the right place at exactly the right time*". – This was in contrast to Omaha Beach where the Americans had been unwilling to use British markers, though in fact it is said their casualties might have been even worse if they had landed at the correct spot.

The noise of the big ships' shells pouring overhead was incredible, like a series of express trains, and at one point we were hit by shrapnel which ricocheted around the wheelhouse and wounded me slightly in the knee. We had Army spotters on board and I asked what we could fire at. "*Have a go at that*

church, it might be an observation post", he said; and we did so with the awesome power of our 3-pounder. How effective this was I know not, but the church is still there!

After the landings, and subsequent to D Day, our night job was to patrol in search of explosive motor-boats, human torpedoes and E Boats. One night we rescued the crew from a torpedoed LCG. Another night I heard from my position in the wheelhouse a long burst from our twin Vickers. A human torpedo had been sighted and we heard later the body of an enemy Midshipman had been recovered.

On 24 June the destroyer *Swift* was mined nearby, her back broken. We managed to get alongside and rescued many crew members, including the CO, Lt Cdr John Gower RN. Under the guidance of the badly burnt Doctor from *Swift* I applied dressings and morphine to the injured survivors. (Many years later I was delighted to make contact with Captain Gower, shortly before he died in 2007).

I assumed command of 197 when the CO left for another appointment. I found this quite a challenge, being very young and an officer for only two years.

Graham Rouse



An ML with special nav aids fitted

LT RICHARD GALLICHAN DSC RNVR

Joining a month after war was declared, on completion of initial training Richard Gallichan was told he had to do 3 months as an Ordinary Seaman at sea before he could be considered for a commission. And so to sea in *Hood* where, in spite of lively action whilst the ship escorted a fiercely bombed Malta convoy, he was unimpressed with service in a large warship. Relief came in July 1940 in the shape of a successful Fleet Board and a 2-month commissioning course at *King Alfred* where he passed out high enough to be selected for an extra month of Navigation instruction. Having requested a small ship appointment he was promptly sent to an Armed Merchant Cruiser for three North Sea patrols before – at last – arriving at Fort William for CF training.

On completion he went as 1st Lt to HDML 1025 but became, due to a sick CO, temporarily in command whilst the boat carried out routine a/s patrols off Plymouth breakwater. Commended for towing a sister-ship off after grounding on that very breakwater, and again asking for more action, in August 1942 he was appointed CO of MASB 25, engaged in air sea rescue duties running out of Grimsby and Lowestoft.

After the relatively slow speeds of an ML this was, in his own words, “...a shattering experience...”. The boat “*had no conventional bridge...two cockpits with all controls in the wheelhouse below....orders having to be shouted through a voice*



Lt Richard Gallichan DSC RNVR.

pipe leading to the helmsman. As the only officer on board I was responsible for conning the boat, all visual signalling, and navigation on a chart table two decks below – an exhilarating but exhausting experience, especially on long trips at night in foul weather!” And all this at a cruising speed of 25 knots, speed being the essence of rescue work. Nevertheless Gallichan earned congratulations from the area Commander for his “excellent rescue”

of a Mosquito pilot after being sent to a position some 50 miles east of Lowestoft, following a signal intercept from an excited German pilot reporting a ‘kill’. “*He was unhurt and thoroughly composed as if being shot down and picked up out of the North Sea was a normal daily experience.*” reported MASB 25.

In May 1943, MASB 25 was re-deployed to Dover where a complete flotilla of MASBs were to operate as gunboats to supplement the anti E-Boat patrols in the Straits. 1st Lts were added for this role but in the event it was decided an unsuitably risky job for fast boats without bridge controls. As the Germans at this time were laying many mines in the Dover Straits, the MASBs were switched to the more defensive role of escorting minesweepers and often laying smoke to conceal their movements when within range of enemy shore-based guns. One night in October the whole flotilla was sailed to a specific position in the Straits where: “*We were confronted by masses of corks floating on the calm sea. I decided to hook one of the ‘snag lines’ below a cork, fasten a long line to it, and gingerly go astern with it. Boomph! - up went a mine without doing any damage to my hull. I did one or two more but was recalled by the SO and on return to harbour was ordered to report to the Captain in charge. After questioning me closely about the danger in hooking the snag-lines, it was decided to fit all boats with a grapnel-ended boathook and we returned to clear most of the minefield in this way.*” Dick Gallichan had no knowledge he had been recommended for an award and was amazed to receive a DSC for “*outstanding coolness, zeal and skill....in a hazardous mine-sweeping operation*”. On a later occasion he was selected to ferry two mine-clearance experts to tow a new type of mine found in an enemy minefield and to park it on the Goodwin Sands for inspection. His spell in MASBs, however, was to end rather less splendidly when he grounded his boat, at cruising speed, on those very Sands on his way back from a night patrol in February 1944.

Exonerated by the subsequent court of inquiry, he was then appointed to command HDML 303 carrying the latest



HDML 1025.



303's ship's company.

navigation equipment and earmarked for leading-in the smoke-laying craft who were to screen the inshore minesweepers off a Normandy landing beach. And so he found himself alongside all other COs at the D Day briefing in Southampton, leaving with a package of Operation Neptune orders. (which, against orders, he failed to subsequently destroy!), eventually sailing for Gold Beach "early pm on 5 June". Having completed their smoke-laying duties the next day, 303's main task was: *"to lead each ship to her designated anchoring position. Often the Master was not keen to go so close to the beach, but by leading them between ships already anchored they could not turn away, and so*

we fulfilled our task. Indeed the tidy lines of anchored ships off Gold Beach contrasted with the scattered ships off the other two beaches." For the next month 303 led various convoys to and fro across the Channel until Gallichan was ordered back to Lowestoft to pay the boat off. *"Thus ended our part in the invasion"*.

On leave, all three officers from 303 received telegrams to report to the Admiralty where they were informed the boat was to re-commission as a "navigational leader in the campaign against the Japanese". Gallichan felt three years in command was probably enough but, encouraged by a promise to keep most of his crew, plus the same officers, he soon found himself on a "brilliant" celestial navigation course at Greenwich where his enthusiasm was rekindled, and 303 returned to Lowestoft for refit and to prepare for the long passage to the Far East. Three flotillas comprising 24 boats in all set sail in two groups that Autumn of 1944.

Apart from really foul weather on the first leg to Gibraltar the *"passage to Rangoon was most enjoyable. The Admiralty were most considerate in providing a leisurely programme with a few days in each port, including Christmas at Aden."* At Bombay for an engine change, refitting and adding suitable armament for the task ahead: *"I met my new SO, Lt Cdr Wise*



MASB 25 (rescued airman's dinghy on Foc'sle).

(known as 'Charley Prawn') and a certain Sub Lt Jones, whose previous experience enabled him to brief us on the fighting ahead in the narrow waters of the 'chaungs' (creeks), with the aid of aerial photographs rather than charts, and where Jap snipers often lurked wherever trees grew along the banks."

Their first action came at Maubin (some 40 miles from Rangoon) where, having embarked a company of Gurkhas, their task was to harry the retreating Japanese army coming South, often in small landing craft, through the maze of waterways and jungle swamps of that part of the Arakan coast. It was harsh work in appalling conditions and frequent groundings became an accepted hazard. Luckily the bottom was always soft mud and the locals were helpful, hospitable and willingly offered priceless intelligence.

In mid-May, along with six other boats from the 13th, 14th and 59th Flotillas, 303 took part in the famous battles at the village on the junction of the Kokkawa and Bawle rivers. In three fierce actions in severely restricted waters, 8 landing craft were destroyed and at least 55 enemy killed, though doubtless others who escaped were hunted down by the villagers. British casualties were 1 fatality and 2 wounded, with slight damage only to the MLs. Following the Japanese surrender later that month, ML 303 returned to Trincomalee where she paid off and the crew flew home to be de-mobilised.

Not bad training for a Solicitor!

With thanks to the Gallichan family

USN IN THE MED

The first American PT Boats to operate East of the Atlantic appeared in the Mediterranean soon after the US 1st Army had landed in North Africa, early in 1943. Under Lt Cdr S. Barnes USN, the 15th PT Squadron of Higgins boats (known as Ron 15) arrived at Bone in April as part of the reinforcements sent to harry the busy supply routes of the Axis troops. These boats carried the latest US radar sets, having a greater range (and including a Plan Position Indicator) than anything yet seen by the British. No time was wasted in inviting these boats to patrol with the RN flotillas, thus greatly enhancing their patrol effectiveness. Following the Sicily landings Ron 15 moved up to operate from Palermo and here again they were joined by RN boats in guarding the Northern end of the Messina Straits.

Later on, as the enemy retreated northwards, a 'mobile' CF base was set up on the island of La Maddalena and Ron 15 moved up there to achieve some success against shore convoys north of

Elba, yet another task for which their excellent radar was ideal. As a result, during 1944, the practice of RN boats operating with a PT 'control' boat became a particularly effective way of patrolling and this resulted in many successful interceptions. The base next moved up to Bastia in the north of Corsica where they worked closely with the 56th MGB flotilla whose COs were all Canadian. With the recent addition of 12 more Higgins PTs in the shape of Ron 22, joint operating continued apace, resulting ultimately in some of the RN boats being fitted with the US radar in return for a few cases of Scotch!

Finally, just before the South of France landings in August 1944, a third PT Squadron (the 29th) of eight Elco boats had arrived. After guarding the Eastern flank of the invasion forces, Ron 29, fitted with even more effective radar equipment and operating with the 7th MTB Flotilla, scored a series of successful actions in August and September.

USN IN HOME WATERS

Turning to Home Waters, three Higgins PT boats were shipped over to the UK in April 1944. The US wanted its own agents in France and these boats arrived at Dartmouth to receive a crash course in clandestine operating from the seasoned veterans of the 15th MGB Flotilla. They had only a few short days to learn the techniques of inshore navigation off an enemy shore and the tricky handling of the surfboats used for landing and collecting agents, something which had taken the 15th weeks to learn. Nevertheless, led by the much decorated Far East veteran of PT Boat operations, Lt Cdr John Bulkeley USN, they completed 19 missions before being withdrawn to join the American sector of the D Day landings.

Squadron 34, consisting of 12 Elco PTs, arrived in May and were assigned to escort the minesweepers which were to clear the approaches to the beaches. They almost arrived 24 hours early after having missed the message postponing the invasion, but were luckily intercepted half way across the Channel and



Lt Cdr John Bulkeley USN.



PT 190 with Admiral Stark aboard.

sent back. On completion of their initial task they then joined the forces defending the Western Task Force off Utah Beach. They were later joined by two more Squadrons (35 and 30) to guard what became known as the 'Mason Line'. Using Portland as their base they managed to keep an average of 19 boats on patrol, even through the gales of 19-22 June. Meanwhile, the three ex-Dartmouth Higgins boats were used as despatch boats, each assigned to an Admiral's flagship.

Off the Western flank, E-boat interceptions were nil, and with mines a continuous hazard, the main task became one of rescuing survivors from stricken ships and landing craft. A couple of night attempts to bomb Allied shipping by using floating flares was thwarted by the PTs sinking the floats by

gunfire before the bombers arrived. One of the boats detailed for despatch duties claimed a record of carrying, on one day's inspection of the beaches, five generals (including Eisenhower and Bradley) and five admirals!

Most of the PT boats moved westwards after the fall of Cherbourg and had a busy time intercepting enemy shipping between St Malo and the Channel islands. Here they employed, with some success, the RN technique of using a destroyer or frigate as their controller. They also found plenty of 'business' helping with the blockade of Le Havre. Finally, surrender of that port saw the end of the PT Boat offensives in the 'Narrow Seas'. On May 12 1945, they had the distinction of being the first Allied craft to enter St Helier, Jersey and St Peter Port, Guernsey.

LIFE IN BRIEF

LT CDR PAT EDGE OBE DSC RNVR

After serving as 1st Lt of MASB 23 his first command was a Dog Boat, MGB 609 in the 50th Flotilla operating off the East coast, and it was whilst there that he took part in what became a major night action in defence of an important North bound convoy. At the time, in late 1943, the enemy high command had begun to concentrate large numbers of E Boats on the North Sea convoy route. On this particular October night, no fewer than thirty, deployed in a number of small units, were sent to attack a large convoy. A variety of MGBs, MTBs, MLs and five destroyers were directed to positions to ward off this threat. Almost all, in sixteen separate actions, were engaged that night. In command of a unit of two MGBs, Edge's handling of his particular situation earned high praise (*"showing a quick and sound appreciation of the objective, skilful use of radar, and*

tactical ability of a high order") during the subsequent action, for which he was awarded a DSC. He also served for a time in the important working-up base HMS *Bee* at Weymouth, where invaluable experience was converted into expert training for the benefit of new crews and newly formed flotillas. Finally, he was trained in the art of directing Coastal Forces craft from a larger vessel, using that ship's radar. As the CF Controller in Admiral Vian's flagship HMS *Scylla*, he played a major role in defending the Eastern flank of the Normandy landings, fighting off what turned out to be the very considerable threat from enemy coastal craft based at Le Havre. During the war he was also mentioned in dispatches three times.

After the war Pat Edge served in local government, earning an OBE in 1963 for services to disabled people, and settled in Guernsey.

IN MEMORIAM

WE SAY FAREWELL TO:

(CFVA No)

D N Carter	
S Crabb	
C A Crowe	(2754)
P Dalzel Job	
A Downing	(693)
H D Y Faulkner CVO	
R C Gardner	
D Hyndman	
G Percival OBE	
D Ridgeon	
D E T Shepherd	(1306)
J Southeard	
J A Templeton Cotill, CB	
R W Miller	
A Wilson	

!!!STOP PRESS!!!

On Wednesday 28 September the Trust became officially affiliated to the National Museum of the Royal Navy. Chairman John Ascoli is shown receiving the formal Affiliation Document from Museum Chief Executive Dominic Tweddle.



WE WILL REMEMBER THEM

THE COASTAL FORCES HERITAGE TRUST

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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.

“GIVE A GALLON CAMPAIGN”

For The Thames Diamond Jubilee Pageant

As these paintings show, Coastal Forces have a long and honourable history of taking part in major Royal events on the River Thames. So it is pleasing to report that next June will see the attendance of both MTB 102 and ML 1387 (*Medusa*) at this Diamond Jubilee event. Both Trusts have enthusiastically taken up the opportunity to take part, in spite of the extra burden on their running costs.

MTB 102 will be proudly leading the vessels from the Association of Dunkirk Little Ships with their Commodore, Richard Basey, flying his flag in command. (This will be the sixth time she has been reviewed by the Monarch). *Medusa* also has a special role, having accepted the invitation of Hampshire County's Lord Lieutenant to be their representative at the Pageant. (By chance, she is also a previous HMS *Thames* when attached to London RNVR for a time). Both boats have also volunteered to represent the CFHT.

As long term backers of both MTB 102 and *Medusa*, the Trustees therefore expect that supporters will welcome the opportunity to contribute to this occasion by offering to finance a gallon or two of fuel to the respective Trusts. Marine diesel costs about £5 a gallon and both craft will burn a few hundred on the trip, so for all supporters wishing to help these craft on this very special occasion, will they please send in their contribution direct to one (or both!) of the Trusts concerned. Please turn over to see how to do it...



LEFT *1st MTB Flotilla escorting King George VI, 1937*

BELOW *2nd FPB Squadron escorting Queen Elizabeth II 1954*





CUT ALONG LINE AND RETURN FORM TO TRUST OF YOUR CHOICE.

“GIVE A GALLON”

Please complete this form and send it to

Either:

MTB 102 Trust, Hilltop, Castle Street, Wroxham, Norfolk NR12 8AB

or

Medusa Trust, The Priory, Old Hill, Portland, Dorset DT5 1LQ

Name

Address

.....

Amount £ Signature Date

(I confirm I am a UK taxpayer for purposes of gift aid) – delete if unapplicable.