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ISSUE 13, NOVEMBER 2013

# NEWSLETTER

There has been virtually no positive response to the suggestion that this newsletter should be made available by e-mail, if supporters so wished. So it will continue in its present 'hard copy' format, now at a circulation of around 1250 copies. It will, however, continue to be available on the CFHT website at [www.coastal-forces.org.uk](http://www.coastal-forces.org.uk) for those who wish to read it that way.

Supporters are asked to note the changes in the administration of the Trust, which are to be found on the back page and referred to within various articles inside this Issue. These changes have come about in order to gear the Trust more closely to the work ahead, in particular as the outlook for some progress on the establishment of the long hoped-for Exhibition is at last beginning to become clearer.

In order to register the Trust's gratitude, future donations by way of a bequest will be acknowledged by a \* alongside the benefactor's name on the IN MEMORIAM list.

RIGHT, FROM TOP TO BOTTOM

*FPB 1947 Bold Class 121 or 123 ft gas turbine; FPB 1950 Dark Class 71ft diesel; FPB 1950 Gay Class 75ft*

For the sake of accuracy, apologies for the picture errors in the last Issue: ML 268 was of course carrying depth charges, not mines. And that of MGB 314 was in fact of a sister ship, 321.



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## CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

As reported in the last Issue, Captain Michael Gordon Lennox OBE RN has retired as our Secretary after a 12 year stint of loyal and stalwart effort on our behalf. Nobody could have done better in seeing us through the red tape, keeping in touch with our supporters and maintaining the accounts. Michael came to us after a distinguished naval career which included command of HMS *Cavalier*, now preserved at Chatham, and culminated as Director of Naval Security. Subsequently he had been head of Blind Veterans UK (formerly St Dunstan's) before joining the CFHT. In thanking him on behalf of all the Trustees I am very pleased he has accepted an invitation to

continue to serve as an Advisory Member. Meanwhile, Trustee Miles Robinson has taken on the formal duties of Trust Secretary in addition to looking after our finances.

Finally, I am delighted to welcome a new Trustee, Rear Admiral James Morse, who is currently Commandant of the Joint Services Command and Staff College. It is important we have a strong link with today's navy and it is fortunate for us that earlier in his career Admiral Morse had experience of small craft when serving with the Bristol University RN Unit, one of the URNU Squadron with whom we now have a close affiliation.

## PROJECT DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Eagle eyed readers will note my title has changed. This is to focus more on my prime role which is to drive forward the Trust's core aim of establishing our own Coastal Forces Exhibition. I am delighted to report that things are starting to happen. We have recently been given the promise of a World War II motor torpedo boat, MTB 71, from the Imperial War Museum collection. Although the transfer still needs final approval, much detailed planning and effort will now be required to make it happen. But this is still a significant milestone. Furthermore, we have identified a very suitable destination for MTB 71 where we can fully restore her for ultimate display, and around which we can mount a good exhibition.

I am also pleased to record that Jonathan Kemp, our new Book Keeper, has already achieved significant efficiency improvements in running our finances and records. A new computer system has certainly proved its worth and means that I can focus more effort on the Project and, in particular, raise our fundraising game. Whilst we remain acutely aware that we will continue to rely much on the resources and expertise of the National Museum of the Royal Navy, we need to ensure we play our full part. It follows we will now need your support more than ever. But at least now we have a firm way forward and you will know exactly where your money is going.

## BOATS ROUNDUP

### 1 PBS

In the early summer hours, the mighty HMS *Express* sailed quietly southward in calm, cold Scandinavian waters, eerily illuminated by the elusive sun astern. On the bridge they kept a sharp lookout for periscopes and could almost imagine themselves playing a part in "The Cruel Sea". In real life though, this was only P 163 on her summer deployment with students from the Wales University Royal Navy Unit. *Express* is one of fourteen P 2000 'Archer' class patrol vessels used for training and 'RN acquaintance' for students at university. Some may subsequently join up but all will be well educated into the ways of the Royal Navy. Twenty metres long, 75 tons fully loaded and with a top speed of 20 knots, she carries a permanent RN skeleton crew and goes to sea most weekends during the academic year, getting further afield at Easter and in the summer.

This year *Express* sailed north from her Cardiff base to visit no less than seven European countries on her summer cruise, starting with Dunkirk, where her previous namesake had assisted in the evacuation in 1940 - a proud moment. Here she was joined by sister-ship *Explorer* with her students from the Yorkshire universities. Thence on to Kiel for a major naval festival as guests of the German Navy, "*who hosted us above and beyond what we could ever have expected, so much so we even made a steely German Warrant Officer an honorary Welshman!*"

However, the Kiel stay was prolonged by having to await a spare generator part before sailing for Ronne in Denmark and then on to Karlskrona, the home of the Swedish Navy, where the somewhat dubious joys of Baltic swimming and Swedish bar-tabs were experienced before going on to Kalmar. It was here whilst exercising among the archipelagos of the area that the port generator failed completely, leading to a short, sharp damage control exercise for real and a fortnight back in Kalmar. At this attractive port "*many good friendships were made resulting in a rousing farewell from the ship's loud-bailer of Hearts of Oak and Rule Britannia as we sailed out of harbour at the end of our prolonged visit*".

This final stage of the deployment turned out to be quite an epic voyage: steaming at a steady 12 knots to Kiel, transiting the canal, on to Den Helder and from there to Amsterdam. After joining *Explorer* once again and a lively run ashore in "Harry Amsters", the lengthy last leg to Cardiff was completed with students and ship's company in defence watches and no greater hiccup than a misbehaving Aldis lamp. All in all, no mean feat for a small plastic vessel over 25 years old but still proud to be representing the RN at some of Europe's main naval bases and further afield in the Baltic Sea.

With thanks to Lt Ben Power RN



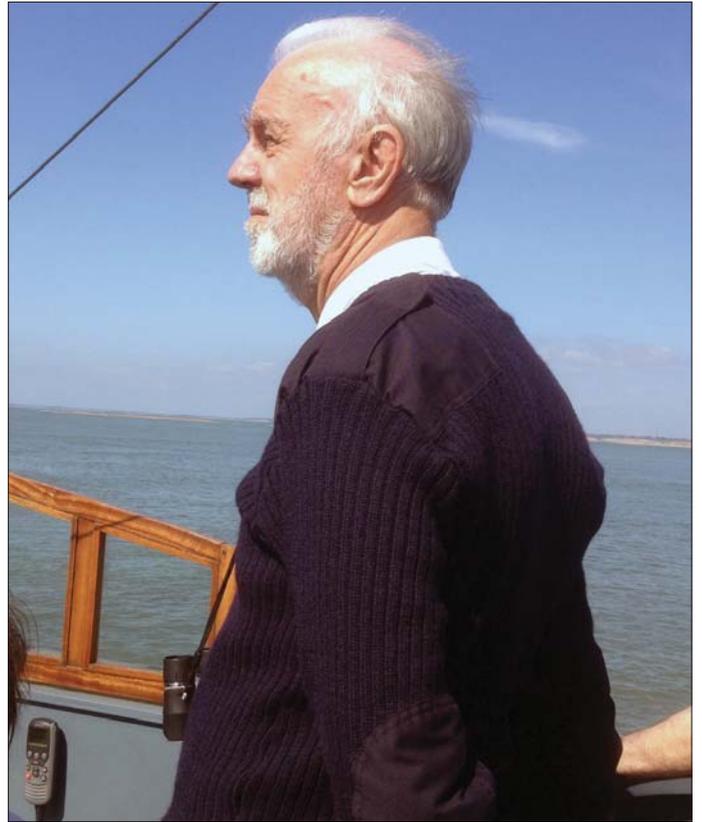
Express crew on deployment 2013

## MEDUSA

After her trip early in the year to Portland for the annual lift-out, painting and anode change, Mike Boyce came to the end of his 45-year service as Skipper for the Trust's pride and joy. As Alan Watson takes over the reins, all concerned registered the debt of gratitude owed to Mike for his outstanding contribution to *Medusa's* welfare over all those years.

Back in the Solent the boat attended the Southampton Maritime Festival over the May Bank Holiday weekend and joined the escort to welcome the restored steam tug *Challenge* back from her refit. The weekend was a great success with the HDML proving a major draw for young and old alike. She has also been open to visitors during the National Heritage Open Days in Portsmouth during September. In October it is '70<sup>th</sup> anniversary time', when she returns to the port of her birth, Poole, for a formal ceremony to mark the occasion (see page 14). And finally, she will of course be back in Hornet for the Remembrance Service in November before the planning begins for her to play her part in yet another 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary – this time of the D Day landings in Normandy.

BELOW *Medusa* open to visitors. RIGHT Mike Boyce of *Medusa*





*MTB 102 on show*

### **MTB 102**

102 has had a busy year which began with a trip down south for the Southampton Maritime Festival in May, involving a round passage of some 400 miles and a lot of diesel! A dead flat calm encouraged her to make the 200 mile return overnight. Since then the boat has attended the ADLS Commemorative Cruise to Ipswich, the Brightlingsea Boat

Show, the Harwich Sea Festival, the Great Yarmouth Maritime Festival and, finally, the Thames Festival at St Katherine's Dock. Apart from a slight encounter with her home pontoon resulting in a few weeks of repairs, she will now rest for the winter and hopefully be ready for action again by next May, with the exciting prospect of the major D Day anniversary ahead.

## NOTICE BOARD

### COASTAL FORCES ADMIRALS

Supporters may be interested to know that Trustee Alastair Wilson has just published the first volume of his Biographical Dictionary of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Royal Navy;

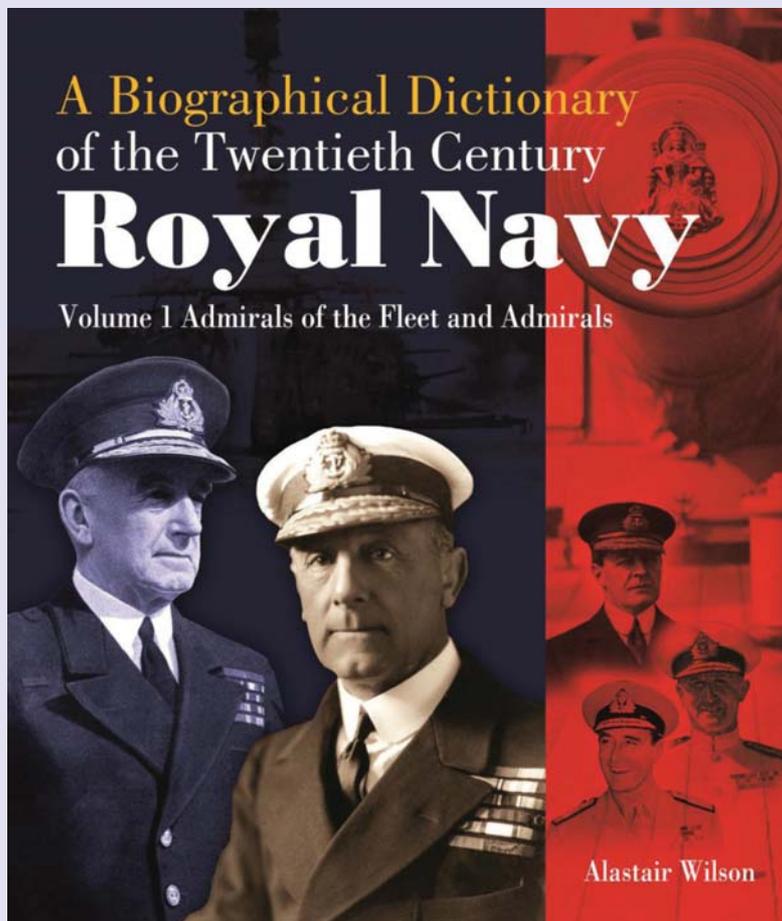
“ADMIRALS of the FLEET and ADMIRALS”

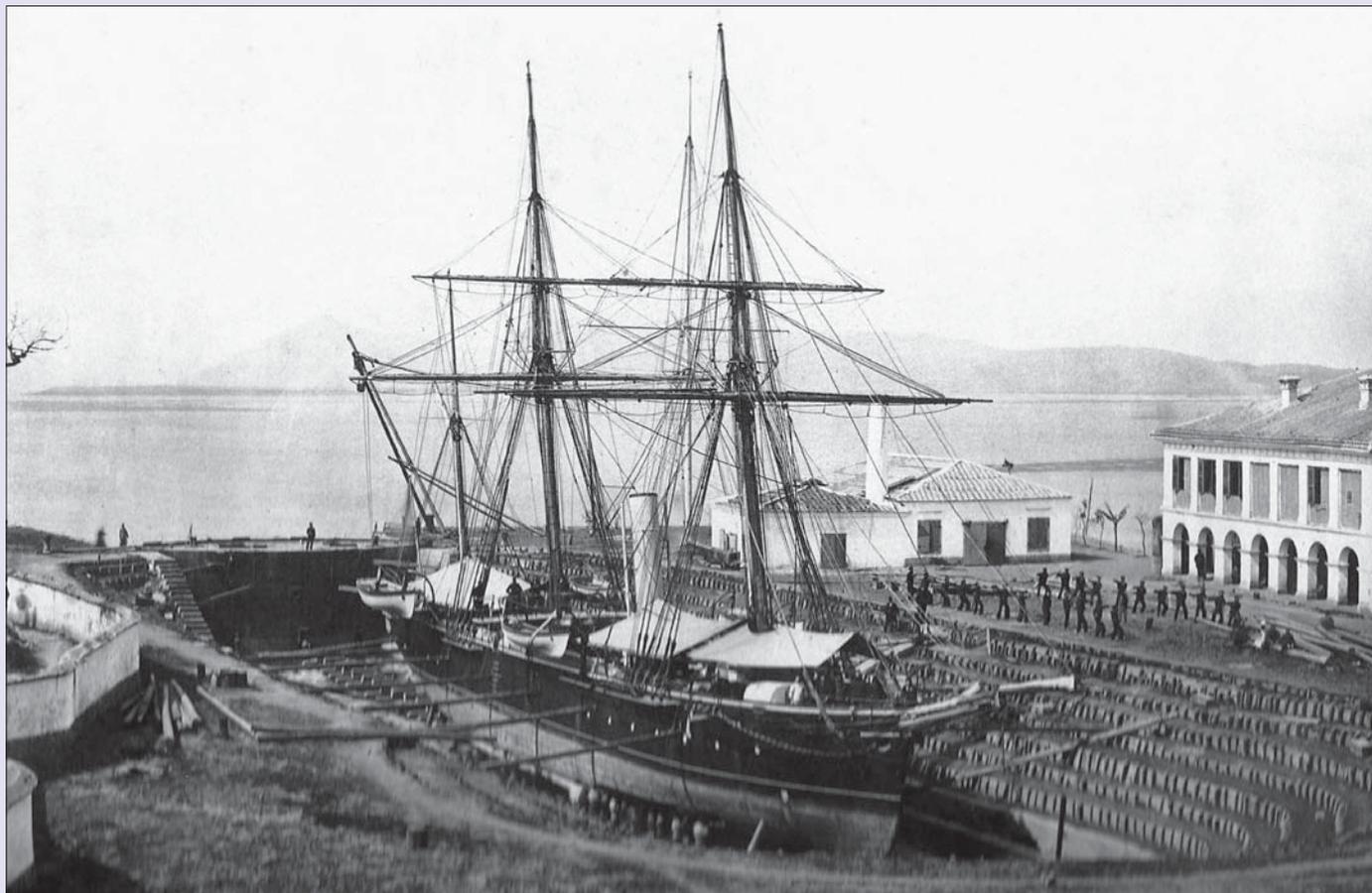
Within its pages three full admirals are listed as having served in coastal forces, one from World War I days, one from World War II and one post-war.

WILLIAM SLAYTER was appointed to the coastal forces depot ship *Thames* in 1916, where he served in CMB 12, then CMB 5 in command, taking part in the famous Zeebrugge raid where he won a DSC. Later he was CO of CMB 55 before joining the cruiser *Diamond*, “for CMBs in command”. She carried six CMBs at davits rather as the old *Vulcan* had carried torpedo boats in the 1880s. *Diamond* went to the Med, but her CMBs were never used. In 1919 Slayter commanded *Theseus*, carrying 12 CMBs into the Black Sea, where she operated against the Bolsheviks. After subsequent non-coastal forces commands of *Liverpool*, *Northumberland* and the Gunnery School, Slayter ended his career as C-in-C East Indies, 1952-54.

‘JIM’ EBERLE’s coastal forces career was briefer: as a Midshipman he joined *Aggressive*, the Newhaven base, in August 1944, where he had a busy month in various boats awaiting a passage to the East Indies to join *Renown*. He went on to qualify in Gunnery and held the positions of 4<sup>th</sup> Sea Lord, CINC Fleet and CINC NAVHOME before retiring in 1983. Always a keen supporter of coastal forces veterans’ affairs, he gave the main address at the De-Commissioning ceremony of the CFVA in 2007.

DAVID HALLIFAX spent two years in coastal forces – 1952-1953. He commanded MTB 5008, based initially at Harwich and later at Gosport, where the boat ran in the Trials Squadron. At one time she was fitted with two cut-down 4.5” guns on stabilised mountings. Whilst good for accuracy, as the gun was hand-loaded the breech could move so rapidly relative to the heaving deck that the loading number had a stiff task on his hands! Hallifax subsequently qualified ‘TAS’ and became Chief of Staff to CINC Fleet during the Falklands campaign, followed by a senior NATO appointment as Deputy SACLANT, and finishing as Commandant at the Royal College of Defence Studies. In retirement he served as the Constable and Governor of Windsor Castle.





### **HMS HORNET**

Coastal Forces veterans and readers of this Newsletter will be well aware of the history of this famous base at Gosport during and after World War II. What they may not know however, is that the base was the eleventh Royal Navy ship to bear that name, albeit the first one never to go to sea! The name goes back as far as 1745, when a 14-gun sloop was launched which lasted 25 years until sold in 1770. A series of wooden sloops, cutters and schooners followed over the next century until, in 1868 the first *Hornet* of the iron and steel age was launched as a “screw gun-vessel”, becoming the eighth in line.

The subject of the fine print shown here, she spent most of her service on the China Station until coming home around 1880 and was placed in reserve until disposal. During her time in the Far East she must have sailed around to what we now know as Burma. The picture shows her “in dock at Pagoda”. This is the south-western tip of that

country which is now called Cape Negrais. The ship’s company appear to be ashore and at cutlass drill. By a curious co-incidence, as some readers will remember, coastal forces craft were active in this part of the world towards the end of World War II, when two ML flotillas harried the retreat of the Japanese army down the Arakan coast.

Next came an early destroyer, built in 1893 and sold out of service sixteen years later. The tenth was another destroyer, built by John Brown on the Clyde in 1911. She served throughout World War I, including taking part in the battle of the Dogger Bank in 1915, and was sold for breaking in 1921. And so we come to the final ship of the name, the ‘stone frigate’, decommissioned in 1957, but still retaining its links with coastal forces through the Hornet Services Sailing Club, which generously hosts the annual Remembrance Sunday Service each November, in front of the Coastal Forces Memorial.

### **A WORD OF WARNING**

As mentioned in the last Issue, Captain Michael Gordon Lennox has retired from the Trust Secretary’s job. But there are still many letters and e-mails coming into the office addressed to him. In future, if you want your correspondence dealt with promptly, please send your letters to the Project Director, Commander Rupert Head, or use his e-mail address – [rheadcoastalforces@msn.com](mailto:rheadcoastalforces@msn.com)

## MAKING HISTORY

### CLANDESTINE OPERATIONS

The role played by coastal forces craft in these activities during World War II has been widely acknowledged, and indeed appreciated, both by the Allies and within those countries whose land was under occupation by the enemy. But the sheer number of operations undertaken, both in Home Waters and in the Mediterranean, is perhaps less well known, as is the variety of craft which participated in this extremely dangerous work. Royal Navy CF craft were indeed heavily involved, in particular during the twelve months of the build-up before D Day, when a special MGB flotilla, the 15<sup>th</sup>, was formed. But they were not alone; from the early days in 1940 until the post-invasion period of late 1944, just on the North and Western coasts of France alone, over two hundred operations were undertaken involving MGBs, MTBs, MASBs, MLs, MFVs, submarines, requisitioned fishing vessels, and even private (usually French) fishing or other civilian-manned craft.

The purpose of these operations fell into several, separate, parts:-

Those involving the landing, support and recovery of intelligence agents and their networks.

Those providing similar support, arms and equipment for Resistance groups and fighters.

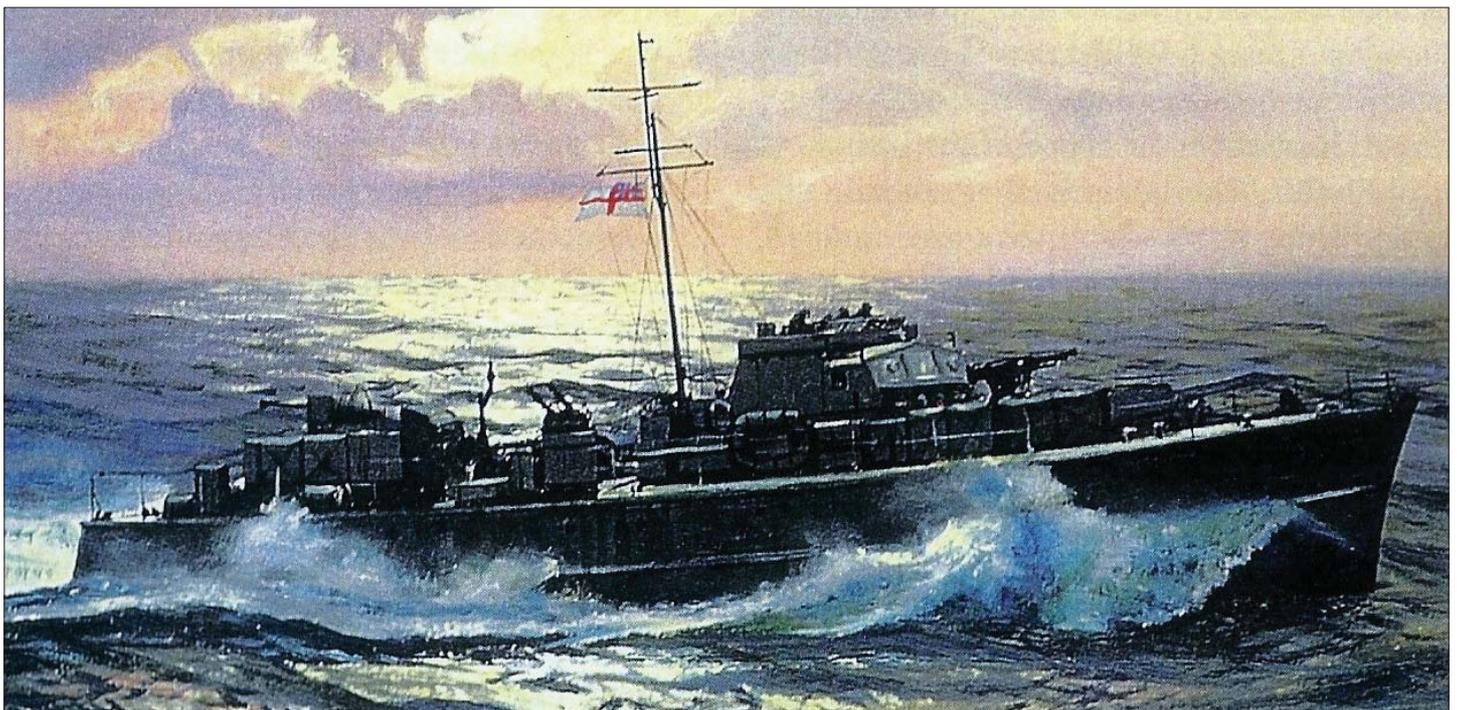
Those providing the final link for escape networks. (The latter involved escaping aircrew, PoWs and resistance workers at risk of capture, sometimes along with their families.)

Those ferrying small raiding or reconnaissance parties to and from enemy held coasts.

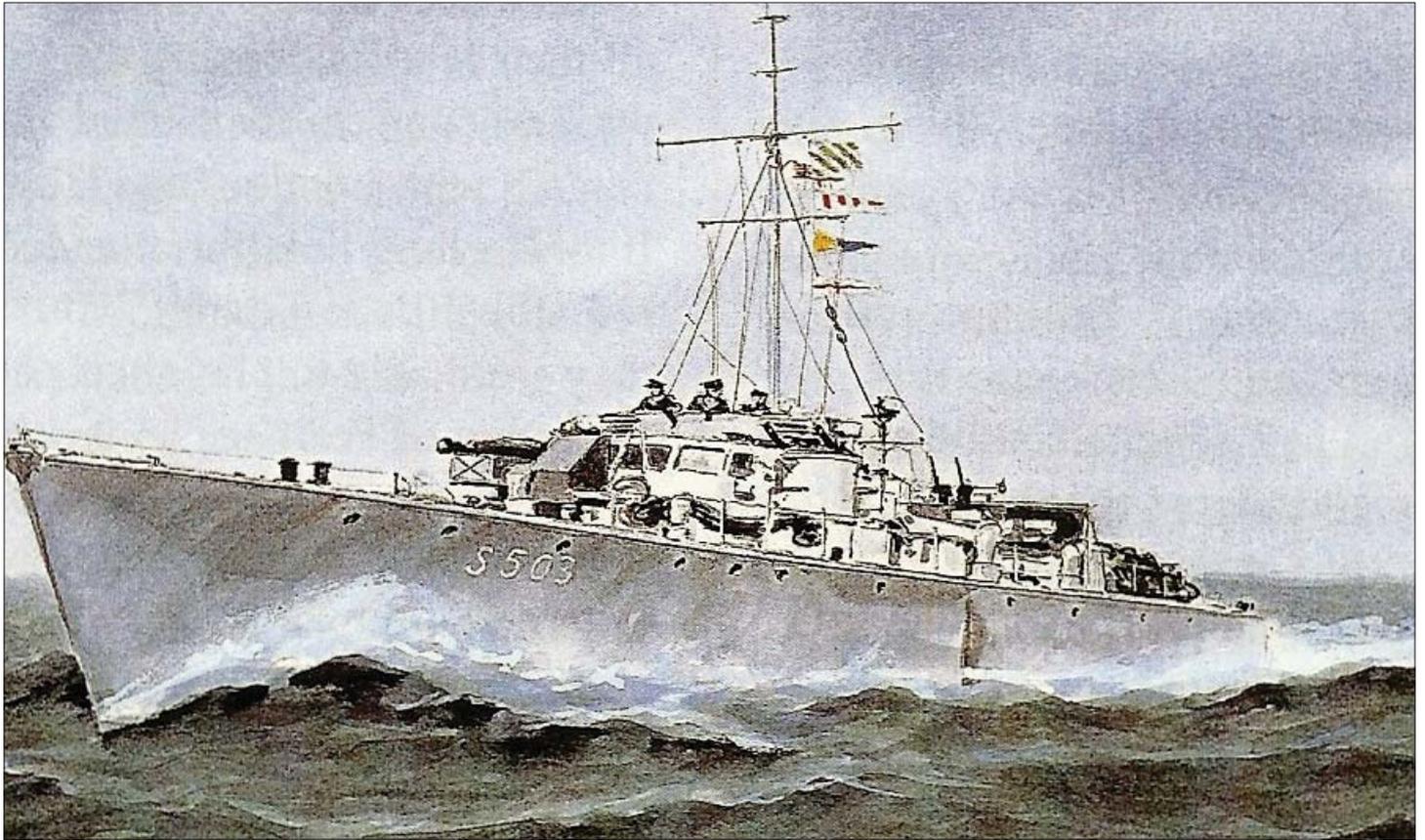
Throughout the war these tasks included a significant incidence of "sea contacts", when civil or fishing craft transferred passengers at sea between boats based in France and their friends from the UK. In Britain, the ports mainly (but not exclusively) involved included Dartmouth, Falmouth, the Helford river and the Isles of Scilly (for France), Lerwick and Aberdeen (for Norway), and Gibraltar became a major base for operations to the shores of Southern France and North Africa.

After initial experience of each task calling for its own requirements, it soon became clear that it was necessary to organise this traffic, set priorities and, if only for security purposes, to establish the criteria for what would today be called 'best practice'. This task fell to a small Admiralty department in the Naval Intelligence Division under the command of the Deputy Director Operations Division (Irregular), a former retired RN Commander recalled for the war in the rank of Captain - Frank Slocum. The department was formed as early as 1940 in order to co-ordinate travel 'to and from' the occupied areas. Initially the air effort was included, but the RAF formed their own team as more suitable aircraft became available for clandestine landings. At the UK front line, a senior Merchant Navy navigation expert, Commander Ted Davis RNR, was based in the West Country to oversee operations and ensure that the crews were well trained in the special arts required.

The techniques involved in providing this secret transport network were highly specialised and had to be learnt, through constant training and practice, by every crew member in every vessel. Loaded on top of the everyday job of operating a small



*MGB 318 of 15th Flotilla*



*MGB 03(2003) of 15th Flotilla*

sea-going warship were the requirements for tight security, absolutely precise navigation, the ability to do everything in total darkness – and complete silence -, the use of specially adapted equipment such as the uniquely designed surf-boats, and all this in wind and weather conditions subject to rapid change, often in notoriously dangerous waters with tides amongst the strongest in the world. Furthermore, in order not to jeopardise the location of any of the chosen landing sites (known as “pinpoints”), whilst on passage it was essential to avoid any contact with either friend or foe, on the surface or in the air. To be spotted, let alone fired on, could give the whole game away. Hence ‘dark moon’ periods only were available for operations, a factor known to the enemy also and thus a time for his increased vigilance. And of course, all these things had to be successfully executed right under the noses of that enemy.

Pressures upon the individual were intense and required outstanding physical and mental strength and resilience. In rough weather a helmsman could be battling for hours to keep his vessel on the right course, threading through unforgiving rocks in a swift tideway. To launch a surf-boat without mishap in rough conditions took both high skill and fine judgement, let alone then having to load landing parties and stores aboard. The boats’ crews would have anything up to two miles to row, with their oars suitably muffled, before arriving at their chosen spot, sometimes without the prior knowledge that the friendly reception committee was in fact already there. And each time they knew the hazardous journey had to be repeated in order

to return in safety to the mother ship, waiting somewhere offshore in the pitch dark. On several occasions the boat could not find the mother ship and so the crews had to land again and stay as ‘guests’ of the local Resistance cell until they could be rescued a few days –or even weeks - later.

If the crossing took place in foul weather, conditions for accurate navigation could be unhelpful, to say the least. The charthouse was a hazardous place to be when heavy rulers, pencils and sharp pointed dividers were hurtling around amongst damp charts, sea water from the bridge, and even vomit if the Navigator had a weak stomach! Conditions in the engine room, often plagued with famously unreliable engines which could break down at any stage, especially when required to run at unhealthily low revs for long periods, were quite simply hellish. If malfunctions did occur, engine room crews, well aware of the vital importance of their mission, were obliged to carry out running repairs if the operation was to reach a successful conclusion.

So it made sense to ease some of the responsibilities involved. For each trip therefore, the boat would normally carry, in addition to the usual crew, a Conducting Officer whose remit was to make the tactical decisions relating to the specific operation, and a Navigating Officer especially trained in the niceties of close inshore pilotage and the more sophisticated equipment which gradually became available. This included a version of RAF bomber navigating gear, two-way radio with the beach and even sonar buoys left behind for

the benefit of subsequent operations. Occasionally too, an extra seaman officer was taken as a Boats Officer to take charge of the surf boats to and from the beach, although this was normally the job of the 1<sup>st</sup> Lt of the boat concerned.

With the passage of time the difficulties inherent in these operations were lessened by greater experience, the honing of skills, better knowledge of the conditions at each pinpoint, improving technical aids and indeed more reliable craft able to make the crossings faster. But there were also offsetting factors. First, enemy vigilance grew both ashore with better defences, including beach-laid minefields, and at sea his patrols and convoy escorts were strengthened. Secondly, some pinpoints became compromised through security breaches. With the number of people involved in the various networks ashore, especially with the D Day build-up, it was probably inevitable that the enemy would infiltrate his 'moles' and local support would suffer. Nevertheless the volume of operations increased steadily and some spectacular intelligence crossed the Channel which contributed directly to the approaching Normandy landings, including details of the locations of the V1 and V2 rocket launch sites.

There is no doubt the contribution of this clandestine work paid off in all the theatres where small craft succeeded in accessing enemy held territory for the benefit of the wider strategy. Not least, it kept enemy occupation forces away from some major battle areas. It is noteworthy how, with full appreciation of the dangers faced by both those afloat and those ashore in occupied countries, post-war contact and friendships forged in those dangerous days have lasted for many years and numbers of heartfelt memorials have been established at or near some of those beach 'pinpoints'. In a post-war comment no less a person than General Eisenhower was of the opinion that this work may have shortened the war in North West France by as much as six months.

A more personal measure of the success achieved during these rigorous campaigns, and indeed of the hazards involved, may be judged from the

example of just one boat's list of awards by the time she reached her concluding operation. MGB 502 (latterly 2002) had been a member of the 15<sup>th</sup> MGB Flotilla especially formed to support the clandestine operations mounted from Dartmouth. After France was liberated she was transferred to Norwegian operations, running out of Aberdeen. Just a few days after the end of the war, the boat was selected to take four Merchant Navy officers to Sweden to arrange the return of some vessels which had been interned in Swedish ports for the War's duration. By a truly cruel stroke of fate, the boat hit a mine in the Skagerrack on the way across and only two out of the whole crew survived. That ship's company had numbered 25 in all, of whom no fewer than 14 held gallantry awards.

As for a measure of the dangers concerned, there can be no more vivid example than the fate which befell MTB 345, exactly 70 years ago. A 55ft Thornycroft boat commissioned in 1942 and sent to join the 30<sup>th</sup> MTB Flotilla. Manned by Norwegian crews and running across to their home country to get in amongst enemy coastal convoys and support resistance fighters ashore; the low-profile design was ideally suited to avoid being spotted at night or while lying up under camouflage

in the narrow Norwegian creeks. But her range was limited and so MTB 620 (a Dog boat) escorted her across to refuel her upon reaching Norway. On 29 June 1943, they were caught in the act and attacked by aircraft. Bombed and damaged, 620 turned for home but 345, perhaps frustrated by lack of success on her previous patrol, decided to stay and lie up under camouflage. Sadly, German aircraft found the boat, guided in the Army, and a fierce battle ensued. The remaining crew were captured, including the British Telegraphist, and subsequently shot. In spite of being dressed in uniform, they had fallen foul of Hitler's decree that such prisoners should be regarded as spies, although this was totally in contravention of the Geneva Convention. After the war, the Senior Officer of the German Security police concerned was found guilty of a war crime and also executed.



*Norway Memorial MTB 345*

## SPECIAL FEATURES

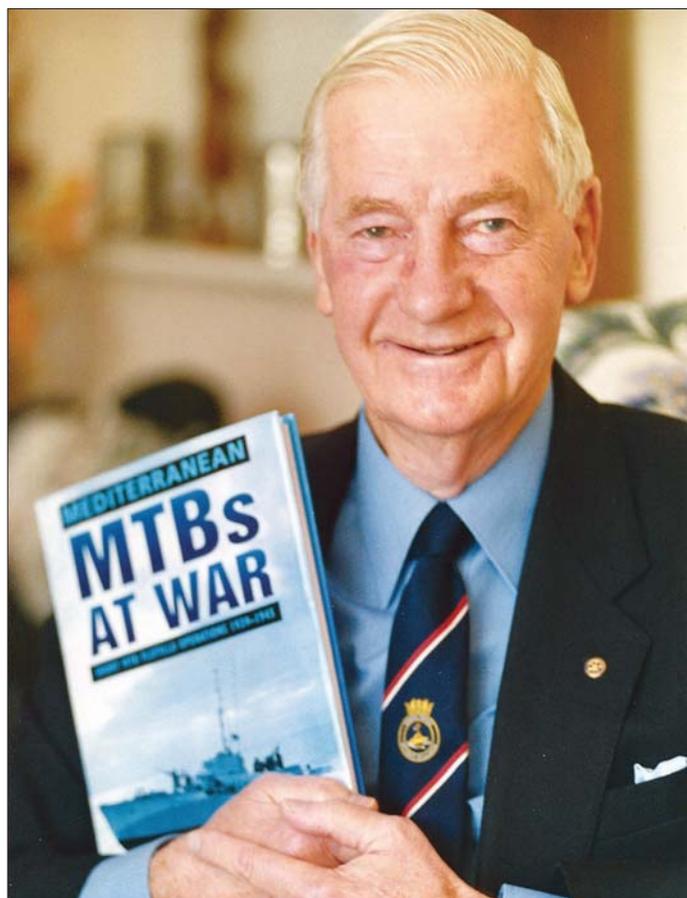
### LEN REYNOLDS – AN APPRECIATION

Many Supporters will have been sorry to hear of Len's passing earlier this year. Perhaps in part due his wartime experience, he was an outstanding example from that generation who believed in serving both their country and their fellow men. For those interested in Coastal Forces he was recognised not only as a very distinguished veteran, but also as the primary source of the British-written history of the 'light coastal forces' of World War II.

Joining the RNVR as a 19-year-old, by early 1943 he had been commissioned and joined a brand new Dog boat, MGB 658, as Navigator. He was destined to serve in her for the next two and a half years, successively as 1<sup>st</sup> Lt and then CO (at the ripe old age of 21) – a unique distinction. A bruising passage in convoy out to the Med formed the tough working-up for his flotilla, which arrived at Malta shortly before Operation Husky, the invasion of Sicily, where they subsequently played a major role in keeping the Messina Straits clear of the enemy during that extremely busy period. After completing fourteen actions within three weeks, and under constant attack from the air, the crews were well seasoned for the hard work that lay ahead, supporting the land forces as they worked their way up Italy. Towards the end of this campaign and on patrol high up on the West Italian coast, 658 was severely damaged in a fierce action with an Italian destroyer. The seaman alongside Reynolds was killed by a shell, probably saving Len's life, and there were more casualties right along the upper deck. He immediately re-organised the badly damaged areas, cleared the fouled steering gear and ensured the injured were tended to as the boat retired to Bastia for repairs.

Subsequently 658 re-deployed to the Adriatic. Operating from Vis, the only island unoccupied by the enemy, she took part in the extensive clandestine operations amongst the Dalmations in support of the Yugoslav partisans. It was hard and fierce work with an ever-present threat from mines laid by a retreating enemy. Several accompanying boats – and friends – were to be lost in that way. By the end of the war, and after being credited with sinking or severely damaging over 26 enemy craft, 658's crew had been awarded 5 DSCs, 5 DSMs and 8 Mentions in Despatches. Len, who had taken command shortly after his 21<sup>st</sup> birthday, was one of the DSCs.

Post-war Len Reynolds qualified as a teacher and took a first class degree in Geography. There followed an outstanding career culminating in headships at Kendal and Maidenhead before he retired in 1981. It was then, although he had of course kept in close touch with his erstwhile naval colleagues, that his mind turned to thoughts of writing about Coastal Forces. He had already told the story of his own war in '*Motor*



*Gunboat 658*', published in 1955. It is a classic personal account of wartime experience. He was now asked by the Imperial War Museum to undertake a full history. Typically, he threw himself into a task which was to take him over ten years in research and which resulted in the three-volume work which is now recognised as the authentic tale of this aspect of naval warfare in World War II: *DOG BOATS AT WAR* was published in 1998, followed by *Mediterranean MTBs AT WAR* in 1999 and *HOME WATERS MTBs AND MGBs AT WAR* in 2000. Meanwhile, he also played a key role in the formation and affairs of both the Coastal Forces Veterans' Association and the Coastal Forces Heritage Trust, where he was a founder Trustee.

Throughout his life Len also found time for a wide variety of public-spirited roles which included becoming a JP, an abiding interest in the Scouting movement for which he was made an OBE in 1981, Rotary and other charitable activities, local arts in the Maidenhead area where he lived, and a passion for rugby as player, referee and supporter. For 30 years he was the Education representative on the Admiralty Interview Board, where for a time he was joined by his Royal Marine son, a unique father-son team!

A true contributor who is much missed by many.

### THOUGHTS AT SEA

Most supporters will have read and enjoyed one or more of the large library of books written by CF veterans since they came ashore in the late 1940s at the end of the War. Browsing through them again it is noticeable how often these experiences have triggered intensely personal accounts of the more emotional moments which the writers had tucked away in their memories. Some are of the beauty of nature, some of more personal feelings. All can readily be understood perhaps only by those lucky enough to have spent time at sea in a small vessel, particularly a fast one. The reminiscences, some almost lyrical, seem even more unusual when one realises that they were recalled as part of the much more savage business of fighting a hectic and brutal war at close quarters. Here is a brief selection.

*“The time was now about midnight, the moon still up, the sea flat calm. In such conditions motor gunboating can be sheer joy; the boats seem to fly along with a tremendous sense of speed. They are very beautiful. I think one of the most lovely sights I have ever seen is a gunboat unit at speed in moonlight, with the white pluming wakes, the cascading bow waves, the tin-black outlines of the guns starkly silhouetted, the figures of the gunners motionless at their positions as though carved out of black rock, all against the beautiful setting of the moon-path on the water.”*

*“The wind had risen to almost gale force, at least force 7 or 8; with the effect of the Portland race on the sea there were some very sharp and, for us, large waves. We jumped through them like porpoises, at one moment entirely hidden from each other by the crest of a wave or by solid sheets of spray, at another exposed to view well down to the under belly of the ship, with a third of the boat’s forward keel clear of the water, like a large fish leaping from a wave.”*

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*“For eleven hours on end we patrolled in line ahead, until mercifully my steering jammed, so we slowed and stopped to examine the gear. Oh, the joy of peace and silence! We had been under way since 1700 the previous evening before: hours of continuous, nerve-wracking tension and noise. This is nothing exceptional. I have often since done as much as sixteen or nineteen hours on end under way in our little cramped bridge, two and a half feet by five, subjected to the tension of station-keeping at 30 knots, much of the time in the dark where an instant’s inattention or lack of judgement might bring disaster sudden and devastating. I am inclined to think that this is the greatest physical and mental strain to which a serving officer is subjected as a matter of routine. This feeling of utter physical and mental exhaustion has to be felt*



*...in the moonlight...*



*...unit at speed...*

*to be understood. I do not believe the majority of people have ever experienced it."*

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*"It will not be easy to forget that dawn, the boats seeming to skim and barely touch the smooth still water, the cool rush of air filling the lungs with oxygen, the exhilarating throb and power of the engines, the slowly changing shades of light, as yet dim in the eastern sky, the bright flashes of rockets and tracer, the dazzling white-blue pencil of a searchlight picking out the mastheads."*

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*"It was bright moonlight and we were going down wind. As we drew away from the land at 30 knots the seas began to mount and break, the boats to swoop and stagger in their flight. I looked apprehensively at the little white ensign at our yardarm. It was flying out stiffly ahead. As we were doing 30, that meant a 30 to 35 knot wind. Not good enough, I thought, and looked still more apprehensively at the rising seas. We were beginning to surge badly now, drawing up sharply as the stern lifted to a steep following sea, the engines grinding and jarring as the revs came down in spite of their thousands of horsepower driving and thrusting the hull into the hollow of each wave. The next moment, like a racing car released by the starting gun, they would be hurtling forward, at what*

*seemed breakneck speed, on the foaming crest of the next wave, the entire forward half of the boat clear of the water and the spray flying mast-high from the wide-thrown bow wave."*

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*"The course was rock-steady as it had to be, and with the Dumbflows operating the rush of wind and water were as loud as the engines and enhanced the thrill of speed and proximity. I found myself gasping with unadulterated joy at this sense of transcendent beauty and achievement, and paused to fix it in my memory; how important it is to do that if life is not to be a sad progression of jam yesterday and jam tomorrow, if there is a tomorrow, with a perpetual sense of loss in always failing to recognise the significance of something outstanding while it is actually happening."*

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*"Then there were the porpoises which shared with us a patch of phosphorescence. To our dark-adapted eyes the brilliance of the great silver-plated bodies, miracles of streamlined perfection as they leapt from the black depths curving and dripping cold fire, was dazzling. Then they were back in their element with never a splash, as though holes had opened to receive them, and down, down, leaving trails of opalescent light wherever they swam."*

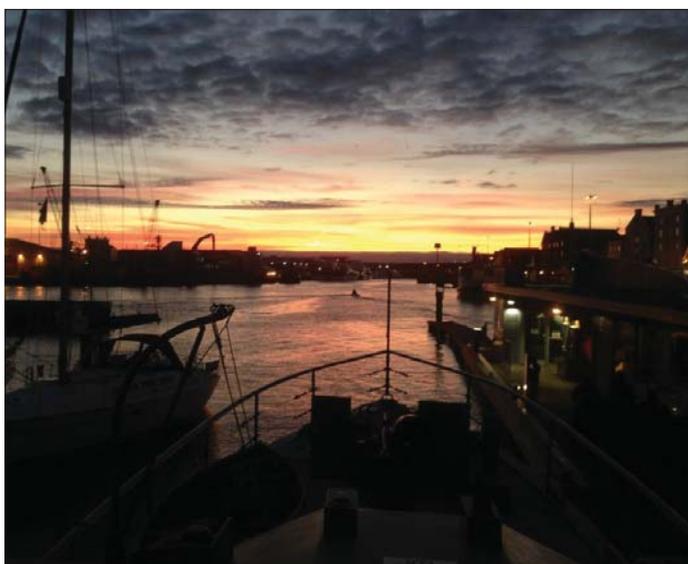
### **MEDUSA's 70<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY**

Launched in October 1943 at R.A. Newman's yard by Poole Bridge, HDML 1387 sailed from Haslar on Wednesday 2 October 2013, berthing – and partying – overnight at the Royal Lymington Yacht Club before reaching Poole after an unpleasantly rough crossing and some skilful manoeuvring to arrive safely at a comfortable berth in the marina. Thursday was spent cleaning ship for the great occasion and *"we were already beginning to attract the crowds"*.

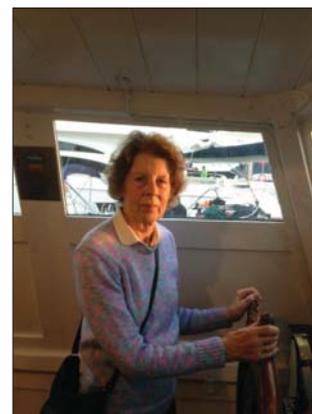
Friday began with a live Radio Solent broadcast including some extracts from D Day recordings and that, coupled with local press coverage, resulted in another very busy visitors' day. Saturday dawned bright and clear for the Mayor and Mayoress's arrival at 1030 and up went the port admiral's flag. The plan was to take their party out to the chain ferry but with the fair conditions *"we actually got as far as the Old Harry Rocks before turning for home and touching the slipway of the ship's birth before returning alongside."*

And then came the formalities: all on the upper deck, including the dinghy being adapted to become a bar! Trust Chairman Alan Watson said a few words which included a message from the boat's last RN skipper, Admiral Rodger Morris. A splendid cake was cut and the ship's health drunk. And then a wonderful surprise – the Mayor presented an exact replica of the commissioning bell, gratefully accepted by Alan on behalf of the crew and Trust.

And so an amazing day ended with many more visitors plus some special ones in the shape of the builder's daughter, Mrs Barbara Cripps, and even a just-married couple who jumped at the chance to have a wedding-day picture taken on the foredeck next to the Oerlikon, which must be unique! To cap it all Poole provided a stunning sunset prior to a good night's sleep and a calm trip back to Portsmouth. *"As we all went our separate ways there was a satisfying sense of a job well done, thanks in no small measure to the efforts of the many people concerned, including a big thank you to Pam Boyce, who did all the arranging with the Poole Mayor's office."*



FROM TOP TO BOTTOM  
*On building slip; 70 this year; New Ship's Bell; 'Action Stations'; Barbara Cripps;*



## LIVES IN BRIEF

### JOHN QUINE

Commissioned into the RNVR in February 1942, John volunteered for coastal forces and by that September had become 1st Lt of MTB 71 (see Project Director's Report). A year later, now in MTB 355, the flotilla were involved in a sharp action off the Dutch coast in September 1943, unhappily not very successful on a bright moonlit night. But later that same year their luck turned and in a further convoy action the largest enemy ship was completely disabled.

Post war, John went on to a successful career in MI 6, becoming head of Counter-Intelligence. He was one of the officers who interrogated George Blake, when he played a major role in extracting a confession from the spy, and subsequently visited him in prison to question him further on those he had betrayed, resulting in death for several. Later, he bought a house in Kent which had briefly been the home of the James Bond author, Ian Fleming

### REAR ADMIRAL MICHAEL STACEY, CB RN

Joining the RN at Dartmouth in 1943 as a general list officer, Mike served in coastal forces soon after WW II. A successful naval career saw him commanding HM Ships *Blackpool*, *Andromeda* and *Tiger* before becoming Assistant Chief of Naval Staff prior to his last appointment as Flag Officer Gibraltar. In retirement he became Director of the UK's Marine Pollution Control Unit for some 8 years, during which time he also ran the Coastguard service, as Chairman of the UK Search and Rescue Committee. Finally, he moved to his third successful career as an Oil Spill Control Consultant.

A devoted family man happily married to former Wren Penelope for 58 years, Mike was one of nature's gentlemen, caring deeply for all those lucky enough to be placed in his charge or become his friend. A keen interest in the Coastal Forces 'family' led to his accepting the invitation to unveil the Memorial Plaque at the old CF Base at Newhaven, HMS *Aggressive*, in 2009.

### REAR ADMIRAL SIR MORGAN MORGAN-GILES, DSO OBE GM MP

A charismatic leader with exceptional qualities of courage, energy and resource, Morgan-Giles played an outstanding part in WW II coastal forces operations in the Mediterranean. Early in the war, when a Lieutenant based at Alexandria helping to deal with mines dropped on the Suez Canal, he

won a George Medal for rescuing survivors after a major explosion. Surviving two air crashes during the Tobruk siege, and a third during the Salerno landings, he was sent to Malta as Operations Officer for Coastal Forces. But his record had been noted by Brigadier Fitzroy Maclean, who persuaded 'the powers that be' to let him join the supporting mission for Tito's partisans in Yugoslavia as the Naval Liaison Officer. Typically, Morgan-Giles recognised immediately the opportunity to set up a gun-running operation from Bari. It was there that, once again, he saved lives after an ammunition ship had been blown up by enemy bombs, and he was awarded an MBE for his rescue efforts.

From Bari he moved to the island of Vis to direct naval operations in support of the partisans, a campaign which was so successful he was awarded a DSO. After the war he earned rapid promotion to Commander, then Captain, when his commands included the destroyer *Chieftain*, the Dartmouth Training Squadron, the torpedo and anti-submarine school at HMS *Vernon* and, finally, the Far East flagship, *Belfast*. On promotion to Rear Admiral and whilst head of the Naval College at Greenwich, Morgan-Giles decided to leave the navy and stand for parliament.

He was duly elected as the member for Winchester, which he represented for 13 years. With his forthright conservative views, he became a strong advocate on all Service matters. As might be expected, he played a major part in the preservation of HMS *Belfast* and was a life President of the RNLI. He was knighted in 1985 and in his later years became a strong supporter of the CFHT.

### ROLAND CLARKE

Roland Clarke began his service in HDML 1456, followed by MTBs 435, 738 and 788. In June 1942 he joined MGB 67 of the 6<sup>th</sup> Flotilla as an Able Seaman gunner and saw his first action on 29 July. In a fierce action off the Belgian coast two merchantmen were sunk in spite of heavy retaliation from enemy flak trawlers. 67 went close in under the bows of one to drop depth charges, successfully sinking her, whilst accompanying MTBs commanded by Lt Harpy Lloyd torpedoed the other. But 67 had suffered major casualties with several killed and the bridge crew temporarily out of action, leaving the boat careering along on its own.

Roland will be well remembered as a buoyant stalwart of CFVA re-unions, never afraid to give his personal view on most subjects!

## IN MEMORIAM

### WE SAY FAREWELL TO:

	(CFVA No)
TVG Binney	
H Brown	(1924)
AV Cooper	(2450)
WT Crawford	(2861)
P Dearling	(3183)
FK Elkington	(149)
NJ Gillies	
PD Hingley	
T Hughes	
George Lane	
JH Mellalieu *	(1189)
Sir Morgan Morgan-Giles KBE DSO GM	
Douglas Palmer	
M Randall	(3212)
Len Reynolds OBE DSC DL	
K Speed	(12)
M L Stacey CB	
Phyllis Ward (nee Luke)	(2617)
A Woplin	(1901)



### !!!STOP PRESS!!!

In November last year Issue 11 featured an article on the 'Channel Dash' recalling the gallant but abortive effort of the 6th MTB Flotilla to stop the escape of three enemy capital ships through the English Channel early in 1942. One of those boats, MTB 219, has been a houseboat on the Thames for many years. Excitingly, she has been acquired by the Childs family from Bridgewater (*Gay Archer* and MASB 27) as their latest restoration project. Anyone interested in supporting this venture can obtain contact details from the CFHT office.

## 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.