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NEWSLETTER

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*Coastal Forces and Minor War Vessels support
Normandy Commemorations*

This issue puts a little more focus on the Coastal Forces involvement in the 70th anniversary commemorations of the D-day landings and the boats which contributed to the splendid events in June of this year. Those individuals whose dedicated efforts keep the boats operational on behalf of all Coastal Forces supporters, deserve our thanks and wholehearted support. There are, of course, other vintage Coastal Forces boats which were not in a position to cross the Channel to Normandy but which are equally well supported by dedicated volunteers. I have been delighted to receive feedback from two Coastal Forces veterans reminding us that minesweeping was also a prominent and particularly dangerous feature of Coastal Forces operations and we include an article covering some of this activity. Some personal recollections from the late Stan Cross are included giving his account on the loss of MTB 666 and its dramatic and surprising effect on the enemy. In addition, we have included articles on specific clandestine operations, expanding on previous general articles on this subject. Once again I wish to say that comments and feedback from readers of the Newsletter are always welcome. Please note the change of office telephone number to the new one shown on the last page of the Newsletter.

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CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

It is with sadness that we say goodbye to Commander Rupert Head after three years at the helm. Rupert has done a great job in running the Trust on a daily basis, tightening up our office management, liaising with a wide range of contacts, dealing with veterans and their families and promoting our interests to a widening audience. However, we have been fortunate in finding another, widely experienced, retired naval officer to fill this increasingly important role. Commander Brian Lambert took up his position in early September and he has already got a firm grip on how the Trust operates. He joins at an important time, when our progress towards the permanent exhibition is really taking shape. Supporters of the Trust will know that, for some years, we have been working hard towards the creation of our permanent Coastal Forces exhibition, working closely with the National Museum of the Royal Navy (NMRN), with whom we are formally Affiliated. I am therefore delighted to announce that our aim is fast becoming reality. Coastal Forces are coming home. A splendid site has been earmarked at Gosport, within the NMRN's "Explosion" museum and a concept plan is being finalised. As readers will also be aware, we have been pursuing the transfer of MTB 71 from the Imperial War Museum at

Duxford to Portsmouth and this will now be completed during October. She will go into a temporary home in BAE Systems Ship Hall until her permanent site at Explosions Gosport is ready, early in the New Year, with other craft planned.

I must be frank, achieving our aim comes at a cost and we continue to need your help. Many of our supporters have responded splendidly to our recent personal appeal to recipients of the Newsletter, and our Finance Director has put a short piece on this in this Newsletter, which I would urge you to read. The Trust is extremely grateful for this generous support but, regrettably, too many who receive our much appreciated newsletter make no contribution at all. We would urge you to correct this situation in order that we can continue to supply you with this high standard publication. Your support also helps us to see this Coastal Forces project through to its important conclusion and this Newsletter will keep you fully informed of our progress. I think that we would all agree that the remarkable story of the men and women, the vast majority of whom were RNVR officers or Hostilities Only ratings, should be told for the benefit of future generations.

J. Ascoli

PROJECT DIRECTOR'S REPORT

FROM THE OLD

It is with a sense of both sadness and gratitude that I stand down from the Trust. Sad because I leave behind many good friends and also because I was unable to see the Trust on its way towards realising its core aim, the establishment of a permanent exhibition. My gratitude is because I have received marvellous support and encouragement from all the Trustees and many of the readers of this newsletter. Your new Project Director arrives at a critical time just as tangible progress towards our permanent exhibition is gathering momentum. I have had a most rewarding, stimulating and challenging three and a half years and it has been both a pleasure and a privilege to work for the Trust.

Commander Rupert Head RN

FROM THE NEW

Joining the Royal Navy in 1970 as a Junior Seaman I had an stimulating 36 year career, leaving the Service in 2006 as a Commander. I saw active Service in the Falklands Conflict, Gulf War 1 and Gulf War 2 and, amongst my many ships I served as the First Lieutenant of the Mine Counter Measures Vessel (MCMV) HMS Hubberston and I commanded the

MCMV HMS ATHERSTONE. I have spent my first few weeks in post getting to grips with the administration of the Trust, and meeting the key personalities both in the CFHT and the Museum of the Royal Navy. My focus since joining has been developing a plan for the Coastal Forces Museum which is due to be based adjacent to the "Explosion" Museum at Priddy's Hard in Gosport. The centrepiece of the Museum will be MTB 71 and possibly CMB 331. The exciting news is that MTB 71 will be transferred from RAF Duxford to Portsmouth Dockyard, where she will be held in storage in the BAE Ship Hall, where only last month the bow section of the Royal Navy's second Aircraft Carrier; HMS PRINCE of Wales was completed. The need to continue to raise funds as explained in the Finance Director's appeal for donations remains in my focus and sources of funding our several projects related to displays in the Museum are being pursued. An area that will be addressed is the need for the cataloguing, digitising and storage of the vast amount of documentation held by the Trust in order to form an archive of researchable material available to all those historians, families and individuals with an interest in Coastal Forces Operations. Once again, researchers should

expect this to incur a small cost. I look forward to keeping you up-to-date on all our areas of activity.

Commander Brian Lambert RN

FINANCE DIRECTOR

As stated in the Chairman's Report we are on the threshold of achieving our long cherished objective to establish the permanent Coastal Forces exhibition, well supported by the National Museum of the Royal Navy. We have for many years distributed our Newsletter to all our supporters free of charge, in the hope that those who value it and can afford it will offer an annual donation. This not only contributes to the cost of the Newsletter but also supports the Trust in achieving its objectives. We are extremely grateful to our many supporters who have responded in the past but

we must now ask each and every recipient to consider making an annual donation to help meet our ever increasing cost of printing and postage costs. In order to make the newsletter viable and to manage costs effectively, we will be writing to those recipients who we have not heard from in the past year to confirm whether they wish to continue to receive the Newsletter, therefore providing us with an annual donation of what they can afford. Obviously such a mailing exercise will further deplete our funds and we would request those affected to complete and return the Supporters Form enclosed in this newsletter in order to prevent us writing to you unnecessarily. We very much regret this action which, due to our increasing costs, Trustees feel is necessary. We sincerely welcome your continued support without which our Trust would not exist.

M. Robinson

BOATS ROUNDUP

GAY ARCHER – TORQUAY FLOTILLA – “MILITARY BOATS”

HMS Gay Archer can now be seen by the public until October at her new berth in the harbour at Torquay. She is accompanied by the ex-Army launch (Humorist) and an ex-RAF sea tender (437). The local authority is still keen to develop a maritime museum to accompany the boats, to which CFHT have offered their support, and there is the possibility of this collection of boats being joined by the ex-Army launch Hyperion and CMB 9. The collection of boats is referred to locally as Military Boats and this is a constantly developing scene, details of which can be found at www.militaryboats.org

TRANSPORT TRUST AWARD

Mike Boyce has been honoured by the Transport Trust for his dedicated work in “rescuing” HDML 1387 (HMS Medusa) over 45 years ago and for keeping the boat sea-worthy and fully active over those many years. Mike received his award from HRH Prince Michael of Kent at a ceremony at Brooklands Park Museum on 23 June.

Mike maintained and operated the boat until she was put in the custody of the Medusa Trust in 2000, which led to her restoration with funding approaching £1M from the Heritage Lottery. Mike played his part in this work and March 2010 saw Medusa back in the water in better condition than when



HMS Gay Archer leaving Watchet on route to a more permanent home at Torquay

she was first built. In the autumn of that year HRH The Princess Royal attended a re-dedication of the vessel, which was complete and seagoing in time to attend the 2012 Jubilee Pageant on the Thames. That was a proud moment for Mike and the pinnacle of his 45 years as skipper. All associated with Coastal Forces Heritage Trust congratulate Mike on this award.



*Mike Boyce with
HRH Prince Michael of Kent*

HMS MEDUSA (HDML 1387) – VISIT TO POOLE

On what has become an annual occasion, HMS Medusa visited Poole, where the boat was built at R.A. Newman and Sons in 1943. The Mayor of Poole, Councillor Peter Adams, was pleased to present the Skipper, Alan Watson, with a scroll of honour marking a special relationship with the borough. The Mayor was presented with a Medusa plaque. The boat was moored alongside Poole Quay for the weekend so that it could be involved in the events commemorating the start of World War I. The crew joined servicemen and ex-service groups in a civic parade from St James's Church to Poole Guildhall on Sunday 3 August.



HDML 1387 (HMS Medusa) leaving Portsmouth



Medusa Crew with the Mayor of Poole following the presentation

NORMANDY COMMEMORATIONS

Our photograph on the cover page shows the small flotilla of historic craft and P2000 Royal Navy ships leaving Caen. MGB 81, MTB 102 and HSL 102 made the journey across the Channel, accompanied by the two P2000 University Royal Navy Unit (URNU) boats HMS Express and Ranger. HDML 1387 (Medusa) followed some days later after meeting commitments in Portsmouth.

MTB 102's long journey south from Lowestoft began on 23 May with additional fuel capacity having been added to the boat. Her first port of call was Chatham where she took part in the Commemorative Cruise of the Association of Dunkirk Little Ships (ADLS), on the Dunkirk anniversary. There were approximately 20 ADLS *little ships* which were open to the public and being dressed overall they made a most impressive sight. Stage two of the journey began with a brisk North Easterly in the Thames Estuary and some entertaining helicopter and winch-man training with the RAF before they reached Dover. The long slog from Dover to Portsmouth commenced on 27 May but Portsmouth was only a stop-over on the way to Weymouth. MTB 102 had been given the privilege of carrying the Millin Pipes from Weymouth to Portsmouth for their official reception.

Few stories from the Normandy Campaign are as moving as that of Bill Millin. The Scottish Piper was just 21 years old when he landed in Normandy in the early hours of D-Day. Wearing the kilt his father had worn at Flanders and carrying only his bagpipes and a *sgian-dubh* tucked into his sock, he was commanded by Lord Lovat to play! And so to *Highland Laddie* and *Road to the Isles*, the rest of his comrades waded ashore and began their brave endeavour which would lead to the liberation of Europe. By some miracle both Bill and the bagpipes survived the war and now, 70 years later, they were able to be played again in support of the D-Day veterans revisit.

MTB 102 left Weymouth on 31 May, with the pipes, on their next leg to Ocean Village Southampton, where they were greeted by the Mayor and Mayoress accompanied by the Commodore of the Royal Southampton Yacht Club. After being well entertained in Southampton the boat took the pipes on their last leg of the journey into Portsmouth Harbour where they were played on the Fore Deck while entering harbour.

On 3 June, exactly 70 years since MTB 102 took Prime Minister Winston Churchill and the Supreme Allied Commander, General Eisenhower around the assembled D-Day fleet, MTB 102 slipped from Haslar Marina in Portsmouth Harbour bound for Ouistreham and Caen, accompanied by MGB 81 and HSL 102. Transiting the lock into the channel for a fascinating journey under Pegasus Bridge all three boats arrived in Caen, with MTB 102 making an impressive berthing evolution astern. A return to her berth at Pegasus Bridge preceded for several days of commemorative activity amidst high security and lots of public attention.



MTB 102 Open to visitors with Association of Dunkirk Little Ships at Chatham



D Day Veterans alongside MTB 102



The young and the old – P2000 crew members.

These included a visit from The Prince of Wales and Duchess of Cornwall, with many D-Day veterans present on the quayside. After seeing many visitors from a wide span of nationalities the boat returned to Caen on 7 June for a Reception and presentation of medallion to the visiting boats, of which there were now a small fleet, including Medusa, P2000 ships HMS Express and HMS Ranger, a Danish naval



Skipper Richard Basey Meets with HRH The Prince of Wales

vessel and HMS Ledbury close by. The 9 June was departure day and MTB 102 led with eight university students onboard from the P2000 boats. A good passage to Dover and then Lowestoft rounded-off a journey of 730 miles in 19 days on a boat that is probably 75% original World War II build and the only surviving warship that was involved in both Dunkirk and D-Day. Richard Basey led his small crew of Debbie King, Mike Hill, Gary Hill and David Ross.

HDML 1387 (Medusa) had a different programme and an extremely busy one over the period of the D-Day commemorations. These started at Portsmouth on 31 May when she escorted the ships carrying veterans bound for France out of Portsmouth Harbour, in conjunction with QHM and the harbour tugs with water monitors going full blast. On the second of June the vintage vessels, HDML 1387, MTB 102, HSL 102 and MGB 81 were on Flagship pontoon in Portsmouth for a visit by D-Day veterans. This was a moving experience, in particular a US Ranger telling for the first time the story of assaulting Point Du Hoc. On the morning of 3 June, all the boats left harbour for the passage to France, although Medusa returned to Portsmouth Harbour for a Royal visit planned for 5 June.

The morning of the 5 June alongside in Portsmouth Harbour HDML 1387 (Medusa) received her VIP guests. These included



Medusa alongside in Caen

Doug Withey who is now the last of Medusa's crew from D-Day and Rear-Admiral Roger Morris, her last Commanding Officer when the boat was in post war RN service. They were joined by HRH The Princess Royal, accompanied by Vice-Admiral Sir Tim Laurence and the Lord Lieutenant of Hampshire, Dame Mary Fagan. After departure of the royal party the two special visitors, Doug Withey and Admiral Morris were taken to sea with, at one point, Admiral Morris in command on the Bridge and Doug Withey on the helm. The combined age of OOW and Coxn was 180, a record perhaps.

On 6 June, HDML 1387 attended the rededication of the D-Day memorial at Ocean Village in Southampton and then at 0300 on the 7 June she departed for France where she joined the other boats for the commemorative events. From Ouistreham the other vessels headed back to the UK but Medusa turned West and went to the Mulberry at Arromanche and from there a slow passage along Omaha beach to Point Du Hoc and then into Port en Bessin, followed by a two day visit to Cherbourg before heading back to the UK. On the way she stopped at the exact spot she had marked at the minefield edge on D-Day and a short service of commemoration was held. Overall it was a very successful trip and the French were hugely grateful for her presence.

COMMEMORATIVE EVENTS IN VIS, CROATIA

It was the November 2011 issue of the Newsletter that carried the article, "Vis – The last Official Reunion". Thankfully this was certainly not to be the last visit and the persistence of those remaining veterans who served in that theatre of war have ensured that the annual visit and the commemorative event continues.

What is it all about?

The island of Vis, two and a half hours' journey by ferry from Split on the Dalmatian coast, has an illustrious maritime history and several

occasions of a British presence. Principal of these was that established on the island by Captain (later Admiral Sir William) Hoste Royal Navy. Admiral Hoste spent several years campaigning in the area during the Napoleonic Wars with France and his most famous battle was the Battle of Lissa in 1811 – Lissa being the ancient name for the island of Vis. Evidence of the British history on the island is easy to find, especially at Fort George which was built to guard the entrance to the harbour and at the British cemetery. The Royal Naval move to the Adriatic in World War II and their operations from Vis were

facilitated by the surrender of the German and Italian forces in North Africa on 13 May 1943, followed by the invasion of Sicily on 19 June 1943. This was followed by the Allied Forces long campaign of advancing through Italy and was accompanied by Italian forces in the Dalmatian Islands surrendering in September 1943, only to be replaced on the Yugoslavian mainland and islands by German forces. However, the initial surrender of the Italian forces in the Dalmatian Islands left a void which was quickly filled by local Partisans, particularly on the island of Vis which was to become the central base for their activity and the only island of the Dalmatian coast never to be occupied by the Germans. The Allied naval presence on Vis was initiated in October 1943 and developed.

Peter Bickmore BEM, former Chairman of the National Coastal Forces Veterans Association, who served in MTBs 243 and 647 in the Adriatic, once again led the return party for the annual commemorations. The numbers of CF veterans have sadly but understandably diminished over the years but Reg Ellis (MTBs 242 and 409) continues as a stalwart attendee and was supported by John Rivett (RML 500) and Freddie Nicol, an RAF Hurricane pilot operating from Vis. All were supported by family and friends and, on this occasion, by CFHT Trustees William Dreyer, Miles Robinson and Trevor Robotham, with their wives. Sadly, veteran John Rivett passed away just a few weeks after the visit and Commander Roy Cook NTC, who with his wife has supported many visits to Vis, died in September.

Once again the commemorative activity, principally on 28 June, was attended by the British Ambassador from Zagreb, HE David Slinn, the serving current British Defence Attaché Colonel Tim Bakewell RM and two previous Military Attaches in that post; an indication of the feeling of support felt by the Embassy team. They were supported by a delegation from Croatian Naval Forces and representatives of the local government of Vis and Komiza. Commemorative events were held at the British Cemetery near Kut, the RAF memorial close to the wartime airfield in the centre of Vis and on the jetty at Komiza, the home of the Coastal Forces operating forces in the war where wreaths were thrown into the sea, in traditional naval fashion.

The visit this year was enhanced by the development of a Coastal Forces exhibition in Fort George, on the headland close to Vis Harbour. The extremely imposing fortress, which was developed for protection of the island in Napoleonic times, is now under restoration and is to be used in several ways as a visitor attraction. The development team wanted to feature the various phases of history of the island and CFHT provided several items of memorabilia for display, in addition to other personal items provided by Peter Bickmore. There was no official opening of this display, as predicted in the last Newsletter, but veterans and supporters were welcomed to tour the fort and were given generous hospitality by William Winkel and Ed Gates and their development team.

The British representatives in Croatia are committed to continue this commemorative event as long as British veterans and their families continue to attend.



Veterans Peter Bickmore, Reg Ellis, and the late John Rivett at the Memorial to the World War II Yugoslavian Partisans



Komiza Jetty – the Embassy Team



Commemorations Komiza Jetty

CLANDESTINE OPERATIONS

The scene was set in issue 13 of the Newsletter which described the extensive involvement of Coastal Forces in clandestine operations and the methods and difficulties associated with these important operations. Although many vessels became involved in these very dangerous activities throughout the war, one particular flotilla was dedicated to this task, that being the 15th MGB flotilla. Initially formed at Dartmouth in February 1944 and working within Naval Intelligence under the Deputy Director Operations Division (Irregular), the flotilla also operated from Lerwick for operations to the Norwegian coast. The flotilla comprised MGBs 502 (Senior Officer), 503, 318 and 718, with MASB 36. MGB 718's first clandestine venture, "Operation Scarf" took place from Dartmouth and was to establish the pattern for many others. These accounts are taken from the personal memories of the late Charles Milner, her Leading Telegraphist throughout her wartime commission.



The ships company of MTB 718 showing L/Tel Charles Milner (front row far left) and the officers, from left to right Sub Lt. Alan Wade (Nav.), Lt. Ronnie Seddon (CO) and Lt. Guy Hamilton (First Lt) Alan Wade had replaced John Townsend late in the commission.

OPERATION SCARF

On 15 April MGB 718 in company with and under the command of the Senior officer, Lt. Cdr. Peter Williams RNVR in MGB 502, sailed for Beg-an-Fry, north-east of Morlaix on the French coast. MGB 502 carried six SOE agents while 718 carried the baggage. Most importantly, the boats were complemented with a specialist navigator Lt. MP Salmond RNR. A 20.00 departure from Dartmouth at 20 knots put the group at Les Bouf rocks off Beg-an-Fry by 01.53. A reduced speed and reduced noise were obviously essential as they approached an anchor point three-quarters of a mile off shore. Six surf boats left for the "pin-point" ashore with the agents and baggage, which were put safely in the hands of the "Var" resistance organisation. On the return the surf boats had embarked six men, three women and one small boy. Amongst

the escapees were Erwin Deman, in charge of the SOE VAR line, responsible for evacuating agents and Allied airmen. Two of the ladies were Suzanne Warengem and Blanche Charlet, both SOE agents who had escaped from the infamous Castres prison where the Germans held hostages from whom they would select a number to be executed as reprisals for attacks on their forces. With a departure at 03.36 enemy LCTs or gun-coasters were unfortunately sighted visually and attempts to confuse them failed which resulted in a burst of enemy fire. The clandestine force did not respond, continuing to act "friendly" and made a stealthy retreat. Able Seaman William Sandalls was badly hurt by the enemy fire and died almost immediately. The two boats arrived back in Dartmouth at 08.45 thus ending MGB 718's first clandestine venture. The crew now had a certain knowledge that their work was a dangerous business which relied on a combination of great professional skill and even greater good-luck. Nevertheless, the operation was typical of many more to come, each with its own individual degree of danger and action.

OPERATION CYGNUS

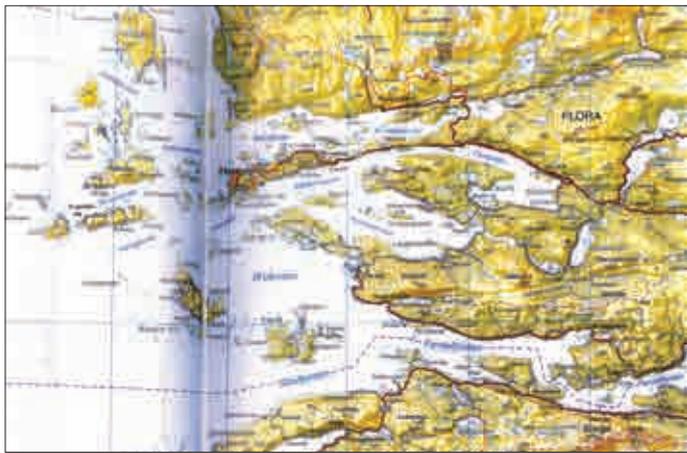
In May 1944 MTB 718's first venture to the Norwegian coast occurred shortly after Operation Scarf and, once again, it was typical of several others which were to follow. First MTB 718 had to undertake the lengthy journey from Dartmouth to Lerwick in the Shetlands, a journey of 850 miles via Holyhead and Oban, with the officers onboard recording only two and a half hours sleep per night during the three day voyage. Their passage through the Caledonian Canal was slightly impeded by the resident Scottish lock keeper who refused to allow a transit during night hours, despite the necessities of war, and who made the boat wait until 0500 next day. The journey then continued to Inverness and Lerwick.

Once again MTB 718 was to carry the specialist Navigating Officer, Lieutenant Salmond who had served them so well on Operation scarf, and on this occasion they carried a Norwegian party including a Lieutenant (Interpreter), Petty Officer (Pilot) and four ratings from the Norwegian MFV Flotilla at Peterhead to act as surf-boat crews. Due to the long distance to be covered a deck cargo of 1000 gallons of 100 octane petrol would be carried in 4 gallon jerry-cans.

An 18 knot passage in rain and with constant fuel management problems eventually brought MTB 718 to its destination off Batalden on the Norwegian Coast. In those latitudes in May there is no darkness and it was only fog that gave the boat cover from the sight of the enemy. One can only envisage the navigational difficulties around the rocks, inlets, islands and fjords of the Norwegian Coast, as shown in the picture of that section of the Norwegian coast. Their Norwegian Petty Officer pilot, Ole Hovden, a fisherman from a nearby



MTB 718



Map of Norway – reflecting navigational difficulties of coast.

island, proved his worth in keeping the boat both safe and in the right place. Their rendezvous with a small motor boat carrying two agents and a family of nine was successful, the motor-boat was holed and sunk and MTB 718 made its departure. The two SIS agents Dagfinn Ulriksen and Ivar Moller had operated a radio link from Skorpa, which had become compromised. The family were that of Saron Karstensen, the Postmaster on the island of Fanoy, whose support for Norwegian resistance had put them in a dangerous position. Operations Scarf and Cygnus were the first for MTB 718 and, although typical of this clandestine activity, they were to be followed by several more dangerous and eventful episodes of which we hope to write in future Newsletters.

NORWEGIAN OPERATIONS

The trust was recently contacted by Johan Aakre, who is the son of a former Norwegian SOE agent and who knew three of the SIS agents that MGB 718 was subsequently to pick up at Egersund in 1945. He is providing valuable historical information. He is also in possession of film and pictures obtained after the war from the office of the German Harbour captain at Egersund. Some of these are shown in this article,

MTB 718 had several drop-off and pick-up points in the Egersund area and Johan Aakre has identified one of the caves used for hiding agents. This is described as a magnificent cathedral type place and it was used by four agents which were picked up by Lt. Guy Hamilton in MTB 718. Johan Aakre has proposed that a joint effort should be made to establish a memorial on that site and the Trust is actively liaising on this proposal. The photographs show the cave and the German presence in Egersund Harbour.



Agent photograph of E-Boats in harbour



Agent photograph of enemy warship



Agent rendezvous cave

PERSONAL ACCOUNT

The following is an adaptation from personal memoirs of the late Stan Cross who served in MTB 666. Stan will be remembered by many as a stalwart supported of the CFVA Southern Branch.

THE REVENGE OF THE 666

By Stan Cross

MTB 666 was lost off the Dutch coast on the night of 5/6 June 1944. She was part of the 58th MTB Flotilla operating out of Lowestoft on the East Coast and the time of her last action was shortly after the Normandy Landings had begun. The flotilla left Lowestoft around 1900 on the evening of 5 June and proceeded to the coast of Holland in search of enemy convoys in what was fertile hunting grounds for the Royal Navy's MTBs. A convoy was spotted just after midnight near the Dutch port of IJmuiden and the flotilla attacked with torpedoes, sinking three enemy ships. This was followed by an intense exchange of gunfire both from a shore battery and from two heavily armed trawlers, one on each side of MTB 666. They were using a lot of their new anti-personnel shells and 666 was hit several times. All engines had stopped, there was a fire in the engine room, and we were getting an increasing list to port. Our guns were also out of action owing to lack of power from the engine room.

After what appeared to be ages, but must have been only minutes, the trawlers ceased firing, but they held their stations. When two of our flotilla tried to reach us to give us aid, the German trawlers left to meet them and presumably to join in the fray. The respite must have given our Skipper Lieutenant-Commander D.N. Buller time to ascertain casualties and damage. With at least fourteen men requiring hospital treatment, some very urgent, and a boat that could not defend itself and which appeared to be sinking while also being on fire, the order 'abandon ship' was given. It seemed like a lifetime in the water before we were picked up by a German armed trawler. It was cold, I will never forget but the Germans did what they could for us while they also had a lot of their own wounded to attend to. It was while on board the German trawler that I saw Lieutenant Clive MacIntryre RN; he with Lieutenant James Linley RNVR had been onboard MTB 666 just for a trip on a 'safe boat'. I'm afraid we let them down especially as I understand that Lieutenant MacIntryre had just been passed fit for sea after being ill and was going on leave as soon as he got back.

At that moment he was lying on a top bunk in the seaman's mess with a hole the size of a saucer in his back. What beat me was that he was still as cheerful as if he had just cut a finger. Eventually he was to be in the same hospital as myself and survivors and at times he had us in fits of laughter. By the time we reached IJmuiden it was daylight.

Those who were able to walk were taken away, I believe to an empty school room. The remainder of us were put into the back of lorries with straw to lie on, a most uncomfortable journey to hospital. The German hospital staff looked after us reasonably well. It was the guards that I did not care for. They were from the Herman Göring Regiment.

When the order to abandon ship had been given the crew had set scuttling charges that were meant to sink the boat 20 minutes after the charges were set thereby preventing it from falling into enemy hands. Something clearly went wrong, the explosions never happened and soon the Germans boarded the 666 and took her in tow while another enemy ship picked up the crew. By this time the rest of the flotilla was heading back to Lowestoft but not without further loss of life. A New Zealand officer on the bridge of the Leader's boat was killed when a shell hit the boat, and the skipper of the MTB 723, Archie MacDougal, was killed as an enemy shell hit the bridge of his boat and another officer was wounded. The New Zealander was buried at sea a few days later, just outside the port of Lowestoft, with the base Padre holding the ceremony.

Meanwhile, the Germans had towed the 666 into the Dutch port of Ymuiden blissfully unaware of the unexploded scuttling charges, and as the boat entered the harbour some of the explosions occurred sinking the 666 in shallow water. The Germans had treasured the capture of the boat and were determined to salvage it and ordered the harbour-master, a Dutchman, to lift the boat with a crane and secure it in one of the Pens that they used to shelter their own boats from Allied bombing. Like the rest of the Dutch people the harbour-master was reluctant to assist the German occupiers of his country, but in the circumstances had no alternative. He ordered the crane operator to lift the boat out of the water and place it in a Pen. In doing so the crane operator managed to inflict further damage to the boat, but she was put in a pen where she was locked up. What the Germans seemed to have forgotten was that these types of MTBs carried five thousand gallons of 100 octane gasoline, the most volatile gasoline there was. In addition the fuel was leaking due to the damage done by the shell which, had penetrated the engine room during the action. About 0700 the next morning someone switched on a light in the Pen and blew the 666 to pieces. The explosion also destroyed the other Pens and the German torpedo boats that were located therein. The Pens were never used again, and the 666 had had its revenge. About 30 years later the harbour-master told this story to his son who urged him to write the event down and that is how we came to know the full story about the revenge of the MTB 666.

There was a further bizarre twist to this story. On the day of our departure for this operation MTB 666 was to have been put in a boat-yard in Lowestoft for repairs. To that end the



MTB 666 after capture with Germans examining the guns.

Skipper had ordered that the boat be taken up the river to the yard. When we had reached the yard the crew were ordered to remove the guns from the boat. One of our seamen had a dog on board and when they tied up at the boat-yard jetty the dog went ashore and was running around the boat-yard. About an hour later the Skipper returned to say that the flotilla was going to sea that night and he wanted 666 to go with them and he ordered that the guns be reinstalled. However, when the time came to leave the owner of the dog attempted to get him back onboard but he refused to leave the yard and no amount of coaxing would change its mind. It was the custom in Lowestoft that when a flotilla left to go to sea the senior officer in charge of the base would stand at the end of the jetty and salute the boats as they left. This night was to be a little different, the officer was there saluting the flotilla alright and standing beside him was the dog.

MINESWEEPING

The following is an edited version of a letter from Derek Gwyther Jones, Lt. RNVR, who was the Navigating officer of ML 250 and CO of HDML 1385. He was involved in Operation Calendar and the minesweeping operations in the Aegean, He was responding to the article in Newsletter 14.

“I was surprised that the Coastal Forces Newsletter 14, May 2014, made no mention of the 19th ML Flotilla which was adapted to sweep mines and go ahead of the Minesweepers on D-Day. On 6 June ML 250, commanded by Lt. John Hearder with myself as navigator headed for the most Easterly channel, which was being prepared for bombarding ships, but not for Landing Craft.

The role of Coastal Forces Minesweeping seems to have taken a back-seat in the recorded history. Perhaps one of the more spectacular mine sweeping operations was Operation Calendar in November 1944, sweeping along the coasts of Belgium and Holland and up the river Scheldt to Antwerp, to allow supplies to

reach the advancing Allied Forces. A large force of minesweepers was led by the 19th ML Flotilla and it is believed that around 260 mines were swept in the most dangerous conditions.”

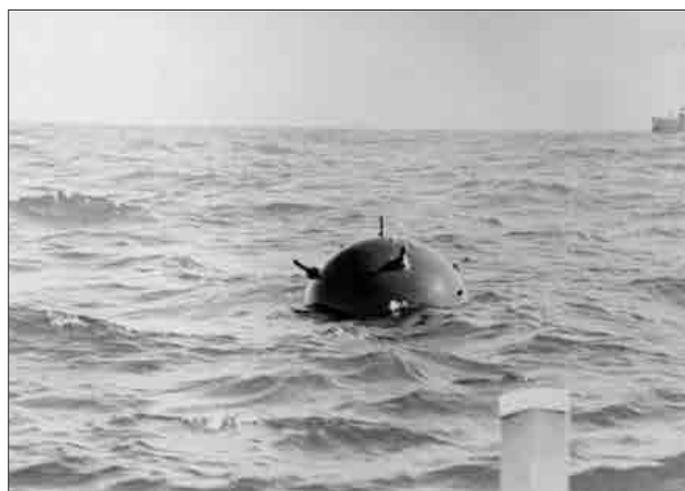
Responding to this prompt, the following is an edited personal account from the late Adrian Martin MBE, VRD * giving an insight to Coastal Forces Minesweeping operations.

Memories of a Minesweeping War

Finishing high up the order on my CW course late in 1942, I was invited to choose the type of ship in which I would like to serve and I chose Coastal Forces. So it was I got my first job as 1st Lt of ML216, a B class Fairmile. Joining at Lowestoft to find she was being converted for magnetic and acoustic sweeping, and knowing precisely nothing of these arts, I got a week's training at Port Edgar and then reported back to my Canadian CO for duty. Our job was to keep the East Coast convoy routes clear and to sink any floating mines as and when reported. It turned out my CO had not been home since 1939 and so on a trip to London he complained to a friend at the Admiralty. Their response was to put him on the next plane to Canada, leaving me to take the ship to sea for our routine sweeping tasks. The fact Captain M/S had not been informed came as some surprise a few weeks later when I was appointed 'in command' at the ripe old age of nearly 21, the former CO never being seen again!

As far as I know, 216 was one of very few Fairmile Bs to be fitted with acoustic and magnetic minesweeping gear. The acoustic gear consisted of a very large and heavy bucket-shaped box towed beneath the ship with a metal hammer the noise from which could detonate mines as far as 2 miles ahead, whilst that to deal with magnetic mines consisted of two very long wires towed astern to create an electro-magnetic field, fed by umpteen heavy-duty batteries which in turn were charged from a Ford V8 engine carried for the purpose. A collection of light weapons were also fitted to ward off air attacks. These included two Oerlikons, a grenade throwing Holman projector (a design originally dating from the 19th century) and two wire-carrying-rocket launchers plus, at the Admiralty's insistence, smoke-making gear. Due to lack of space the mortar for these flares had to be fitted on the deck above the fuel tank space – in spite of the obvious danger involved.

And so our war continued until, in September 1944, we were ordered to clear the approaches and harbour at Ostend. Though still in retreating German hands, it was shortly to become a major strategic port for supplying Allied Forces ashore. I pointed out to my boss that this was most likely a job for contact mine clearance, a task for which my vessel was not equipped. However, I was told intelligence indicated no such threat existed, so off we sailed. On 19 September we duly hit a contact mine, the bows were blown away as far aft as the bridge but luckily the engine room bulkhead held. By chance I found a horn of the mine by the Oerlikon. I and four



ABOVE *A floating Contact Mine*

LEFT *Clearing a beached submersible Mine*

volunteers remained aboard while the rest of the crew were rescued by sister ships. There were no fatal casualties. With three of the seven watertight compartments holding, it was decided to tow 216 away from the scene. However, the Fleet Sweeper taking us in tow was a little too eager and 216 began to take on more water and eventually foundered, sadly, when close to safety off Margate.

We had been taken off just in time and later landed at Harwich, where the Captain asked "What went wrong?" I told him we hit a contact mine but he said that was impossible as there weren't any in the area. So when I showed him the horn he said he would get it looked at by experts. – I did not see it again! However, the Admiral was more sympathetic and said he would ensure I got a cushy appointment next.

After survivor's leave I joined the Malta-bound troopship *Ranchi*, along with hundreds of WAAFs who unfortunately suffered from seasickness for the whole trip. In Malta I was told they were to find me "a cushy job", so I was to command the minesweeping ML 493 at Ancona. When I joined, after a somewhat tortuous journey by sea and land, I found she was fitted for contact minesweeping, of which I knew nothing! However, after some swotting up, we managed to sweep all the way up the coast of Yugoslavia northward from Zara, in amongst the Dalmatian islands and eventually up as far as Trieste and even round to Venice where the Grand Canal had yet to be made safe. In Yugoslavia we frequently found the partisans to be quite unfriendly so had to rely on stores and fuel brought over from Italy. In Ancona just before VE Day, we were ordered to escort a large and vital tanker to Venice through a channel we ourselves had swept. But, on the day of sailing, the enemy surrendered, so I had to stay sober to ensure the supplies arrived safely and I was very relieved to complete that journey successfully. Watching a film ashore in Venice just afterwards I had a premonition my ship had been in collision. So I left the cinema to find HMS *Magpie* had indeed made a large hole in 493 when trying to turn around in the Grand

Canal. We had to go to Trieste for repairs in a floating dock and ships were asked to watch out for us, a damaged ML, on the way. The weather got bad and I had to turn head to sea just as Patsy, the ship's bitch, decided to have her pups! A nearby destroyer asked if I needed assistance and when I explained my change of course he responded, "That's nothing, I've been having kittens for ages"!

We were lucky enough to be in Ancona when the enemy E-Boats arrived to surrender, a happy occasion for us all. After the war ended the sweeping of course had to continue for some time and the Americans lent us some 'Blimps', small airships, who flew ahead of us to spot mines in the very clear water of those areas. But when they did so it was quite difficult to turn quickly enough to get clear with a long sweep towed astern – a quite frightening business. The other hazard was the 'Bora', a very strong gale which blew up in minutes but could last for days and made the harbours not only uncomfortable, but also dangerous if you were at anchor or, worse, moored alongside. Indeed, sometimes we had to put to sea in order to ride out these storms safely.

We ended our sweeping career in the Northern Adriatic, doing our best to clear some pretty small harbours in spite of a lack of charts, and even using some ex-German gear occasionally, because it was lighter and thus easier, and safer, in shallow waters. Over this period we made frequent visits to Italy for stores and spares and, sailors being sailors, the occasional local lady was to be found having spent the night aboard. Word reached the local Admiral, who was not amused, and I was one of the unfortunate COs selected for 'logging' as one of my quartermasters had been found with a girl in his bunk one morning! The entry was made in 493's Ship's Log in beautiful copper-plate writing. I felt this needed a celebration and sent the appropriate signal to my fellow COs for the following lunchtime. Unhappily my signalman had sent the signal to everybody in the harbour, including the Admiral!

Our final efforts involved some sweeping in Bizerta where we were given so-called accurate positions of a minefield but we found no mines. It turned out that they had all been fitted with soluble plugs and thus made harmless some months before our arrival! Eventually we were ordered back to Malta but suffered an engine failure during the passage. As there was a long queue for the floating docks when we arrived, the decision was made for ML 493 to be paid-off and her crew sent home for demob.

A quite colourful troopship voyage to Marseilles was followed by my being put in charge of some 900 ratings for the overland return, via Paris, to Calais; though how many actually arrived I have no idea! Equally, having been told that keeping a personal diary was strictly prohibited, I also have no idea how many mines I had been responsible for sweeping, but I do know there was one we dealt with in a very dramatic manner – in Ostend harbour!

With thanks to Adrian Martin MBE RD*

LIVES IN BRIEF

SIR OWEN WOODHOUSE KBE, DSC, ONZ

Owen Woodhouse, a New Zealander, served as a Lieutenant in MTBs in the Adriatic. In autumn 1944 he was in command of MTB 85 in the 24th Flotilla, based at Ancona, carrying out clandestine operations on the Istrian Peninsular and later that year he was involved in landing Special Forces at Vignole, Venice. His last mission in MTB 85, however, nearly ended in disaster. Woodhouse sailed from Bari in company with MTB 97 to land two politicians and a Special Forces team in Albania but they were driven back by bad weather. A second attempt resulted in MTB 85's engines failing, a leak in the engine room hull, all her electrics shorted, stuck in forward gear and her bilge pumps failed. It was only by rigging a rudimentary sail that he was able to sail away from the Albanian coast until he was taken under tow. In January 1945 he was given command of the American built MTB410 in the newly formed 28th Flotilla which undertook 11 attacks on German forces and shipping without any loss to the flotilla. Woodhouse was awarded the DSC for his gallantry and skill in the Adriatic. On his return to New Zealand after the war he resumed his legal profession. In 1961 he was appointed judge of the Supreme Court and subsequently to the Court of Appeal where he was President, New Zealand's highest judicial office. He chaired the Royal Commission on Accident Compensation in New Zealand.

DAVID (JASPER) COBB

David Cobb served as a First Lieutenant in Atlantic Convoys in the early 1940s and subsequently in MTBs between 1943 and 1945. He commanded MTBs 66, 346 at St Christopher and 246. Post war he became a very talented and prominent marine artist and served as the President of the Royal Society of Marine Artists. Although he produced a broad spectrum of marine art, a good many of his paintings were of Coastal Forces craft. Commencing his career in Newlyn he subsequently moved to the Sussex village of Itchenor and then Brockenhurst in the New Forest, where he lived with his wife Jean, herself a prominent portrait painter.

STAN CROSS

Stan Cross served in Coastal Forces as an Able Seaman and joined MTB 666 on completion of her build in June 1943. Post war he described the boat's number, 666, as the sign of the devil, perhaps with good cause. On the night of 4 / 5 July 1943 the boat was sunk close to the coast of Holland, off IJmuiden, after an engagement with enemy surface forces. The action resulted in the award of a DSC for the Commanding Officer, three DSMs and three Mention in Despatches. There was a severe loss of lift but Stan was rescued by an enemy surface vessel and he remained as a Prisoner of War for the duration of the war. As Allied Forces liberated the POWs in May 1945, Stan found himself encountering a Concentration Camp, close to his prison camp, an experience the memory of which remained with him throughout his life. Post war he worked as a maintenance engineer and was a staunch member of the Coastal Forces Veterans Association, once the organisation had been formed. Many will remember his service as the Standard Bearer at the Hornet Remembrance Service for many years.

GEORGE (JIMMY) JAMES DSC

Jimmy James served in the 7th and 21st MTB Flotillas in the Mediterranean and was awarded the DSC for his part in the sinking of fifteen enemy ships in the Gulf of Genoa in 1944 and 1945 while in command of MTB 378. He was subsequently Mentioned in Despatches for further actions in that area during August and September 1945. During one of these actions he approached the enemy to within 700 yards while under intense fire from five F-Lighters, successfully securing a hit. Post war he worked for Electrolux becoming the company's very successful Managing Director and until recent years he was always a strong supporter of Coastal Forces veteran events.

ROY COOK

It is with sadness that we announce the death of Commander Roy Cook of the Nautical Training Corp, who with his young cadets has been a staunch and loyal supporter of Trust events including the Hornet Remembrance Service.

BRIEF NEWS & FEEDBACK

!!!STOP PRESS!!!

COASTAL FORCES FILM

The Trust is now well advanced with the planning for the production of a Coastal Forces film for television. This is being supported by John Lloyd, the well known television producer of several acclaimed programmes. John is the son of Harpy Lloyd DSC a prominent and highly decorated MTB commander in World War II.

Planning is proceeding well and expectations are high. It is hoped that we will be able to report positively on the continuing progress on this project and give an outline of the concept in our Spring issue of the Newsletter.

ROYAL CONNECTIONS

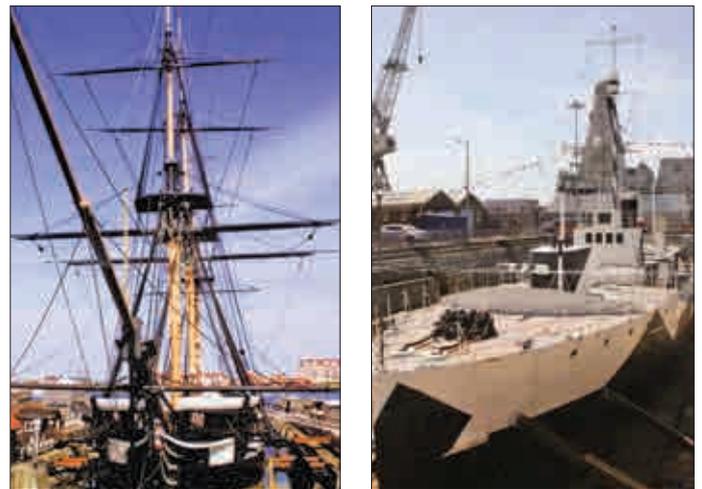
Our picture shows King George V while in command of a "Torpedo Boat" at Portsmouth in the early 1900s. Although clearly a very different and much larger boat than those we recognise as MTBs it nevertheless gives a very interesting royal connection with torpedo warfare.



King George V during his career as a Naval Officer in command of a Torpedo boat in Portsmouth

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE ROYAL NAVY (NMRN)

The new exhibition of 20th Century naval history in the NMRN opened to visitors earlier this year and, in addition, two significant British ships have been added to the Museum's collection. These are HMS *Trincomalee*, Britain's oldest warship, and HMS *M33*, the First World War Monitor, a survivor from Gallipoli. These additions add to the ever-growing collection of historic ships under the Museum's care, which includes the world famous HMS *Victory*, HMS *Caroline*, the sole survivor from the Battle of Jutland in 1916 and the newly refurbished HMS *Alliance*, the UK's only surviving World War II era submarine. As previously stated in the Newsletter, MTB 71 will be added to this collection as the first of the boats which will be the focus of the Coastal Forces exhibition and, additionally, the Museum has already acquired MTB 331, a Second World War boat initially built for the Thai Navy.



HMS Trincomalee and HMS M33

CORRECTIONS

It is with apologies that we must correct the following mistakes in Newsletter 14. Our Trustee and Finance Director Miles Robinson was referred to as Miles Robertson in one place. Apologies.

In The Life in Brief on Hugh Arnold the reference to Cherbourg Harbour should have read St Nazaire.



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IN MEMORIAM

WE SAY FAREWELL TO:

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Charles Ansfeld	CFVA 565	John M Lloyd	CFVA 685
Gerald Charles Baker	CFVA 1345	William Maher	CFVA 2513
David Beavis		Adrian Martin MBE, RD*	
Douglas Bradshaw	CFVA 2297	John E Rivett	CFVA 1402
Alan Carr		Colin W Sears	CFVA 1180
David (Jasper) Cobb		Charlie Smorthit	CFVa 1437
Roy Cook NTC		Basil Styles	CFVA 2949
Stan Cross	CFVA 112	Thomas H Stewart	CFVA 2716
Peter Richard Davis DSC	CFVA 121	Basil Styles	CFVA 2949
Dennis Edwards	CFVA 1176	Eric Tyrrell	CFVA 3189
Sidney W Farrow	CFVA 362	John Williamson	CFVA 3326
David G Felce		Harry Winter	CFVA 3410
William (Bill) Gale	CFVA 3264	Sir Owen Woodhouse KBE, DSC, ONZ	
George PH (Jimmy) James DSC	CFVA 986		

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Objectives 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 therestoration and permanent display, for public benefit, of Coastal Forces craft together with relevant artefacts, records and memorabilia relating to such craft, and those who served therein.