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# NEWSLETTER



*The P2000 Royal Navy Squadron with HDML 1387 (HMS Medusa) and MGB 81 in the lead.*

In this Newsletter we, once again, report on the Trust's progress in pursuing its aim to establish a permanent Exhibition. Supporting this, we have news of several other initiatives which the Trust is undertaking to ensure that the last of our historic Coastal Forces craft are saved. We have been especially pleased to receive interesting feedback on two of the previous articles published in Newsletter 20 and we have published these responses, which we hope will add additional information and interest to the original articles. It would be remiss not to include a tribute to the WRNS in this their Centenary year. It is important to give recognition and credit to the women serving in Coastal Forces who made such a vital contribution in shore support for those serving at sea. We have two main articles, one on the important part played by the Royal Netherlands Navy in Coastal Forces operations in World War II and a second on the development and threat of the German Schnellboot, which was to become such focus of Coastal Forces operations. Our articles on prominent veterans always generate a good deal of interest from readers and the two included in this issue are slightly expanded to satisfy that interest. Both had very different experiences in Coastal Forces but each made a vital contribution. Finally, we have again included the pro-forma for legacy contributions to the Trust for those who feel able to offer this particular support.

Captain Trevor Robotham Royal Navy  
EDITOR

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## CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

I am pleased to report that the metaphoric traffic lights on our road to delivering the Exhibition Project are pretty much green and the odd flicker of amber is nothing which we will not be able to deal with – touch wood! The headline news is that the Libor Grant is now deposited in our bank account, thanks to much work by Trevor Robotham and Simon Haill in meeting the various Treasury rules for release of the money. BZ to them both. Another positive headline is that CMB 331, the last surviving 55ft CMB, has been acquired by the NMRN and is destined to be displayed alongside MTB 71 in our exhibition. More details on this and other exhibition news are elsewhere in the newsletter. On the wider Coastal Forces front, I would highlight that the Trust has funded the lift out and safe storage of MTB 219, pending further restoration. We send Paul Childs every good wish for this work. We continue to develop our relationship with the P2000 community and the First Patrol Boat Squadron. I was honoured to be the guest speaker at the P2000 Commanding Officer's

annual dinner this year and I am delighted that the Squadron Commander has agreed that he and his successors in post will be an Honorary Trustee of the CFHT. There is plenty to read in this newsletter and I am most grateful to the Editor for his tireless work. I hope you will take away the message that the CFHT remains very active and is particularly focussed on the Exhibition project which is getting ever closer to being a reality. On a sad note, we record the passing of one of the Trust's founding fathers, Reg Ellis who over many years made an enormous contribution to our work, especially with Veterans. I close with a continued plea for financial support for our activities. We need to keep the Trust alive to deliver on our aims and our fixed costs must be met before we can do anything else. Thank you for your support – it is greatly appreciated.

Vice Admiral Sir Paul Haddacks KCB  
CHAIRMAN

## BOATS ROUNDUP

### HMS MEDUSA (HDML 1387)

The activities of *Medusa* quite rightly feature prominently in our Newsletters as she continues to project the image of Coastal Forces to the public at large in many different ways. The early part of this year was dominated by her involvement in the making of the film "Dunkirk" which was released in cinemas in July. She made a major contribution to the film and, as a navigation guide ship for the landings on Omaha Beach on D Day, she fully justified her inclusion. She also had exposure on

the television history channel programme, "Combat Ships", shown on 5 March. In addition to her many activities her involvement in the support of Royal Navy events, both training and operational, has increased dramatically and a visit from the First Sea Lord firmly put the boat on the Royal Navy's map. All involved in *Medusa*, both crew and her many supporters, mourn the passing away of Brian Holmes, her longtime Coxswain. His enthusiasm and support for the boat and his deep knowledge of Coastal Forces will be most sadly missed.



*The First Sea Lord Admiral Sir Philip Jones KCB, ADC visits Medusa.*



*Apprentices working on the original CMB 4 at The International Boatbuilding College, Lowestoft, in the early 1980s.*

### **CMB 4**

Readers will recall that we previously reported that HM Treasury's Grant to the Portsmouth Naval Base Property Trust, to help establish its Heritage Memorial Flotilla, contained funding for PNBPT to build a working, sea-going replica of a World War I 40ft Coastal Motor Boat (CMB 4) with its revolutionary Thornycroft hull design. This vessel will be constructed by volunteers, veterans and students at the International Boatbuilding Training College, Portsmouth. Not only will this project require great boatbuilding skills, but it will preserve the history of these epic craft for future generations. The original CMB 4, veteran of the Konstradt raid in 1919, resides with the Imperial War Museum at their museum at Duxford. Once completed the replica CMB will form part of the Memorial Flotilla operated by PNBPT as a sea-going display. It is planned that she will be completed and launched after the centenary in 2019 of the historic action by Lieutenant Augustus Agar with the sinking of the Bolshevic cruiser *OLEG* off Kronstadt in the Baltic.

### **MTB 219**

In the last Newsletter we said that "readers will hear more about *MTB 219* in the coming months". We are now happy to report our progress in helping to save this historic vessel, which played a prominent part in attempts to foil the passage of the German Battleships *Scharnhorst*, *Gneisenau* and the cruiser *Prinz Eugen* in the 1942 "Channel Dash", as well as successfully taking part in many other actions. The boat is held privately by Paul Childs and family, who previously restored *HMS Gay Archer* to its former World War II glory. *MTB 219* has been lying in a fresh water canal at Bridgewater, Somerset for the last two years and has been deteriorating badly. Due to insufficient funds available for taking any kind of action with the boat and with very limited options for her future storage, the Childs family sought the help of CFHT. The Trust has now provided funding for the boat to be lifted out of the canal by crane and chocked-up ashore, pending further options for her restoration. This has undoubtedly saved this last remaining 71ft MTB of the 1941 build programme from becoming a wreck. We will report on further progress with the boat.



*MTB 219 being lifted out of its canal berth.*



*CMB 331.*

### **CMB 331**

It was always a hope to acquire a Coastal Motor Boat as a second boat in our planned Exhibition, to complement *MTB 71*. *CMB 331* had been in our sights for some time but its private ownership was a problem until a recent opportunity to purchase her became available. Funding of £6,000 was necessary, partly to meet the purchase price of the boat and partly to move her from her then home at Upper Hayford to a suitable temporary storage. Our partner, the National Museum of the Royal Navy launched an internet "crowd-funding" campaign to save the boat and more than 150 responded. In just three weeks the NMRN secured the £6,000 target. The campaign got a welcome boost from BAE Systems who donated an additional £1,000 just as the appeal closed. David Mitchard, BAE Systems Managing Director, said: "Preserving the heritage of our Armed Forces is an important part of BAE Systems investment in the community and we are delighted to provide the final sponsorship that will help save the *CMB 331* for generations to come. The National Museum of the Royal Navy plays an important role in protecting this heritage and the great reception this fundraising campaign received from the public shows how important the Royal Navy's historical roots are to our local community."

*CMB 331* is the last surviving Thornycroft 55ft. Coastal Motor Boat, based on a World War I design and built as a

Motor Torpedo Boat just prior to the start of World War II. The original 40ft CMBs designed by pioneering boat-builder John Thornycroft first saw action at the Zeebrugge Raid in April 1918. Those small 40ft. boats could only carry one small torpedo so, in 1916, Thornycroft designed the much larger 55ft. model which could carry two torpedoes at speeds of up to 41 knots. The larger boats saw action in the Baltic and Caspian Seas in 1919 and these boats remained effective right up to the Second World War. *CMB 331* was one of the last to be built, part of an order for the Philippines which was requisitioned for the Royal Navy in 1941. The Trust is delighted with the support of the NMRN to provide this important historical boat as an exhibit for the planned Coastal Forces Exhibition. The boat is currently stored with *MTB 71* at the Fleet Air Arm Museum in Yeovilton prior to it being moved to Gosport.



*A rare gathering of the P2000 Squadron in formation.*



*HMS Archer under the bows of HMS Queen Elizabeth.*



## THE P2000 FLOTILLA

The P2000 Flotilla continue to astound many with the scope of their adventurous activities and the breadth of experience they give their junior Commanding Officers as well as the young officers of the Royal Navy and cadet members of the University Royal Naval Units. The summer activities of *HMS Archer*, resident boat at Leith, are typical of the scope of their travels. In two deployments giving students from Universities on the Forth an extended insight into the Royal Navy, *HMS Archer* travelled 6,009 miles, visiting 45 different ports and six countries since departing from her home base of Leith in April. The highlight of her four-month double deployment was joining three other P2000s, *HM Ships Exploit, Ranger and Smiter*, harassing much larger NATO warships during this year's major NATO exercise, BALTOPS. That two week work-out was followed by a change of pace in Kiel and the world's

most famous yachting regatta. This was also attended by warships from around the world and approximately 400 visitors took the chance to look around the boat. Slipping from Kiel, she then joined *HMS Smiter* for passage around the Schleswig-Holstein coast to visit the German Naval College, Murwik Marineschule, the equivalent of BRNC Dartmouth. This was the first visit to the college by P2000 flotilla boats and it was extremely well received and was most interesting for the Royal Navy cadets to meet German naval contemporaries. Returning to Leith in mid-July, *Archer* then headed out for an eight day Highlands cruise, a trip down the Caledonian Canal and two days on Loch Ness. It was then in the Moray Firth that *Archer* encountered *HMS Queen Elizabeth* undergoing her sea trials, creating a unique picture of the Royal Navy's biggest and smallest vessels together.

She then represented the Royal Navy at the small port of Buckie for the unveiling of a memorial stone for Private George MacIntosh VC, who fought at Passchendaele. During this summer period her port visits have included Hamburg, Copenhagen, Antwerp and Amsterdam, and also a host of Scottish ports. Not bad for a 21-metre craft with limited range, a young crew of just five plus a dozen undergraduates!



*The P2000 Flotilla.*

## THE EXHIBITION PROJECT

The months since the May edition of the Newsletter have been dominated by the planning and administrative aspects associated with our Coastal Forces Exhibition at Priddy's Hard, Gosport. Our HM Treasury grant of £925,000 towards the Exhibition project came with a number of Governance requirements, particularly associated with the need for formal agreements with our two partners -The National Museum of the Royal Navy (NMRN) and the Portsmouth Naval Base Property Trust. (PNBPT) These have been achieved after considerable negotiation and the LIBOR Grant has now been received by the Trust. Invitations to Tender for the design of the Exhibition are being issued by the NMRN and the production of Conservation Management Plans are underway as the first stage of restoration for the two boats which are to be the focus of the Exhibition, *MTB 71* and *CMB 331*. The acquisition of *CMB 331* by the NMRN is reported in our Boats Roundup. It is possible that BAE Systems will provide support for the restoration of the boats, thanks to negotiations between the Company and the Director General NMRN. The way ahead also includes the need for additional planning approvals associated with the development of the Exhibition building at Priddy's Hard but resolution of these is well underway. With the planning moving ahead in this way, work on development of the Exhibition building is planned to start in June next year, completing by the end of the year. That will leave the way clear for establishing the Exhibition with a planned opening in June 2019. All involved in this Exhibition project are determined that this should be achieved.

### FEEDBACK

It is always a pleasure to receive feedback from readers and I am delighted to publish below letters we have received in response to articles in our last Newsletter, Number 20. Firstly in response to the article on Operation Jungle, the landing of Agents into the Baltic states, managed by the Royal Navy using German crews and ex E-boats. The following is from Commander Simon De Halpert Royal Navy.

*"I was particularly interested in "Operation Jungle" to insert Agents into Poland and the Baltic states and the mention of Lieutenant-Commander John Harvey-Jones, as his successor in this highly sensitive job was my father. We moved, as a family, to Hamburg in early 1952 and lived there for about two years. I was about 6 when we arrived and my brother 4 and a half and our sister was borne there. My father had an office in Hamburg, with a German secretary, fluent in English. She and her family often visited us in the UK for many years and she thought the comedy, 'Allo Allo' quite the funniest TV programme she had ever seen. Mention is made of Lieutenant Hans-Helmut Klose who was put in command of the 1st boat and subsequently the whole squadron. I remember him very well and he remained a very close family friend until his death. He became the the German Chief of Naval Staff and my brother saw him in Hamburg in 1991 when he was CO of HMS Campbelltown. I have a vivid memory of a night -time passage through the Kiel Canal on one of the E-boats, although I very much doubt whether an Agent was onboard. I have vague memories of strange people coming*



*The German E Boats S204 and S205 at Felixstowe.*

*to stay for a night or two before, presumably, they sailed through the Kiel Canal on their way to the Baltic coast. I understood later that their final run ashore was a night down the Reeperbahn. For most of them it was their final ever run-ashore. We left Hamburg in April 1954, staying briefly at Chipstead, Surrey, before moving to Waterlooville and then in 1968 to Petersfield. My father retired from the RN in 1957 and his final job was as Estates Manager at Bedales School, 1975-1985. He died in 2008 and my mother died in 2014.”*

Simon’s younger brother is Rear-Admiral Sir Jeremy De Halpert KCVO, CB.

The second feedback in response to the Operation Jungle article is from John Ascoli, a long standing CFHT Trustee and a past chairman.

*“Congratulations on the Operation Jungle article in the May Newsletter which I found fascinating, especially as I have an affinity with E boats. My father, Lt Cdr Hugh Ascoli DSC. RNVR took command of MTB 704 in August 1943 and became part of the 63<sup>rd</sup> Flotilla. Our Trust President Lord Strathcona and Mount Royal, at the time The Hon. Euan Howard, served in the same flotilla as 1st Lt of MTB 721. In May 1945 my father was selected to be one of the Coastal Forces officers escorting the two German E boats which had sailed from Wilhelmshaven, for Felixstowe, with the German Admiral on board, in order to hand over charts of their minefields. Instructed to rendezvous some miles out at South Falls, the British officers boarded; the white flags of surrender were struck and the White Ensigns hoisted. The E boats, S 204 and S*

*205 were the only survivors of eight relatively new boats. The written reports describe the boats being in a filthy condition of neglect, perhaps an indication of the recent slack discipline and morale in the German Navy. Most of the officers and crew were haughty and arrogant.*

*On 24 May my father assumed command of S205 with orders to take her to a number of ports where she could be further inspected and “shown off” to a whole range of interested parties. The original log book, now next to me on the desk, was turned into a visitors book and contains hundred of names from Admirals Dudley North and Jack Tovey and other senior officers plus a large number of well known names from Coastal Forces. S205 was powered by three Daimler Benz diesel engines with the log showing that she normally cruised at 35 knots and could achieve speeds of just over 40 knots if required. This was*

*considerably faster than a British Dog boat. Under the White Ensign, my father visited ports including Chatham, Greenwich, Sheerness, Ramsgate, Dover, Portsmouth, Portland and Plymouth. She was decommissioned at Wilhelmshaven in July 1945 although an ex E boat was in use through the early 1950s in the HMS Hornet Experimental or Trials Squadron, to test the then new Deltic engines.”*

Feedback was also received about the reference to the Bari incident in the article on Rear Admiral Morgan Morgan-Giles. That article referred to his involvement in the bombing of the harbour which resulted in the release of mustard gas. The following are edited notes supplied by Peter Bickmore who was serving in MTB 243 in Bari during the raid.

*“On 2 December, with a warm Italian autumn day, little notice was being taken of a German reconnaissance plane high in the sky flying over a harbour with all the unloading berths occupied and with more ships awaiting for empty berths to discharge cargo. This included a recently arrived convoy of fifteen ships being berthed alongside each other with their sterns to the harbour wall to await their turn for docking and unloading. The information supplied by that reconnaissance aircraft enabled a flight of some twenty German aircraft to attack the harbour at about 1930 that evening. The harbour was brilliantly lit with all the unloading activity taking place and the enemy’s first targets were the fifteen newly arrived ships lining the the harbour wall. This group included an oil tanker, ammunition ship and a ship carrying canisters containing chemicals. All were sunk in the first attack with disastrous consequences. MTB 243, in which I was serving, was*

detailed to scan the harbour and pick-up survivors. MTBs were never meant to be lifeboats and helping survivors out of the water was difficult. It was later reported that the operation to rescue survivors had by 0300 the next morning saved approaching fifty from both the water and damaged ships and these were ferried to hospital. It was during the early hours of that morning that we all developed some very serious blisters on our arms and our eyes became very sore, making it difficult to see. For me and many others who were there that night it remains a painful experience with memories of the many hundreds who did not survive. The hospital in Bari was fighting a losing battle to explain why many of the survivors were not responding to treatment and were dying. It was a massive security blanket put over the affair that prevented the circumstances and the existence of mustard chemicals in this war environment being revealed for 30 years, until publicly released in December 1973."

The second letter relating to the Bari incident is from Ken Lambert, son of a veteran who lost his father on that occasion.

"I would like to say how much I have enjoyed reading my first copy off the Newsletter, especially the article about Rear Admiral Sir Morgan Morgan-Giles and his involvement in the aftermath of the catastrophic air raid on the harbour in Bari on 2nd December 1943. It was in that raid that my father perished with the sinking of his ship, the SS Fort Athabaska. A lot of the damage was done because a number of ships were moored close together along the mole and the American ship the John L Motley was carrying ammunition and received a direct hit, causing a huge explosion. The SS Fort Athabaska soon became ablaze and two top secret German 1000 lb rocket bombs she was to carry



*Devastation in Bari Harbour.*

back to the UK exploded. Despite heroic efforts by the crew. Forty six of the 57 man crew were killed the ship sank within 5 minutes.

Many years later I contacted the War Graves Commission to enquire if there was a memorial in Bari to those lost in the disaster. I was informed that there wasn't but I discovered that a book on the incident, which explained about the release of the mustard gas, had been published in the USA although the sale of the book had been banned in the UK. The British Government directed that the gas symptoms were to be described and explained as Dermatitis. My investigation into this helped identify how my father died after having survived three trips to Russia and several across the Atlantic, both North and South, and helps me still after all these years. As a result of the Bari raid, over a thousand Allied servicemen and a similar number of civilians died."

The book referred to in this letter is titled, "Poisonous Inferno". No other details are known.

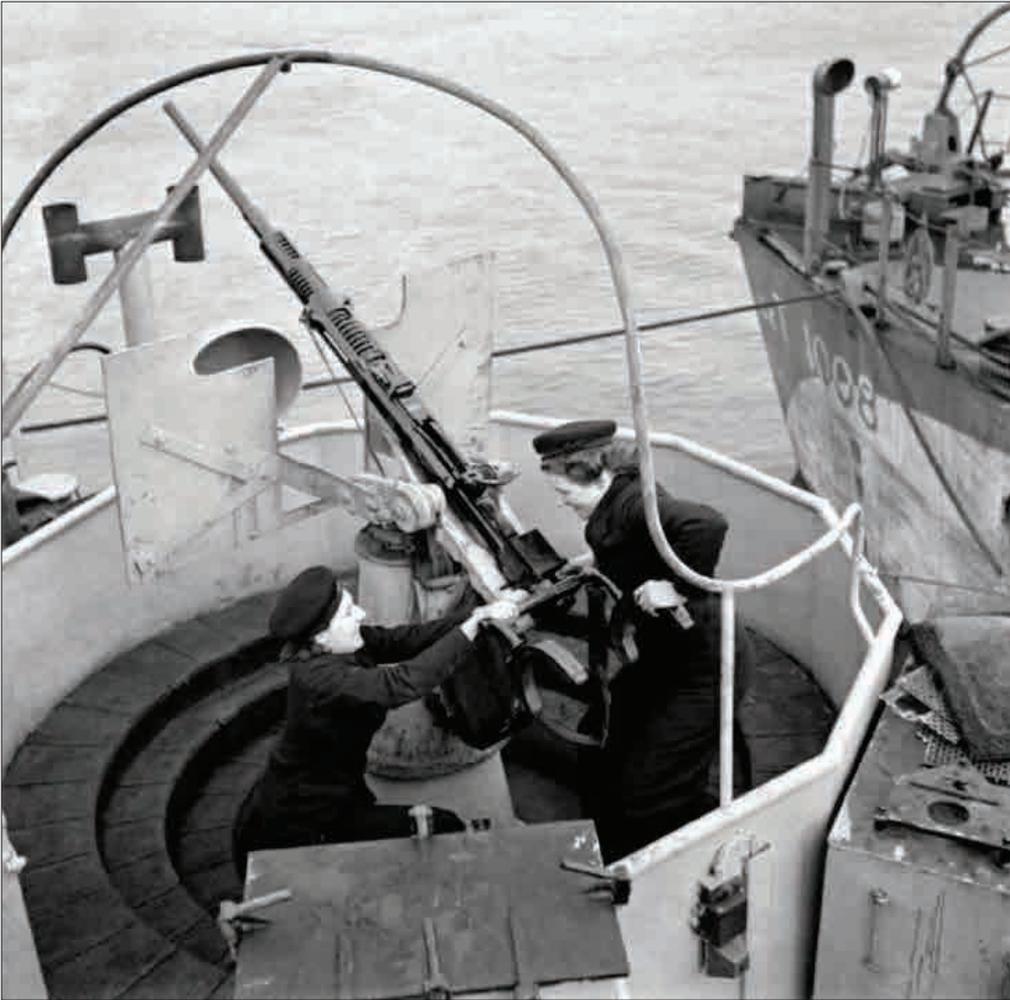
## THE CENTENARY OF THE WRNS – 2017

As many will be aware, the Women's Royal Naval Service was formed exactly 100 years ago, when they took on a number of roles in World War I, thus enabling more men to be released for sea service. After the war the Branch was disbanded, so it wasn't until war was again looming, in the late 1930s, that they were re-introduced. This was just as well, because by the time World War II began they had come to play a very major role within the Royal Navy. This time they featured not only in their previous posts in signal centres, administration offices,



*WRNS Inspection.*





*Wrens Servicing Oerlikon guns.*

kitchens and wardrooms throughout the Royal Navy's shore-bases, but now also in vital technical workshops of almost all Coastal Forces bases, both at home and abroad.

In many home ports they also provided the boats-crews who worked the harbours. A posting to Coastal Forces was extremely popular and much sought after by new volunteers. While the work was challenging and exhausting, the feeling of being part of a team taking the fight to the enemy was, in their own words, extremely rewarding. There are several references in the Trust's DVD (*A History of the Royal Navy's Coastal Forces*) of the splendid work the Wrens undertook, following crash technical training which enabled them to man a variety of technical posts. They became absolutely vital in the repair of the famously unreliable engines fitted in Coastal Forces craft in the early days of the war. They also had teams servicing guns, torpedoes, mines and depth charges, including the loading of these weapons onto the boats.

One thing they did not generally do, however, was to go to sea, at least not officially! So it was really quite special for our Newsletter No 10, published in May 2012, to feature an old wartime photograph of Wren Irene Jones standing on the stern of an MTB travelling at speed with other boats of the flotilla seen astern.

One must suppose she had managed to talk her way onboard during a trial or exercise trip from *HMS Midge*, the base at Great Yarmouth where she served. Very rare exceptions were made, however, for a small number of German-speaking Wren Telegraphists to go to sea in some of the larger escorts of the East Coast convoys in order to listen in on German voice radio so as to help in the convoys defence. But, so far as is known, this did not apply to CF craft. In March 1943 *HMS Midge*, the CF base at Great Yarmouth, was severely bombed and there were many casualties, sadly including the death of eight Wrens and with several more injured. With the closure of all the CF bases after the war, with the exception of *HMS Hornet*, the Wrens reverted to their peacetime roles within the Service. However, such was the loyalty within the ranks of those who had served in Coastal Forces that almost all the Wrens concerned joined the Coastal Forces Veterans Association

when it was formed in 1974. A measure of their affection of their time in Coastal Forces can be judged perhaps by the fact that, when this writer looked at his copy of the CFVA membership in 1996, every single page of the 80 pages within the booklet featured at least one ex-Wren member.

With thanks to Hugh Campbell



*Wrens servicing torpedoes.*

## THE GERMAN SCHNELLBOOTE

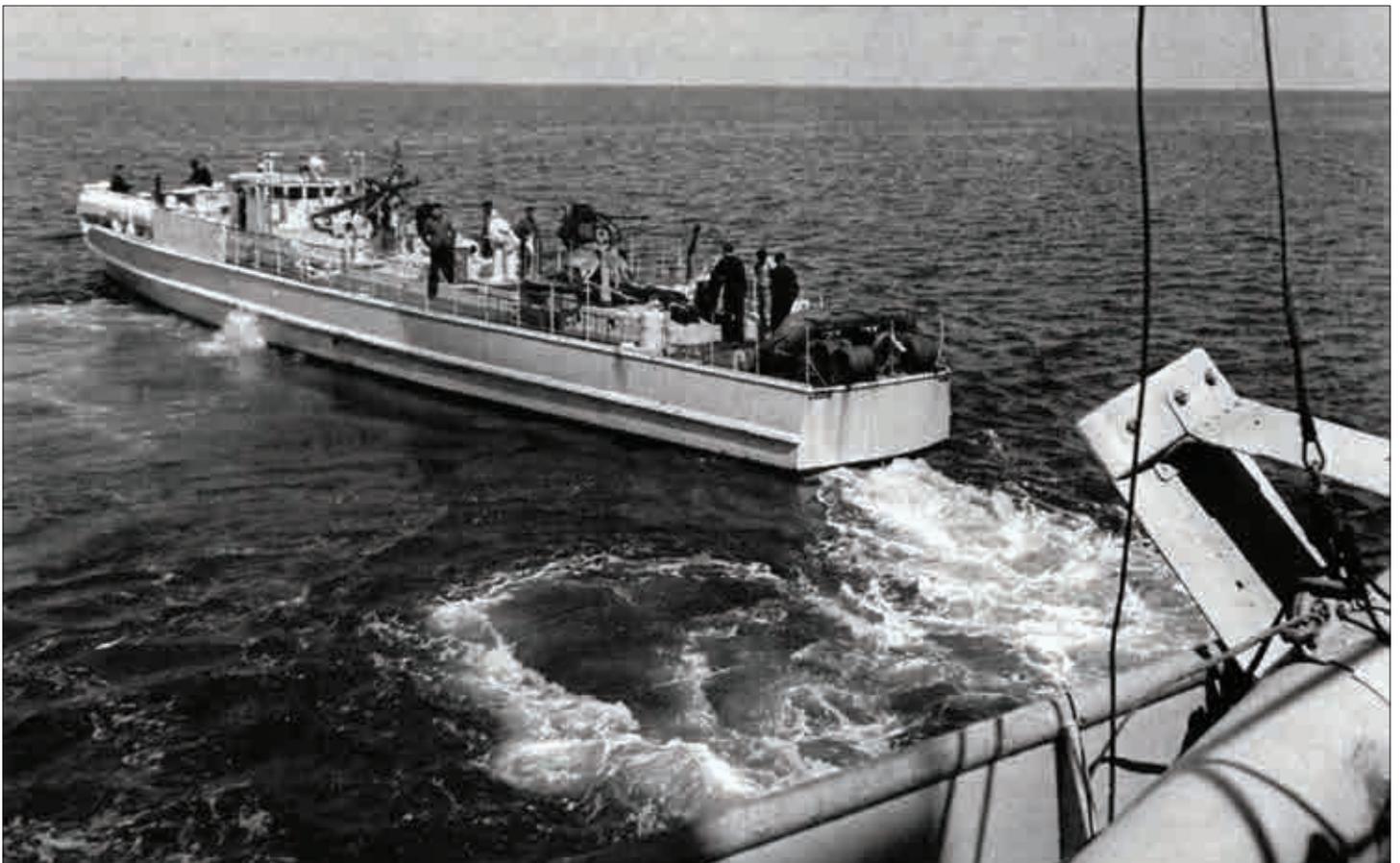


*Black Panther – symbol on the forecastle of E-Boat.*

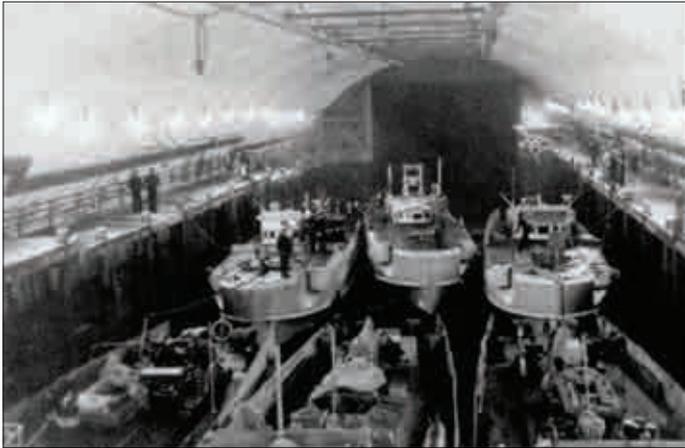
The German Schnellboote, always referred to by the British as E-boats, was to become a major and formidable adversary for Coastal Forces. These boats were, in many respects, vastly different to the small wooden craft of Coastal Forces and its development had been carefully managed in the decade leading to the outbreak of the Second World War.

In this article we will only consider the development of the boat and its early operational use and in following Newsletters give accounts of some of the German E-boat major engagements with Coastal Forces. Three basic factors made the development of the German S-boat arm possible: the torpedo as a self-contained weapon of devastating effect, the effectiveness of high speed torpedo boats in World War I and the rapid German development of high quality engines for small boats. Germany had played a major role in the development of small fast boats in World War I and they learnt lessons from both the Italians and British in the use of fast boats as attack craft. A German need for these craft came in the summer of 1916 when small fast attack craft were required to clear British anti-submarine nets at Zeebrugge and Ostend

and so allow German U-boats safe access and departure at these ports. After the First World War and the drastic reduction of the German fleet by the terms of the Versailles Agreement, only twelve 200-tonne torpedo boats were allowed to remain in use, in addition to a small quota of larger ships. However, German development of fast attack craft continued in secrecy under the premise that the craft were for civil use in the Travemunder Yachthafen AG, (Yacht Sporting League), the Neustadter Slip GmbH and the NAVIS shipping Company. All these organisations had feign reasons for the use of fast boats and all were supported by special "non-military" budgets. At the termination of the training of the supposed civilian crews, a kind of Master's Certificate was awarded and the experience gained coincided extensively with the knowledge necessary to operate the boats as fast attack craft, if so converted. By the early 1930s the pretence of the civilian use of these boats was disappearing and, by 1932 the classification S-boat had been introduced and a military Schnellbootshalfflotille (S-boat half-flotilla) had been established under the command of Kapitanleutnant Bey. Initially, they were not designated as torpedo boats as this would infringe their allowance for this type of craft. By 1935 the Reichsmarine had been renamed Kriegsmarine and old original boats were decommissioned in favour of more modern



*An S-boat leaving a depot ship.*



*Boats in Cherbourg bunker.*



*Roll-call in the bunker before sailing.*

boats driven by Daimler-Benz sixteen-cylinder four stroke diesel engines, replacing more troublesome MAN engines. All this development was taking place within full view of the British Admiralty and Government, at the same time as the Royal Navy's Coastal Forces had been reduced to a skeleton force.

At the outbreak of war two S-boat flotillas were in operation, comprising eight boats. Thirty three metres in length (approx) with a displacement of 100 tonnes (approx) their Daimler-Benz engines gave them speeds of up to 35 Knots. They had a relatively shallow draft at 1.4 metres and a range of around 600 nautical miles. A typical armament outfit consisted of: two torpedo tubes (plus two reload torpedoes), 2 or 3 x 2cm Machine guns, 6 to 8 depth charges and 6 mines. The average complement was two officers and 18 men with the right spread of skills. An additional enclosed Bridge facility was a great advantage over that of the open Bridge Coastal Forces craft. By the end of the war Germany had established 14 S-boat flotillas operating throughout all areas, from the Baltic to the Aegean. A total of 216 S-boats were built and 140 were lost. The casualties from S-boats were 767 dead, 620 wounded and 322 taken prisoner of war; a sober debit balance. Living conditions onboard were described as frugal and reports of poor cleanliness were confirmed when cockroach ridden boats

surrendered at Felixstowe and Gosport at the end of the war. After the war many opportunities were taken to de-brief German naval officers who had served in and operated E-boats. Extensive debriefings were conducted by Peter Scott and Donald Bradford, amongst others. The following is an extract from comments made by Donald Bradford on his interviews.

“During my stay in Flemsburg I had many opportunities of talking with some German officers of the E-boat flotillas, particularly Captain Penderson who had been Fuhrer der Schnellboote of the German Navy, our equivalent of Captain Coastal Forces. He and all the E-boat officers I spoke to were quite categorical about the superiority of their craft over the British MTB and MGB. They cited speed, low silhouette, better sea-keeping qualities, more reliable engines, better torpedo sights and non-inflammability of diesel fuel in support of their opinion. The facts of their argument were correct and the only things we had in our favour were the undoubted superiority of our gunnery armament and the most important factor of all, the seamanlike qualities of the English race. The sea is and always has been our heritage and our safeguard and there seems to be an in-bred affinity for the sea within the English character.”



*Korvettenkapitan Rudolf Petersen, at a flotilla parade in 1944.*

## THE ROYAL NETHERLANDS NAVY



*MGB 46 former TM51. INSTITUTE VOOR MARITIEME HISTORIE, S-GRAVENHAGE.*

The Dutch are a very proud maritime nation and it is of little surprise that the Royal Netherlands Navy (RNthN) was able to make a vital contribution to the Allied cause in World War II. The RNthN had experience in operating 55ft Thornycroft Coastal Motor Boats prior to the outbreak of war, particularly in the Dutch East Indies. Although these boats had been scrapped by 1940, the Dutch Government had plans for the building of a formidable force of 70ft MTBs. Once again these were destined for service overseas in protecting the Dutch colonies in the East Indies. Their first boat would be built by Hubert Scott-Paine's British Powerboat Company at Hythe while the remainder would be built under license by the Gusto shipyard at Schiedam in Holland. The first two of these boats TM52 and TM53, were well under construction in Holland when the Germans invaded and occupied the country. These boats then became available to the Germans and were redesignated S201 and S202. In addition, eight 90ft MTBS were also on the stocks at the Gusto yard and were subsequently completed for German use. These boats were then each equipped with three Daimler-Benz diesel engines in a design akin to German E-Boats. Therefore, initially, the only Dutch commissioned MTB to sail under their national flag was to be TM51, built in the UK. However, sixteen 70ft British Powerboat MTBs would be built in Montreal to compensate

the Dutch for their loss of boats and two MTB flotillas would be manned exclusively by the Dutch Navy, led by TM51. The story of TM51 started in a most interesting way. Prior to the outbreak of war, TM51 was still undergoing trials based on the British Powerboat Company at Hythe, prior to being handed to the Dutch navy. The declaration of war changed the situation dramatically and the British Government commandeered all foreign naval construction orders, which included TM51. The Dutch, however, persuaded the Admiralty that a Dutch naval representative should be onboard TM51 while the trials continued, in order that lessons could be learnt, and the Admiralty agreed. The Dutch naval officer onboard, Lieutenant-Commander Otto de Booy, ensured that the fuel tanks were full prior to trials in the Solent and, once underway, he altered course for Rotterdam and the Gusto yard, Holland still being free of occupation at that time. Here she was fitted-out with Dutch weapons and worked-up. It was only with the German invasion on 10 May 1940 that the Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Jan van Staveren, returned the boat to England, damaged but still running. He received Holland's highest gallantry award for his actions that day. The Admiralty converted the boat to a Motor Anti-Submarine Boat (MAS/SB), operating as *MGB 46*. At that stage of the war the Admiralty were concerned about the threat from



*The Dutch crew of MGB 46 at Ramsgate, 1942. INSTITUTE BOOR MARITIEME HISTORIE S-GRAVENHAGE.*

enemy submarines operating close to British shores but this never materialised.

Following heavy lobbying by the Dutch Navy *MGB 46*/<sup>TM</sup> *51* was eventually run with an all Dutch crew, operating from Dover. In September 1941 Lieutenant Willem de Looze was appointed to command *MGB 46* and he brought valuable experience of operating Coastal Forces boats in the Dutch East Indies. His performance was impressive and the Admiralty decided that four MTBs, totally manned by Dutch crew, should be formed, with one under his command. As more Dutch crews became available a Dutch flotilla was formed, operated exclusively by the Royal Netherlands Navy for operations around their native coast. The flotilla commander, Lieutenant-Commander Hans Larive had escaped from the infamous Colditz Castle Prisoner of War camp, enduring a long journey through Switzerland, France Spain and Gibraltar.

It was on the night of 14/15 June that *MGB 46* in company with a combined force of MTBs and MGBs was involved in a major offensive. The force left Dover to intercept an enemy convoy making its way along the French coast. Heavily armed escorts accompanied the convoy and *MGB 46* was the first to

make an attack in order to draw fire. Her Chief Motor Mechanic was killed as shells hit the Engine room. *MGB 46* laid mines and then released depth charges before attempting to start one of her three engines in her shattered Engine Room. With one engine running she made a slow passage back to Dover. With many injured and the boat barely afloat the Commanding Officer made the engine room team drink large quantities of milk to overcome the engine fumes!

As the war progressed a second Royal Netherlands Navy flotilla was formed with larger 71ft 6" British Powerboats, more heavily armed. There was no shortage of volunteers which flowed from both Holland and the Dutch East Indies. It was normal for the Royal Navy to appoint Liaison Officers in boats manned by Allied Navies although this was not considered necessary in the boats of the Dutch flotillas, whose performance was so impressive. In September 1944 the two Dutch flotillas were returned to the Royal Navy, with the exception of one MTB and one MGB which were used after the liberation of Holland for the monumental task of clearing their devastated ports and establishing a Dutch presence. The original *TMSI* ended her service as a Royal Navy training boat for motor mechanics at Portland.

## PROMINENT VETERANS

### DONALD BRADFORD DSO, DSC\*\*

Donald Bradford, who died in June 1995, was a Coastal Forces commander who must be unequalled in the number of actions in which he took part throughout the war. His war was fought in the Channel and the North Sea and all his actions were fought with dash and verve. Borne near Manchester, he was relatively “elderly” for a RNVR Officer in Coastal Forces, being in his late twenties and early thirties by the end of the war. He had had an eventful and somewhat colourful life before the war, serving as Third Mate in the British Merchant Marine, herding cows in Argentina and fighting for the International Brigade at the siege of Madrid until a machine gun bullet put him out of action. Some would say perfect training for a future in Coastal Forces! When in command of *MTB 117* he had a dagger with a red hilt painted on her side and he flew a special flag with the same design. Daggers were his hobby and they adorned the walls of his tiny cabin and many consider that his version of a sea battle was to board the enemy with a cutlass, if he possibly could! Despite this cavalier spirit, he was an intelligent and perceptive commanding officer who took his crew into well calculated engagements with much success.

Donald Bradford’s first DSC was earned in the Spring of 1943. While on patrol off the Dutch Coast, waiting and listening, his small force of two MGBs became aware of the



*Lt. Don Bradford DSO, DSC\*\* RNVR.*

noise of five German E-boats. Seeing their wakes in the darkness, he managed to close to 40 yards before opening fire sinking one by gunfire and sending a second to the bottom by ramming it. In September 1943 Bradford was in command of the 55th MTB Flotilla based at Great Yarmouth. A contemporary, generously swelling his pride in his own flotilla, acknowledged that, under Don Bradford’s leadership, the 55th fought more actions than most and pressed home more firmly than most. His second DSC was awarded as the result of another action off the Dutch coast. Dangerously manoeuvring amongst sandbanks, Bradford’s force of six MTBs and MGBs sank a large heavily escorted liner and sank or damaged four of her escorts. In April 1944 Bradford’s flotilla moved around to the south coast in anticipation of the D Day landings. There he was responsible for protecting the flank of the British invasion beaches from enemy interference in the corner of the Seine Bay, west of Le Havre. The night after D Day he attacked a force of German torpedo boats and minelayers sinking one and disrupting their operations. This action was conducted within a German minefield and twenty-three mines were triggered during the action without any British loss. Later, after the fall of Cherbourg, he initiated the close blockade of Le Havre, during which time he torpedoed two E-boats and sank a corvette. It was during this period that he was awarded his DSO and third DSC. Donald Bradford epitomised the daring and courage present in so many of those serving in Coastal Forces.

### MICHAEL WYNN DSC (LORD NEWBOROUGH)

Robert Charles Michael Vaughan Wynn was the eldest son of Sir Robert Vaughan Wynn, 6th Baron Newborough. He was to serve with great distinction in Coastal Forces and played a decisive role in Operation Chariot, the raid on St Nazaire, for which he was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross. However, at start of the war Michael Wynn was initially commissioned into the 9th Lancers and then joined the 5th Inniskilling Dragoon Guards and then the 16th/5th Lancers. He was invalided out of the army in 1940 and, then as a civilian, he was given command of a yacht acting as an Air Sea Rescue unit. While British forces were being evacuated from Dunkirk he made five successful trips across the Channel before being hit by shellfire and just making it back to Ramsgate. The Royal Navy recognised his abilities and gave him an RNVR commission in July 1941. Stationed in Coastal Forces at HMS Hornet in Gosport, he was involved in a plan to attack the German battleships *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau*. This involved an MTB specially built to house torpedo tubes on the foredeck instead of midships. This would enable the torpedoes to be fired over the anti-submarine net in Brest harbour where they would sink in the sea-bed and explode after a time delay. Regrettably, the German Battleships made a daring escape from Brest, through the channel, in what was known as the Channel Dash



*Lord Newborough of Rug.*

and his plan was foiled. His boat, *MTB 74*, was re-tasked to Operation Chariot, the raid on St. Nazaire. His role was to torpedo the inner caisson of the Normandy Dock or lock gate to the Submarine Basin. If the plan for *HMS Campbelltown* to blow-up the St Nazaire dock was not successful then Wynn was

to fire two delayed-action torpedoes into the dock caisson. The details of Operation Chariot are well described in articles in previous Newsletters. However, under intense fire *HMS Campbelltown* cut through the torpedo net and rammed the dock and Wynn was ordered to fire his two torpedoes at his secondary target, the Dock Gate entrance. His task completed Wynn was ordered to return to England. Spotting two men in a Carley float and under intense enemy fire, he hesitated on whether to pick them up; an awful decision. When he did stop to make the rescue German shells ripped through his boat and he was blown off the Bridge. He was saved by his Chief Motor Mechanic, Chief Petty Officer Lovegrove who held the severely injured Wynn on a Carley float for 12 hours before being found by the Germans. *HMS Campbelltown* blew-up the following day, followed, two days later by Wynn's two torpedoes exploding and destroying the gates of the dock entrance. Wynn was now a prisoner of war, blind in one eye, and with a glass eye courtesy of his captors. He first went to Marlag Nord, near Bremen and, after escaping and being re-capture he was sent to Colditz. Repatriated in 1945, he heard that CPO Lovegrove was in a German naval prison camp and he volunteered to join the relieving force in order to meet again the man who had saved his life at St Nazaire. After the war he returned to farming the family 20,000 acres in North Wales and he became the High Sheriff of Merionethshire, succeeding his father as Lord Newborough in 1965. He was called before the magistrates for allegedly firing a cannonball across the Menai Straits in celebration of his late mother-in-law's birthday! The shot went through the sail of a yacht and, although denying the charge on the basis that it must have been someone else, he was, nevertheless, found guilty and fined. When he died in Istanbul in 1998 his ashes were fired from an 18th Century cannon.

## IN MEMORIAM

### WE SAY FAREWELL TO:

Raymond Baldock	CFVA 2194	R J C George	CFVA 190
Alan Brown	CFVA 2864	John William Harrop	CFVA 1138
Rear Admiral Sir Nigel "Os" Cecil		Sheila Hill	CFVA 1389
Denis Cooke	CFVA 2471	Brian Holmes (HDML 1367 <i>Medusa</i> Coxswain)	
Alan Cuttle		Brian Joy	
The Rt. Hon. Sir Edward Dilton Lott du Can KBE		Frank Hill Lovegrove	CFVA 2036
John Doddsworth		George William Mitchell	CFVA 1628
Maldwin Drummond OBE, DL		John Pigott	
Reg Ellis	CFVA 270	Ernest Yorke	

## WE WILL REMEMBER THEM

## STOP PRESS

### REG ELLIS

At the point of going to press we hear of the death Reg Ellis who was one of our founding Trustees in 1994 and who was the Chairman of the Southern Branch of the veterans association. He remained an active CFHT Trustee, representing the veterans, until 2012 when ill health prevented him continuing. Reg served on MTBs 242 and 409, extensively in the Adriatic, operating from Komiza on the Croatian Island of Vis. Reg was a resolute supporter of the annual commemorative services to the British wartime presence on the Island and with his engaging personality and passion for the Island he built-up strong relationships with local people, who also supported the annual British visit. Reg Ellis contributed greatly to Coastal Forces, not only in the veterans association activities but by his personal involvement in every one of its activities. He was the glue that held the association together.

### LEGION D'HONNEUR

In Newsletter number 20 we request contact from Coastal Forces veterans who had recently received the Legion d'Honneur. We are to quote from a letter received from Sidney E Downer CFVA No. 422 and offer our congratulations on his award.

*"With reference to your request in the May edition of the Newsletter: I took part in Operation Glimmer in which we acted as decoys off Boulogne in the early hours of D-Day. This was designed to mislead the Germans into believing that the invasion of France would take place in the Pas de Calais area. I was First Lieutenant onboard HDML 1410. The presentation of the Legion d'Honneur was made to me by the French Ambassador in London on 27 May 2016."*

At the very point of going to press we have also heard from Robin Coventry, who states:

*"I am honoured and delighted to announce that on 10 October this year I received in the post a delightful personal letter from Her Excellency Mme. Sylvie Bermann, French Ambassador to the Court of St James, appointing me to the rank of Chevalier in the Order of National de la Legion d'Honneur, in recognition of my military engagement in the liberation of France during the Second World War."*

From all involved in our Heritage Trust we offer our very many congratulations to both recipients for these extremely deserved awards.



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**Registered Address:**

Coastal Forces Heritage Trust  
c/o The National Museum of the Royal Navy  
HM Naval Base (PP66)  
Portsmouth  
Hampshire PO1 3NH

**Director:** 07506 596109

**Answerphone:** 023 9272 7129

**Fax:** 023 9272 7575

**email:** directorcoastalforces@outlook.com

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

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**Objectives of the Trust:** The object of the Coastal Forces  
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