



THE LONDON BRANCH NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2016/7



ROYAL NAVY

Editorial

Due mainly to travelling difficulties the October branch meeting was again a very diminished affair, but luckily it was judged able to convene with the bare minimum number of members present. The huge London 'cross rail' construction scheme, coupled with long term modifications being made to London Bridge Station, plus a one-way-traffic system introduced for Tooley Street and the temporary ban to road traffic over Tower Bridge, all conspired to make the journey to HMS *Belfast* extremely difficult, if not impossible for some travelling by car. However, the meeting was productive and most enjoyable.

A condensed version of the meeting Minutes is reported with this edition.



Content for this issue:

- Website.
- A Day to Remember.
- Camper Nicholson MGB's
- Modelling CF craft
- Late News



A Russian super yacht, known simply as 'Motor Yacht A', caused quite a stir when she recently moored alongside HMS *Belfast* in the Pool of London.

Owned by the Russian tycoon Mr Andrey Melnichenko she is currently up for sale. £200m anyone?

BRANCH REPORTS

Chairman's Report.

Ken Gadsdon, our Chairman, is currently unable to contribute to this edition of the Newsletter owing to domestic problems. He has requested to be 'excused duties' until further notice, so I have been volunteered to carry on. However Ken has extremely large shoes to fill, so you are warned!

We met on HMS *Belfast* on Sunday 16th October and discussed the events of the past few months and made tentative plans for 2017. More details are in David's notes below.

We were delighted that Eddie and Vera were able to join us. Our next meetings on HMS *Belfast* will be 13th November for Remembrance Day and 15th January 2017, by which time Tower Bridge should be repaired and the travelling problems hopefully eased.

In the meantime I wish all our veterans, readers and friends,

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY NEW YEAR.

Ted Else (Acting Chairman)

Secretary/Treasurer's Report.

Notes of meeting held on HMS BELFAST 15th October 2016

Those present: Ted Else. Newsletter Editor. (Acting Chairman), David Carter. Secretary/Treasurer. Vera Mitchell, Eddie Dibley, Bernie Coote.

1. The Chairman welcomed those present.
2. We remembered in silence those who died in the course of war, with emphasis on those British servicemen, especially



shipmates in coastal forces.

We remember also those members of London Branch who are no longer with us.

3. Apologies for absence were received from – Ken Gadsdon, Steve Borne, Peter Bickmore, Tex Basely, Jack Brown, Tom Gatford, Mark Macey, Martin Harris and Andrew Withers.

4. Minutes of the meeting held 15th May 2016 were agreed. No notes were taken at the meeting of 15th July, as it was not quorate.

Matters arising:

5. Wallis Randall's book collection – The books stored on Belfast had been transferred the collection to Kevin Costello as a data resource. A donation had been sent to Mr Gould to cover costs.

Secretary's Report:

6. Some members of the Branch had attended the Thames Traditional Boat Festival at Henley in July. We had a display arranged by Peter and Kevin in a tent in the military section. Considerable interest was shown and we gained a new member. We have been invited again in 14 – 16 July 2017.

7. Peter Bickmore and David [our Secretary] attended the Centenary of the Coastal Motor Boats in Portsmouth – CMB's were the WW1 precursors of MTB's. The event was organised by the **Coastal Forces Heritage Trust** and attracted a large crowd. It was televised on Meridian ITV and BBC South. A team from the History Channel filmed the event from HMS *Medusa*.

8. In the evening '*Medusa* was visited by Caroline Dineage MP (for Gosport) and her husband Mark Lancaster MP (for Milton Keynes). Mark Lancaster was appointed Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Defence Personnel and Veterans.

9. The Branch has received an invitation from Sadiq Khan, Mayor for London, to attend a Remembrance Day Service at City Hall (adjacent to HMS *Belfast*). Bernie Coote and Tex Basely wished to attend. Secretary will make arrangements.

Finance:

10. The Treasurer circulated copies of the accounts for 2016 to date, which had been reconciled to the bank holdings. The regular income from membership and donations adequately covered the expenses of the newsletter etc.

Newsletter:

11. The Newsletter Editor proposed that the winter edition should be 8 pages (2 sheets of A3). It was suggested also to have a print of 100 rather than 50 as the increased cost was negligible. The proposal was agreed in principle, so that the Editor could negotiate detailed costs with the printer.

Any Other Business:

12. Sea Cadet Liaison & Security Officer Steve Borne was unable to attend due to work commitments.

13 The Secretary will order a wreath from Royal British Legion, to be sent to Bernie Coote for the Remembrance Sunday Commemoration on board HMS *Belfast*.

14 In view of the small number of members attending recent Branch meetings, we briefly discussed the viability of such meetings. Although there was much support for the Branch continuing, it might be more practicable to call meetings only when there was something viable to discuss. (For further discussion).

Next meeting: This will be 15th January 2017.





The much depleted Branch Meeting of October 2016.

Eddie Dibley, Vera Mitchell, David Carter, Bernie Coote. (camera Ted Else)

currently seen on the website:

I have been asked “is it possible to give our non ‘on-line’ members some glimpses of the website?” Our website is continually being updated but, courtesy of Kevin, here are some a views of an established web page giving brief details of 4 of the 10 illustrated preserved C.F. Craft. T. E.

PRESERVATION

The Surviving Coastal Forces Boats

Over 2000 vessels of various types were constructed for use by Coastal Forces during the Second World War, including motor torpedo boats, motor gunboats and motor launches. On the cessation of hostilities nearly all boats were sold or otherwise disposed of. Some were donated to sea scout groups, while many more were converted for use as leisure craft, houseboats, or in some cases ferries. Over the decades the number to remain seaworthy has inevitably dwindled, leaving a precious few to be saved for the nation, or preserved for posterity by private individuals or trusts.

[HDML 1301](#)

Known for a time as *Meda*, a former Harbour Defence Launch. It originally served in the Mediterranean taking part in the invasions of Sicily and Elba, as well as the Salerno Landings. [Current status unknown but believed to have been ‘landed’ in preparation to be the main exhibit at a Dutch museum. T.E.]



MTB 71

MTB 71 was built for the Royal Norwegian Navy as No 7 but requisitioned for the Royal Navy in July 1943. MTB 71 survived the war and was sold in 1945.

Acquired as part of the National collection in 1993, having had 'cosmetic' restoration she was placed on public display at Duxford. She is now awaiting full restoration to WW2 configuration and will be eventually exhibited in the RN National Museum at Portsmouth.



MGB 81

This boat was completed as a Motor Gun Boat (MGB) but converted along with others for use as a Motor Torpedo Boat (MTB 416) in September 1943. It has since been restored to its original gunboat specification and secured for preservation by Portsmouth Naval Base Property Trust.





RML 497

As a Rescue Motor Launch, RML 497 carried out air sea rescue work in conjunction with the RAF in their high-speed Air Sea Rescue (ASR) launches, often putting to sea when weather conditions were too rough for the RAF boats. It has now been secured for preservation by the National Museum of the Royal Navy.



[After an exemplary wartime career RML 497 was placed on the Disposal List in 1947 and sold off. She entered service with the Western Lady Ferry Service, plying between Brixham and Torquay carrying the name of 'Western Lady III'. After many years of successful commercial service she was due for a heavy refit but eventually she was laid up. Difficult years followed but she was purchased (in 2009) by Greenway Ferry Service to once again ply the waters of Torbay and Dartmouth being renamed 'The Fairmile', returning to her wartime colours in 2013. Purchased once more, with the aid of generous donations by the CFHT and PNBPT (needed to qualify for a large Lottery grant) - she now awaits full restoration to WW2 configuration. T.E.]

A Day To Remember.

We are pleased to say that Albert (Tex) and Mary Baseley celebrated their **70th Wedding Anniversary** with their family on 15th October.



Our Heartiest Congratulations go to Tex and Mary - may you have many, many more.





117ft CAMPER & NICHOLSONS 1943 class - MTB 2011-2018

Thought by many to be the most handsome Coastal Forces boats, the Camper 1943 class was a development of a design dating from 1938, by Bill Holt, Head of the Boat Section, Director of Naval Construction [DNC].



MGB 511 © IWM (FL 25661)

Of the 1938 design which was tested in the tank at the Admiralty Experiment Works, Haslar in the autumn of 1939 — ten boats were ordered in 1940: ML 501 [prototype, destroyed in the Gosport blitz, 10 March 1941], plus nine ordered for Turkey [later requisitioned], becoming MGB 501-509. The 1943 class was ordered in January 1943, as MGB 511-518; MGB 511-516 being built at the company's Gosport yard and MGB 517 and 518 at the Northam Bridge, Southampton yard. As with MGB 501-509, construction was composite. Web frames and beams, deck girders, floors and main bulkheads were of steel, with intermediate frames, stringers and beams of wood. The deck was 3/4 inch plywood and the hull triple diagonal planking 1 3/8 inch thick. In these boats, the round bilge hull form was modified by DNC and had considerable flare forward and a knuckle line running fore and aft about 2 feet below the deck edge, in order to make the fore deck less prone to spray, from which the earlier batch suffered. One feature was the completely enclosed 'wheelhouse' containing chart room, radar and offices; in effect an Action Information Centre. This 'wheelhouse' and the bridge had protective plating. In September 1943, following the decision to arm all new MTB's and MGB's with a combined torpedo and gun armament, these boats were renumbered MTB 5111-18. In April 1945 they were again renumbered, becoming MTB 2011—2018 and in July 1949 they became Fast Patrol Boats 5511-5518.

Unlike the type Fairmiles, these Campers were not prefabricated and therefore took longer to build. The first boat, MTB 511, was laid down in June 1943 and commissioned in July 1944, with the last, MTB 518, laid down in November 1944 and commissioned in July 1946. MTB 2011-2014 completed before VE day, 8 May 1945, with 2015 following in June and the last three in 1946.





MTB 2011-2015 joined the 52nd MTB Flotilla, Senior Officer Lieut Commander A R H 'Bob' Nye DSC RNVR, which operated from Great Yarmouth, Lowestoft and Ostend on the Thames—Scheldt convoy route and was brought up to full strength by Fairmile 'D's MTB 758, 762, 764, 798 and 5020. In May 1945 this flotilla was at Bergen for the liberation of Norway; thereafter based at HMS *Hornet*, Gosport.

In September 1945, following the paying off of the majority of Coastal Forces craft, the 52nd became the 20th MTB Flotilla. From May 1946, following further reductions in the number of boats, at any one time only one to three Campers served in the 2nd MTB Flotilla and later the 1st MTB Flotilla. In 1949 this became the 1st Fast Patrol Boat Flotilla and from 1952 the 1st FPB Squadron.

MTB 2016 and 2017, with specially extended bridges, were used by the Royal Family and Royal Household for the Fleet Review on the Clyde on 23 July 1947. In February 1949, MTB's 2012, 2016 and 2017 carried out cold weather trials off the North Cape, Norway.

©Geoffrey Hudson

The fruits of skilled modellers.

We are fortunate here to be able to show you some of the efforts of very skilled modellers. First is a detailed 'working' (Radio Controlled) model of HDML 1008. This model was constructed by Peter Stern a long time friend of the late John Lambert, who had supplied the drawings. The detail shown of the F'rd 3Pdr Gun is truly stunning. There are several other images of the superb detail involved with this model and will be shown in the Spring edition of the Newsletter.



Our second gentleman hails from New Zealand.

Mike Harrison likes to model in the larger scale and is currently constructing a 5ft (plus) model of HMS *Brave Swordsman*. The original boat was launched in 1957 - right at the very end of the RN entity known as 'Coastal Forces' - but as we may know, she was the first really successful vessel to use gas turbines as main propulsion units. The 'Gatric' MTB 2009, the 'Bold' class, HMS *Grey Goose*, having been experimental craft to prove the concept and development of GT power for marine use.

Mike Harrison informs us that his latest model is far from complete and will total at least 2 years in the building. His experience in building to such large scales has seen a previous build of HMS *Brave Swordsman* (this particular model came to grief falling off a vehicle roof rack!!)

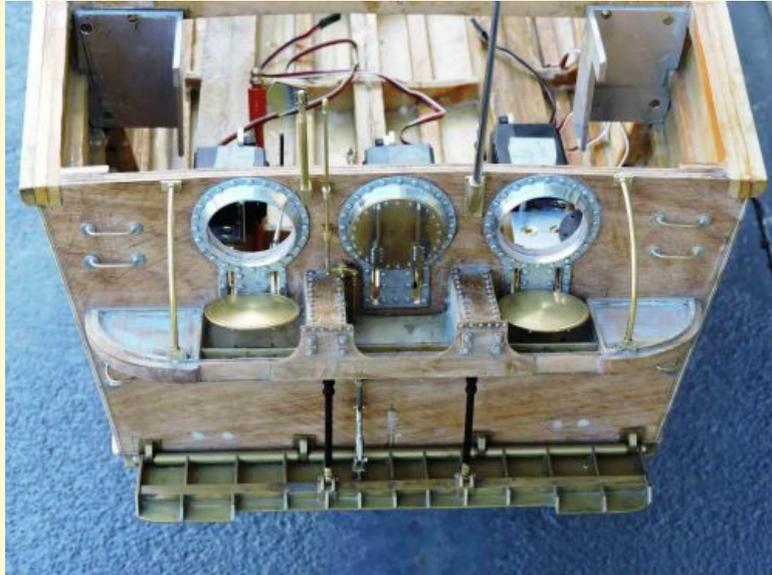
Again, the detail seen with the modelling of the Bofors gun is very impressive - and there are 2 of them!!





The Bofors gun is not finished Mike informs me. He has to build the electrical and mechanical fittings to the starboard side of the weapon as well as the gun operators compartment and gun loader stand behind and alongside the breach on the port side. Of course it does not yet have the shielding normally fitted to this Mk of Bofors. The skill shown with this particular model gun gained Mike a well deserved award at a prestigious ceremony in NZ - well done!!

Mike's model will also be radio controlled and incorporate a 'sound system' that will generate the 'whine' of GT's starting up (and running) together with other 'nautical' noises.



Late News.



Here is a recent shot of London Branch member James Battison's MTB 208 undergoing restoration at Teddington. A White built Vosper 'Short' boat that has quite some 'history'.

Our website database shows that she was completed in August 1942, not listed as having any casualties but having had Awards made to: Acting Chief Motor Mechanic Philip DUNDAS. P/MX 79030. Able Seaman David Mathew COLLIN. C/JX 352622. Able Seaman Henry Edward HAMILL. D/KX 364976. Acting Leading Seaman Kenneth Arthur Charles CHILDS. D/JX 186892 and Leading Seaman Leonard Samuel Dagwell STAPLEY. P/JX 149109.

Having lost several valuable members this year, we are inevitably setting course to rely more heavily on new membership to keep the London Branch afloat. But - we *are* 'afloat' - and already planning for the New Year. Leaving you with this positive note; the 'Team' and I again wish you all a very...

..Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

