



London and Home Counties Branch

The newsletter

During this shutdown we thought that our Branch should produce a relatively light-hearted newsletter in lieu of our branch meetings and social events that had been planned for the coming months.

We don't want it to be filled with nautical tales of hairy RAS's but hairy tales of nights in Sembawang village would be very welcome. I recall long ago that some deck cadets who went on a Mid-Apprenticeship Release scheme of about three months. The object was to enlighten us to the world outside ships. In my college, the Stack of Bricks down the Mile End Road (anyone remember it?) the director of studies said at our first meeting, "sailors have only three subjects that they talk about and that is Ships, Sea, and Sex, and they don't know much about any of them".

I am well aware from my own experience of editing a company newsletter that most people enjoy reading them, but obtaining contributions is akin to getting blood-out-of-a-stone. But if anyone has something, they feel that the wider world should know about, then please send it to either myself or Richard Fernley. It only remains for me to say, look after yourselves and I look forward to seeing you all in the pub as soon as possible. [Peter Harrison]



They say those who follow the Great Rubber Ducky will ride safely through any storm!

Branch AGM

Under prevailing conditions we will be unable to hold this and assume that current Committee members will 'extend appointment' until they can be relieved or reappointed.

RFAA AGM and Reunion?

At the time of writing indecision seems to rule the day. At this moment in our history when our pubs are closed, the Edinburgh Festival, Wimbledon, Chelsea Flower Show and even Glastonbury are off we do feel like asking *Is it on or is it off...?????*

Letter from Thailand

Just seen a news report about the stresses and strains of self-isolation. It reported that people are going crazy from being in lock

down! It was strange, actually, because I had just been talking about this with the microwave and toaster and all of us agreed that things are getting bad. I didn't mention anything to the washing machine, as she always has to put a different spin on everything, and certainly not to the fridge as he acting cold and distant. In the end the iron calmed me down. She said everything will be fine, which surprised me because she's usually the first one to apply unnecessary pressure and get steamed u over nothing!!! [Mike Ainley]

Branch Christmas Lunch

Our Christmas Lunch at the Admiralty (Pub in Trafalgar Sq) was very successful and that we should repeat this again this year. However it was felt we should victual a little more closely to Christmas – we propose Wednesday 8 December.

Message Mix-up...

I remember so clearly when I was a Junior Radio Officer and the scrapes I got into, with TR's and battery lockers and learning the language of the sea.

I was fortunate enough to have a training officer onboard my first ship, and as I was supernumery his intention was to make me into a deck officer, as I was just tagged onto the other two cadets onboard.

I did a lifeboat ticket, a steering ticket, NBCD ticket, in point of fact I had so many tickets I could have joined London Transport.

The story I would like to relate is as follows:

We were languishing in Hong Kong at an army base of Shamshi Po, as we were under the

command of the Army being an LSL and tasked to take various pieces of machinery up to Hong Kong and then to take various regiments on exercise around the Far East.

Well my stay in Hong Kong was just fantastic, but after four months we were all a little short of the readies, as a sailors life is very much the high life for a short period of time, then sea and saving.

The signal eventually came through that we were all waiting for, and that was to embark Ghurkha's for passage to Brunei via Kota Kinabalu.

The Ghurkha's were a strange set, with such beliefs that they would be seasick once they went onboard, the Doctor was on standby with seasick pills on the gangway, and that they would contract TB if doing PE at night! But a hardier bunch of blokes you couldn't wish to meet.

*The one thing even on a short sea voyage is boredom**, so the Ghurkha CO came to me to discuss what on earth these chaps could do on the confines of the ship. Well as I was the film officer, second security officer, junior radio officer and the list goes on – I came up with the idea of film shows during the night and tug of war on the tank deck, so it was PE as long as in daylight.*

I was also issued with three Ghurkha signallers all very proficient at morse code and we went from a single operator period to full time broadcast, which was transmitted from Hong Kong, and this consisted of the usual suspects

of weather, navigation, news and of course our signals.

Our trip first included a visit to Kota Kinabalu where we were to fly our helicopter off the flight deck and deliver urgent medical aid. So we lay off the coast and did our mission of mercy!

Then on to the port of Muara at Brunei where we were to discharge our cargo and the Ghurkha's.

Because the port had only just been completed and a commercial port at that, the Captain specifically requested that I take down details of entering port and also obtaining a pilot.

That was simple enough as our call sign was on the next traffic list, and I took down very carefully, well I thought very carefully, full docking details. I asked for a repeat, I even got my boss to have a go! No avail, so I went onto the bridge to see the Old Man and explain.

Well he was resident in his bridge chair, and accompanying him was the Ghurkha CO, a regimented man, and a colonel of high standing.

"Excuse me Sir, the signal has come in from Port Muara, but I think there is a mistake"

"Read it out young man"

"Well I would rather discuss this with you on your own!"

"Read it out, I am sure that Colonel Smith won't mind"

I took a deep breath and read out the telegram.

"Anchor in the shit"

The eyes of the colonel rose, and the Captain looked at me and asked:

"How long have you been at sea Mr Fernley?"

"Nine months, two weeks and 3 days Sir"

And you don't know the difference between a good 'spit' and a 'shit'? Radio Officers, what I could do without them!

I left the bridge feeling very distraught, but it made the telling of a good tale. [Richard Fernley]

* actually an early training course for our current lockdown but we did not appreciate that at the time [ed]

Cheesy, Hammy, Eggy Topside

The famous Cheesy Hammy Eggy Topside understood to have originated in Singapore (HMS TERROR Club) and eaten by all those of a Far East persuasion. brings back splendid memories ... comfort food after a particularly difficult watch. So in tribute to your good ship's cook do not call the local Chinese takeaway ... get cooking...



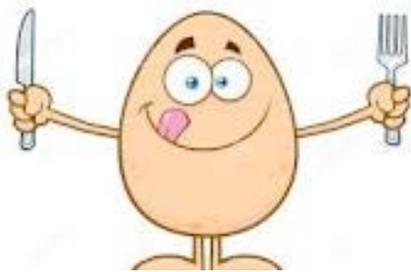
Ingredients

- One thick slice of bread or half a split bap
- One slice of ham
- Handful of grated cheese
- One Egg

Method

1. Heat grill to medium/high. At the same time heat a knob of lard or cooking oil in a small frying pan

2. Toast one side of bread, remove from grill, lightly butter untoasted side
3. Add slice of ham to untoasted side and top with grated cheese
4. Place topped toast back under grill until cheese melted and bubbling. Meanwhile add egg to the hot frying pan, fry till white just set and yolk still soft.
5. Remove toast to plate and let rest.
6. Top with fried egg and enjoy.



If you know of an alternative menu/method please do share it with us.

How will future generations see us? ...Imagine this scene

...It was a quiet Monday morning in April 2053, when Jimmy awoke with a need to go to the heads. To him this wasn't just any ordinary day! This was the day he would open the last package of toilet paper his parents had bought in 2020!!!



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WELFARE

- **NHS UK Advice (online)**
<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>
- **SAIL** (Seafarers Advice and Information Line)
0800 160 1842
<http://www.sailine.org.uk>
- **Dreadnought Medical Service**
Email gst-tr.dreadnought@nhs.net
020 7188 2049