



# THE NEWSLETTER

of the London and Home Counties Branch – November 2020

Well Christmas is finally coming for the year 2020, a year which most of us would probably like to see the back of. I say for most of us, but for the London and Home Counties branch it has been a success, in the initiation of our Newsletter. I must admit I thought it would be a bit of a flash in the pan, and that after the initial few editions, contributions would dry up. I am immensely pleased that I was wrong, and that people have been sending in contributions in increasing quantities, so well done to all our readers and contributors. As most, if not all, of our readers are sailors, we have spent Christmas away some if they were lucky alongside, but for others it was at sea.

In my early days in the RFA the MOD thought that vessels sitting alongside were a wasted opportunity, and whilst the RN had Christmas alongside, tankers in the UK could be much more usefully employed by doing a quick freighting run to Trinidad to pick up some FFO. In my time at sea, I was lucky that I only spent two Christmas's away, this was more by luck than judgement. My first experience of being away was in *RFA Orangeleaf*, where after loading with fuel in Singapore, we went west to go to the Beira Patrol before reaching there we stopped at Gan Island for Christmas.

As an aside, navigating to Gan in those days by sextant, was a bit of a hit and miss affair, one arranged for the arrival soon after dawn, so that the navigator could obtain an accurate star

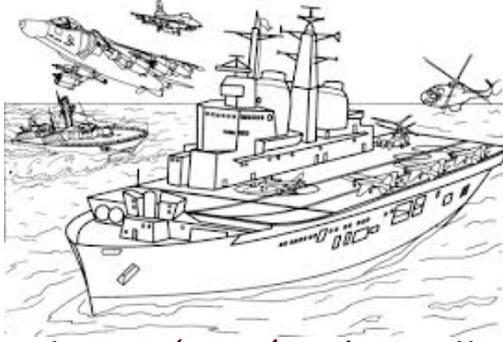
fix. It was so low lying that even with radar, it could easily be missed, so extra lookouts were posted to catch sight of the palm trees. In Singapore we had each bought a present for each other, so the day was a very happy affair, and in addition *RFA Hebe* was there so we went over to them to carry on the festivities. However, we were not welcomed by the RAF and were told that we could go to their church for Christmas service but had to immediately go back on board.



Apparently, an aircraft carrier had spent Christmas there a few years before, and the lads went ashore and as would be expected had a few beers. They took exception to the prissy attitude of the RAF, and in a convivial manner beat the place up. Not unnaturally after that the RAF banned any naval personnel from going ashore, so we had a good time on board. We did point out to them that we were not Royal Navy, but for whatever reason their attitude was that a sailor-is-a-sailor whatever uniform he wears. My only other time was spent in *RFA Resource* at the bottom of Plymouth Sound attached to C Buoy, where through

binoculars one could see everyone else in the world having a good time.

Of course, it is what you make of it, and as we all know some ships are happier than others, and if it is a miserable ship, Christmas is unlikely to make it much happier.



**...do you 'ere there! ...well done to all ...I can confirm that u're run ashore has properly annoyed the Crabs!!!**

I also spent Christmas alone in Accra in Ghana, and after spending the morning reading a book, I went down to the local expat bar, and had one of the most entertaining Christmas's ever. As a sailor you expect to spend a lot of time, including Christmas, away, and if you don't like it, then it's time to get an office job ashore. Happy Christmas to all our readers, and a peaceful and safe New Year. [Peter Harrison]



### **HOW TO FIRE YOUR CANNON**

Should you feel yourself required to fire your cannon, possibly to mark an easing of lockdown, the arrival of Santa Claus or for New Year's day, these orders were issued in Nelson's navy – with the

Explosives Responsible Officer's approval of course:

Silence!  
Cast loose your gun!  
Level your gun!  
Take out your tampion!  
Prime!  
Run out your gun!  
Fire!!!  
Worm and sponge!  
Load with cartridge!  
Load with shot and wad your shot!  
Ram home shot and wad!  
Put in your tampion!  
House your gun!  
Secure your gun!



### **...LOOTING or PIRACY?**

**Part 2** – The vessel detained was the 360-ton *NAV Upnor*, a small naval armament freighter on passage from Cork to Devonport, in South West England.

This article, the initial report by the Commander-in-Chief, Western Approaches and the subsequent Admiralty Board of Enquiry combine to give a fuller picture of what actually occurred during the days between 28th and 30th March 1922.

Reported as bound for HM Dockyard Devonport, *Upnor* was engaged in routine shipment of arms and ammunition from the naval base of Haulbowline. This base was located in the outer reaches of the River Lee below the city of Cork and was in the process of being decommissioned. Originally scheduled for closure in 1922, the Provisional Government had asked that the facility remain in British hands for a further year, probably due to the political and military uncertainty in and around the city of Cork. Consequently,

the handover to Free State forces was delayed until the following year.

*Upnor* sailed from the Haulbowline just after noon on 29th March having loaded a cargo of armament and general naval stores. Clearing the headlands at the entrance to Cork harbour, a south easterly course was set to pass south of Land's End, followed by a short run up the English Channel to Devonport Naval Dockyard. Two hours after this, the privately owned tug *Warrior* mysteriously slipped her moorings in Queenstown (now Cobh) and, without her Master, followed in the *Upnor's* direction eventually overhauling her at 1800 that evening, some 35 miles off the Irish coast. The *Warrior*, owned by The Elliot Steam Tug Co of Fenchurch Street, London had been previously chartered to tow the decommissioned *HMS Medusa* from Queenstown for breaking up. Sailing with her charge on 28th March, *Warrior's* Master soon realised that he could make no headway in the prevailing sea conditions and reluctantly returned to port. At 1030 on the morning of 29th March the tug and tow arrived off Queenstown and eventually returned *Medusa* to her original moorings in Monkstown Bay. On completion, *Warrior* secured alongside the deepwater berth at Queenstown. Shortly after noon, the Master went ashore and called at the offices of Horne & Co, his owner's Agents in an effort to seek further instructions.

Events which governed the next eighteen hours had their origins in Cork city earlier on 29th March. Captain Collins, a former Mercantile Marine Officer and now a serving member of the Cork Harbour Commission was taken by armed civilians, driven to Queenstown, and placed onboard the *Warrior* at about 1430. With the tug's Master already detained ashore and the English crew confined below decks, their places were taken by similar

number of armed men. Collins was ordered to take the tug to sea. She subsequently sailed at 1445.

That evening, armed men visited those city merchants known to have 'motor lorries' and demanded that they provide both vehicles and drivers for an undisclosed purpose. Intimidation, threats and probably some sympathetic collusion led to some 'eighty' vehicles being provided which immediately set off easterly towards the small fishing village of Ballycotton. To prevent outside interference trees were felled and all access to the area cut off, hardly necessary given that by this stage in political proceedings, Crown Forces were largely confined to barracks. This point is made abundantly clear in the C-in-C's report which records 'There being no police in Queenstown no news of the holding of the master of the "*Warrior*" reached me" the report goes on to say, "*I regret that...all civilians live in such fear of their lives that they will take no action against the forces of disorder*"...

On coming within hailing distance, the *Upnor* was advised that *Warrior* had been instructed to deliver an urgent hand message from the Admiralty. Somewhat surprisingly no questions were asked and a boat crewed by four men left for the NAV. On boarding the *Upnor* the Master was informed that his vessel was being detained, that he was to proceed to Ballycotton Bay in company with the *Warrior* and that no attempt to escape should be made. Arriving at 0100 on the 30th, unloading was immediately commenced using locally pressed men as stevedores, who incidentally, each reportedly received, the equivalent, of '£7.10p for their labour! Quoting from C-in-C's report 'the raiders withdrew at about 1030', probably due to the sighting of two destroyers (HM Ships *Heather* and *Strenuous*) outside the bay, before unloading had been completed. This

early departure meant that a proportion of the arms and ammunition remained onboard *Upnor*. The report also noted that after the 'raiders' had departed the local population 'continued looting and braking (open) cases and throwing the cargo of the *Upnor* into confusion'.  
**To be continued** [Shane Redmond]

A member of our 'stay-in club' Bob Nichols has very kindly communicated to us that he will open his house and gardens at Epsom Downs.

It is very easy to get to by road, rail and horse – not so easy by boat. So let me know if you are interested in joining us. [RF]

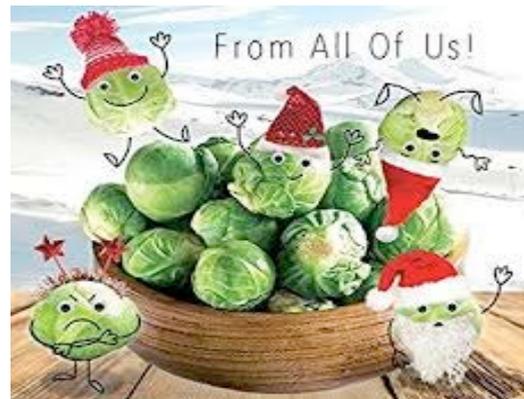


**...and who says that we can't learn from our cousins in the Southern Oceans!!**



**Advance notice of staff planning for a BBQ**

It is proposed to hold a Summer BBQ next year on Saturday 17th July.



**Sprouting nonsense...  
 ...the vegetable we love to hate**

Here are ten things you didn't know about the *humble sprout*...

1. It won its name after becoming popular in the Belgian capital in the 16th century, but the Brussels sprout is - originally thought to have come from Iran and Afghanistan.
2. The British eat more Brussels sprouts per head than any other country in Europe
3. Around 5,000 years ago sprouts were prescribed by Chinese physicians as a medication for bowel problems.
4. To the untrained eye one sprout looks like any other, but there are 50 varieties of the mini green cabbages to avoid if you're not a fan.
5. In the run-up to Christmas, farmers run 10 times as many harvesters and work from dawn until dusk picking them.
6. An area equal to over 3,200 football pitches is covered by Brussels sprout fields in the UK.
7. As you're letting out your waistband feasting on turkey, roast potatoes and cranberry sauce, remember that a cup

of cooked Brussels sprouts contains only about 60 calories.

**8.** Sprout fan Linus Urbanec from Sweden holds the current world record for the most Brussels sprouts eaten in one minute. He swallowed 31 on November 26, 2008, one at a time using a cocktail stick.

**9.** Bernard Lavery, of Llanharry in Rhondda Cynon Taff, has held the record for the heaviest Brussels sprout since October 1, 1992, when he grew a monster that weighed in at 8.3kg. Imagine that on your table!

**10.** In 2014, Stuart Kettell pushed a Brussels sprout up mount Snowdon with his nose for charity. The climb took four days 22 hours and used 20 sprouts.

**...And if you don't enjoy soggy, waterlogged sprouts, try something a bit different!!!**



### Honey Mustard Brussels Sprout Slaw

(serves 4)

*Coleslaw*

- 1 pound Brussels sprouts
- $\frac{1}{3}$  cup slivered almonds, toasted
- $\frac{1}{3}$  cup tart dried cherries or cranberries, chopped
- $\frac{1}{3}$  cup finely shredded Parmesan cheese

*Honey mustard dressing*

- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup extra-virgin olive oil

- 2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar
- 1 tablespoon honey
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- 1 garlic clove, pressed or minced
- $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon fine sea salt

### Method

1. Shred the sprouts: First, cut off the tough ends of the sprouts and any browning outer leaves. Then shred them in a food processor using the slicing blade, pressing the sprouts against the blade with the provided plastic pusher. If you don't have a food processor, slice them as thinly as possible using a sharp chef's knife, then give them a few extra chops for good measure.
2. If you are using raw almonds, toast them over medium heat for three to four minutes, stirring frequently, until they are fragrant and turning golden on the edges.
3. Whisk together the olive oil, vinegar, honey, mustard and garlic until blended. In a medium serving bowl, toss the shredded sprouts with the almonds, chopped dried fruit, Parmesan and dressing. Taste, and add another pinch or two of salt if it needs a little something more.
4. Serve immediately, or cover and refrigerate for up to 4 days. The Brussels sprouts will continue to soften as they marinate. The edges of the sprouts might brown lightly over time. Wake up leftovers with a little sprinkle of salt and a tiny splash of vinegar.

For your Noticeboard  
Our programme for 2021\*

**JANUARY** laid up on R&R after Xmas

**FEBRUARY** ...still laid on R&R

**MARCH**

Wed 17<sup>th</sup> Branch Meeting 12 noon

**APRIL** ...on R&R

**MAY**

Wed 19<sup>th</sup> London Branch  
Summer lunch 12 noon

**JUNE**

Wed 9<sup>th</sup> London Branch  
AGM 12 noon

**JULY**

Sat 17<sup>th</sup> London Branch  
Summer BBQ 5pm

**AUGUST** on R&R

**SEPTEMBER**

Sun 5<sup>th</sup> MN Day Parade 12 noon  
Tower Hill Memorial

**SEPTEMBER**

Wed 15<sup>th</sup> Branch meeting 12 noon

**OCTOBER**

Wed 6<sup>th</sup> Seafarers Service  
St. Pauls 5pm  
(ticket only)

**NOVEMBER**

Sun 7<sup>th</sup> Remembrance Service  
Whitehall (ticket only)

**DECEMBER**

Wed 8<sup>th</sup> Christmas Lunch  
Admiralty Pub 12 noon  
(Trafalgar Square)

*\*Provisional and subject to "Boris Instructions" and local Port Health Regulations.*



**The Royal Fleet Auxiliary  
Christmas Song**

I saw three ships go sailing bye  
On Christ-i-mus day  
On Christ-i-mus day  
I saw three ships go sailing bye  
On Christ-i-mus day in the morning

It must of been the RFA on Christ-mus  
day

It must of been the RFA  
On Christ-i-mus day in the morning

And what were in those ships of three  
Ships of three

And what were in those ships of three  
On Christ-i-mus day in the morning

FFO and dieso  
On Chris-i-mus day in the morning.



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All opinions expressed in are those of individual members of our 'stay-in club' and not of the Association.