

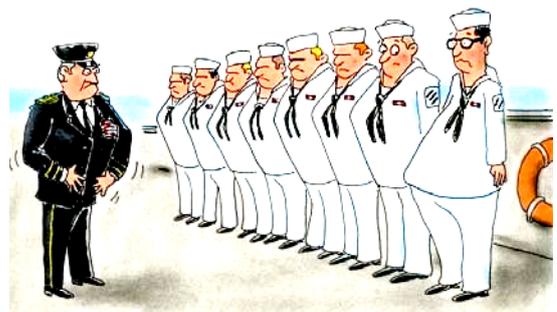


London and Home Counties Branch

The newsletter

Whilst continuing with my (semi) lockdown, I came across a picture of the latest batch of RFA cadets at Dartmouth. They were dressed in full army style battledress ready for some strenuous route marching across Dartmoor, no doubt good training for bridge watch keepers. I do not wish to sound cynical, because the modern RFA is totally different to the one I joined in 1964, and it now has to be much closer to the RN than in those days. However, the reason for this missive is that it set me thinking about the changing style of the uniforms, in the last fifty years. I have been given 15 volumes of a weekly newspaper called the Navy and Army Illustrated which dates from about 1892 to 1902. The naval officers' uniforms were almost exactly the same, albeit with wing collars, for the next 60 years. When I joined, the blue uniform with braid on the sleeve was the working dress of the day for officers, whites in the Med and the tropics. This has changed to an all season blue uniform sometimes disparagingly called pyjamas, the old style uniform is now apparently for ceremonial purposes only. It would appear that this one uniform is also for the tropics. This style, for the RN and RFA, is really only following foreign navies who have been wearing khaki, or similar, for years, and for working dress. especially the white ones, were not very practical. I can remember loading FFO in Singapore's Stores Basin in *RFA Orangeleaf*, when the ship moved slightly, and fine spots of oil went over

my shirt and shorts. A trip up the road to 'Toothy Wong' was required to replace said whites. I also remember being on the Beira Patrol refuelling a frigate and *RFA Stromness* at the same time. The frigate's captain sat on the bridge in swimming trunks conning his vessel. Meanwhile on *Stromness*, everyone including the Chief Engineer wore full whites, including caps, and this in the middle of the Indian Ocean. Okay so it was the Commodore's ship, but even so... So, it is good for the modern sailor to have an all seasons uniform, and not have to worry about taking different sets of uniforms when going to sea. Fair winds and calm seas to the modern sailor! [Peter Harrison]



**So you want a run ashore - you silly
****ers get back into number 8 rig
and set up number 8 rig for a test
load!!! ...while I'm ashore!**

...I wandered lonely as a cloud

Two metres from the madding crowd
When all at once my name was called
To enter Waitrose hallowed hall
This was the pensioners' special hour
I'd gone to get a bag of flour
But I forgot, when through the door
What I had gone to Waitrose for

The Waitrose staff are extra kind
I told them it had slipped my mind
They asked what else I had forgot
They clearly thought I'd lost the plot
I phoned my wife again to ask
She reminded me of this special task:
*"I need some flour to bake a cake with
all that cream you made me take"*
"Ah yes I recall" I had to lie
I dared not ask what flower to buy
But then I saw them next the tills
a bunch of golden daffodils!
[John Littlechild]

...overseas travel as it used to be
I was instructed to report to the West
London Air Terminal on a Sunday
evening in June 1965 to catch a flight
from Heathrow on Sunday evening for
Singapore. It was a MOD chartered
flight transporting a new crew out for the
HMS Plymouth. As I was a civilian, I had
to fly with the Officers and their families
at the rear of the aircraft.

The aircraft was a Bristol Britannia, a
four turbo-prop job belonging to British
Eagle. We left at 2200 and our first stop
to refuel was Istanbul, as we flew later
over Ankara we hit a lot of air
turbulence and all you could hear was
about 80 people throwing up!! We
stopped at Karachi to refuel again and
then had to call at Bombay to feed
everybody (*Ed. was it curry?*), finally
arriving in Singapore on Tuesday at
0200 – after a 28-hour flight!

We all trooped off to the arrivals hall
where an RN security person started
showing his authority. *"Right, Officers
and their families outside for your taxis",
then "Officers outside for your bus"* and
then for the general crew *"Right you lot,
get outside and get on the bus now"*. He
hadn't mentioned me but 'Hitler'
stomped over to me and said *"Oy didn't
you hear me, get outside now and get
on the bus quick"*. I replied *"Excuse me I
am a civilian"*. *"Oh! I do apologise sir
would you come this way please"* and I
was taken into the Immigration Office

and dealt with privately. I went outside
and got on the familiar blue RN bus with
the rest of the crew but I was asked to
get off as I was not allowed to travel
with this lot – being a civilian that is. I
had to travel on another RN bus – on
my own – to the same place. Yes...a
previous form of 'social distancing'.

We left Sembawang on Wednesday
heading for Fremantle, Western
Australia and on Saturday morning I
was told *"You join your ship today"*
when I asked what time we would be
getting to Auz. I was told *"Next
Tuesday"*, so when I asked how I could
join the ship I was told *"By jackstay!"*,
What's a jackstay?"

I was to soon find out! On a ship
travelling at about 14 knots on a sea
that was anything but flat, about 1,000
(nautical) miles from land, that gap of
about 130 feet looked a hell of a long
way! But arms up, lifejacket on and UP
and AWAY, here we go and that is how
I joined *RFA Tidereach*. [Deckie]

...letter from Kilimanjaro

In 1967 I sailed in *RFA Fort Dunvegan*
and whilst supporting the Beira Patrol
often frequently called at Mombasa.
These visits allowed us to go on safaris
and it was on one of these that I first
saw the Mount Kilimanjaro at 19,340
feet (5,895M) it's the highest free
standing mountain in the world and
thought wow I wouldn't mind climbing
that. But Mombasa visits were only
ever for a few days so the ambition was
put on hold. Now 53 years later and
long after retirement three of us, Rufus
Dunne, Paul Lloyd and I) mostly the
wrong side of 70, thought we would
have a go.

That resulted in us setting out for
Tanzania in January. Its on the equator
so it must be warm we thought. Well it
might be at sea level but at the summit it
is Arctic conditions. Cold and snow
everywhere even your drinking water
freezes! We flew to Moshi in Tanzania

and prepared to climb and camp on the mountain for six nights.



Frank (l) and Rufus at Gilman's Point

We obeyed our guides and over the first four days gradually gained height and became accustomed to the rarefied air. Then we arrived at the Kibo Hut and prepared for the final assault. We set off at midnight for a punishing six hour climb to Gilman's Point (18,651 ft) first and then onto Uhuru Peak (19,340 ft). It's white everywhere but a grand view of Tanzania and Kenya. Then of course all you have to do is get down again!
[Frank Andrews]

...continuing on my First Ship

... and next port of call Trinidad. Officers on the 1200 – 1600 watch took lunch at 1130... a quick lunch as Junior he had to be on the control platform 5 – 10 minutes before the watch started. But first, he had to look at the steering gear, the boiler room and the engine room arriving on the platform in time to be told of any problems etc. Relieved at 1600 then a shower, relaxation with a beer and then dinner at 1830. When on the 2400 – 0400 he received a shake at 2320, time to wake up get dressed and down to the engine room to arrive at the control platform about ten to fifteen minutes before the start of his watch. The 3rd Engineer was also the electrical

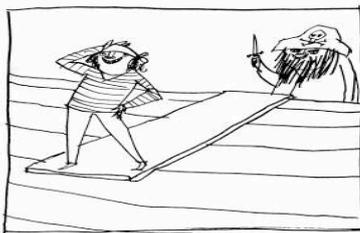
officer and had to do extra work from 0900 to 1100, not on every day. His Junior Engineer had to help/learn. Still, the voyage was relatively peaceful and the sea was calm, no sea sickness!!

On arrival at Pointe a Pierre in Trinidad, the main engine was shut down and routine repairs and maintenance conducted. No opportunity to go ashore during the day but he could go ashore in the evening provided not required for duty. Not a very exciting visit, though this Junior did manage to sample the local rum!!!

Cherryleaf sailed with a hurricane warning, fortunately it missed the ship though it was a little rough for a couple of days. This young engineer was becoming acclimatised to the watch keeping schedule and just about managed to get up for breakfast. Once clear of the hurricane he was awakened early one morning by the Second Engineer who told him that if he was having breakfast, he had better get up now, anyway he had to be in the boiler room by 0830. Breakfast was bypassed and he arrived in the boiler room to see the other engineers already there. They were stuffing rag down the arms and legs of their boiler suits! The Second told him to do the same and asked if he had any experience of expanding boiler tubes. As it happened, he had and was told he was next. With that an engineer appeared out of one of the boiler furnaces, face black with soot and very sweaty. Briefly the pressure had been vented from the boiler but it was still full of boiling water. Each boiler had three furnaces. The furnace where combustion of the fuel took place was corrugated and about three feet in diameter. It was about nine feet in length and attached to a combustion chamber. You could stand up in the combustion chamber. The fuel oil was sprayed into the furnace and ignited. The hot combustion gases then passed through a series of tubes from the

chamber to the front of the boiler and from there up to the funnel, heating the water and generating steam. The furnaces, tubes and combustion chambers were submerged in water. The boiler operated at 150 pounds per square inch (approx. 10kg/square centimetre). The pressure had been vented but the boiler was still full of water close to boiling point (212°F).

A plank had been laid in the furnace to crawl along. They were to spend five minutes in the boiler. One minute, crawling along the furnace, three minutes in the combustion chamber expanding the tubes and another minute to come out of the furnace. As he was crawling along the plank, they shouted at him to remember to dance. Not understanding what they meant he was a little confused. Reaching the combustion chamber, he started expanding the tubes, half a minute later, he understood!



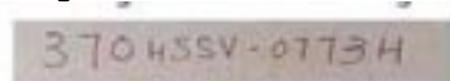
The bottom of the combustion chamber being immersed in the boiler water, the heat very quickly penetrated his shoes, so he started to dance! The forced draught fan was running continuously supplying some air but even so the temperature in the combustion chamber was quite high, hence the five minute spells. By the time one's spell was up you were soaked in sweat, good for reducing weight. After two/three hours the repairs were completed and the boiler was flashed up (started) again. At eleven o'clock it was a quick shower and lunch as the ship was at sea and it was back to the routine.

Our young engineer had quickly found that life could be a little hard...to be continued. [Colin Spencer]

Joke of the Day...

Kim Jong Un decided to send Donald Trump a letter in his own handwriting to let him know he was still in the game.

Trump opened the letter which appeared to contain a single-line coded message:



Trump was baffled, so he e-mailed it to his aides, who had no clue either, so they sent it to the FBI.

No one could solve it at FBI, so it sent to the CIA. With no clue as to its meaning, FBI finally asked MSS (Ministry of State Security in China) for help.

Within a few seconds MSS cabled backed with this reply: Tell the President he's holding the message 'upside down'.



NASI GORENG

...Indonesian fried rice

Nasi Goreng will be instantly recognisable to those of us who sailed Far East – noted as it is for the perfect hangover cure!!

It can be made with prawns or beef instead of the chicken or indeed any leftover meat that may be to hand.

Certainly, there are rumours that unscrupulous chefs may have added a

variety of indigenous rodents into the mix.

Ed. Fortunately you can't get those in Sainsbury's or any other reputable market! However, everything list below can be found in all larger supermarkets.

The ingredients ... serving 2 and it will take your about 25 minutes

- tbsp vegetable oil
- tsp sesame oil
- onion chopped
- garlic cloves minced
- 1/4 tsp ground ginger
- 1/4 tsp turmeric
- 1/2 tsp cumin
- chicken breast diced
- cups basmati rice cooked
- tsp sambal oelek (Indonesian Chilli Paste)
- tsp soy sauce
- tsp ketjap manis (Indonesian sweet Soy sauce)
- 1/4 cup shredded carrot
- 1/4 cup bean sprouts
- 1/4 cup shredded green cabbage
- 1 tbsp fresh coriander chopped
- spring onions sliced
- 1-2 eggs
- 1/4 cup peanuts
- 1/2 lime juice

1. Heat both oils in a large frying pan and cook chopped onion over medium heat for 5 minutes, add garlic and continue cooking for 1 minute longer.
2. Add ground ginger, turmeric and cumin and cook stirring for 1 minute until you start smelling the spices.
3. Add diced chicken breast and cook for 5 minutes until all pieces are sealed.
4. Now add cooked rice to the pan together with sambal oelek, soy sauce and ketjap manis. I add no salt as soy sauce is quite salty but feel free to adjust to your own taste. If using rice dried out from being in the fridge overnight lower the heat and cover the pan with a lid to let it steam for 2 minutes to soften it a bit.

5. Take the lid off and start stirring to coat rice with spices and break up any large chunks of rice.
6. Add your vegetables, the ingredients above are only suggestions, you may use anything you like-beans, peas, broccoli, etc.
7. Stir fry for 2-3 minutes.
8. Meanwhile fry eggs on a separate pan for a topping. Alternatively, you can whisk your eggs, cook them like an omelette, slice in strips and use them as a topping.
9. To finish Nasi Goreng off, squeeze the juice of 1/2 lime all over it, sprinkle with sliced spring onions, chopped cilantro, peanuts and fried egg.
10. Serve peanuts, sliced green onions, chopped coriander and chillies on the side as toppings so people may add more if they wish. ...**Enjoy!!!**

Life after the RFA...

It will be no news to you that life with the RFA is one of the best jobs on the planet. Or at least it was in our day. That perfect blend of military training, experiences and kit to play with, along with the more relaxed vibe of a merchant navy outfit pretty much guaranteed we were having the best time of anyone on the high seas. The best time of my working life, I now realise looking back. On paper it was the launching pad of many new adventures and of a great new career, but in actual fact I'm starting to realise it was 'it'.

But we all find a need/reason to come ashore, and when I did, after nearly 20 years, I found the skills and experience I had, as well as the badge of being 'RFA', launched me easily into a plumb job as a marine pilot in Portsmouth. Life as a pilot wasn't too stressful; I was equipped with the skills and the hours were light enough for me to take a second job (more of that in a moment).

Pilotage is not without its moments; in ten years I had a couple. I ran over the

Outer Spit Buoy once (got away with it) and I do remember once, after committing to entering the harbour entrance in some marginal seas on a Greek reefer, having the thought flash through my brain 'I want my mother'. There was a lot of time off, so I took that second job on Marchwood Lake, Warsash's manned model shiphandling facility, where I taught international masters and pilots shiphandling techniques, and messed about on the ship models. This was brilliant fun! When I wasn't teaching I'd be out in a dinghy building a new terminal (there was for a time a Shennan Terminal on the planet!) and making some lifelong friends amongst the staff. This was the fourth time in my career I would cross paths with Roy Stanbrook, my RFA colleague, who had replaced me on *Sir Galahad* and was on her when she went down to the Falklands, and who will pop up again later.

After ten years of this, a job came up at Harwich Haven Authority for a pilotage manager for 39 precious pilots. God did I have to bring my A game! Many a time did the words of one of my RFA superiors pop into my brain at just the right time to be delivered, and usually had the desired effect. I can still recall the words of Captain Dickie Guy as he took issue with the undone top button of my shirt... *"Dress, Shennan, is the one of the first points of a good ship's discipline. A ship runs on discipline, efficiency and morale, and at all times, Shennan, an officer must COMMAND respect!"*

It must have sunk in, because later on when I went to Australia it took me a good few years to drop the tie, and while I had nine suits in my closet, I'm pretty sure most Aussies have one jacket they leave on the back of their office doors, and two pairs of pants they rotate all year! I only dropped the tie to avoid being ribbed.

Soon after I started at Harwich, the CEO casually asked me if I thought I could do the Harbour Master job. There must have still been a streak of cocky RFA deck officer in me, because I looked up and said *"give me six months and I could do both."* Well he took me up on that and I guess that served me right. The second major stage of my career, that of Harbour Master, had begun...to be continued.

[Dave Shennan]



**...yes Sir! This is the new normal
...the clippers were on special offer at
the garden centre.**

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