

# The Life and Times of H.M.S. Concord



*Peace With Honour*

**China Station 1945-1958**

**H.M.S. Concord Association 1995-2010**

This book is dedicated to all crew members who served in H.M.S. Concord, a ship with a heart and was loved by all who served in her from Boy Seaman to Captain.

The compilers of this book also dedicate it to the families of the crews who supported their husbands, sons, and boyfriends whilst they faced the rigours of the sea and in some cases the guns of an enemy.

It has been produced as a memory of life aboard our ship, a humble member of the fleet in which we served.

**Peter Lee-Hale**  
**December 2011**

<b>Compilers</b>	Peter Lee-Hale	1955-56
	Derek Hodgson	1948-50
	Alan Ausden	1956-58

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<b>SHIPMATE</b>	
NAME.....	RANK/RATE.....
COMMISSION.....	BRANCH.....
AGE ON JOINING HMS CONCORD.....	
SIGNATURE.....	
NICK NAME.....	

**Cover designed by Claire Aplin (BA Hons)**

Front cover: Leaving Malta on the way to the China Station.

Back cover: Entering Portsmouth harbour, flying the paying off pennant

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**Disclaimer**

This book is composed of many articles, many contributed by shipmates and their families over the life of our Association.

They cover historical events, that are recorded, in the National Archives at Kew, and many from memory, of individual experiences.

They have been accepted in good faith as to their authenticity, and not necessarily the views of the Editorial team.

## Foreword

By The President, Commander Rodney Agar RN.



It is splendid that Alan Ausden, Derek Hodgson and Peter Lee-Hale have put together this record of our destroyer, *HMS CONCORD*, over her short life-span from 1947 –1958. Although one of fifty fleet destroyers in commission at that period, and a single ship in the 8<sup>th</sup> Destroyer Squadron with the Far East Fleet, she was a potent symbol of all the Royal Navy stood for at a peak of its world-wide influence.

For all of us who served in her, she had a huge influence on our lives – a ship with an indefinable spirit in which we lived and worked together for over two years in different commissions. This spirit, has carried forward for 52 years afterwards in the shape of our HMS Concord Association, until finally “paying off” last year in 2010. Our shared bonds of service and friendship, which now include families and loved ones, are a testimony to that ‘Concord Spirit’ ; and we must thank hugely all those Committee Members and the Newsletter Editors who, with their time and devotion for 15 years, have kept our Association alive until old age has sadly called ‘Time’.

This book draws sketches of Concord’s wide-ranging service to the Pacific Ocean and back, where she took part in the Malayan Emergency, the Yangtze Incident, the Korean War for 3 years, Pearl River, Australia and voyaging to many other British Dependencies. All forming part of the Navy’s role in support of British interests. We worked hard and played hard. Over the years we won many sports events, and in August 1953, winning the 8<sup>th</sup> DS Regatta, coming first in 7 out of 8 races, to be “Cock” of the Squadron, however we did lose some as well!

We saw action against North Korea and had several escapades, people got lost and once we nearly went the wrong side of Formosa – but got away with it! *Concord* always had spark and good humour, with an aura of confidence and efficiency. Above all we had ‘Pride of Ship’ which continues to this day.

During the few years I have been your President, many of our *Concord* shipmates have said that ‘she was the best ship I ever served in’. Although we served in her over 50 years ago, I am sure that I speak for us all when I say that we will never forget her and her motto “Peace with Honour”, nor those of our shipmates who have crossed the bar.

I am very delighted to be asked to contribute the foreword to this excellent book.

**Rodney Agar**

## Ships Specifications

### HMS Concord (R63)

HMS Concord was a C-class destroyer of the Royal Navy.

She was initially ordered as HMS Corso during the Second World War, and was built by John I. Thornycroft & Co., Southampton. She was launched on 14 May 1945, renamed HMS Concord in June 1946 and commissioned on 20 December 1946. She was involved in the 'Amethyst incident' in 1949; Concord entered the River Yangtze and proceeded to a point off the Woosung Forts, the location of a heavy gun battery 38 miles from the mouth of the river. Lt. Cdr. Kerans, Commanding Amethyst, had from the beginning requested that Concord should meet him there to give protection at the most critical point of his escape. There was no boom at the mouth of the river. Concord went on to serve during the Korean War, before finally being decommissioned. She arrived at the breakers yard at Inverkeithing on 22 October 1962.

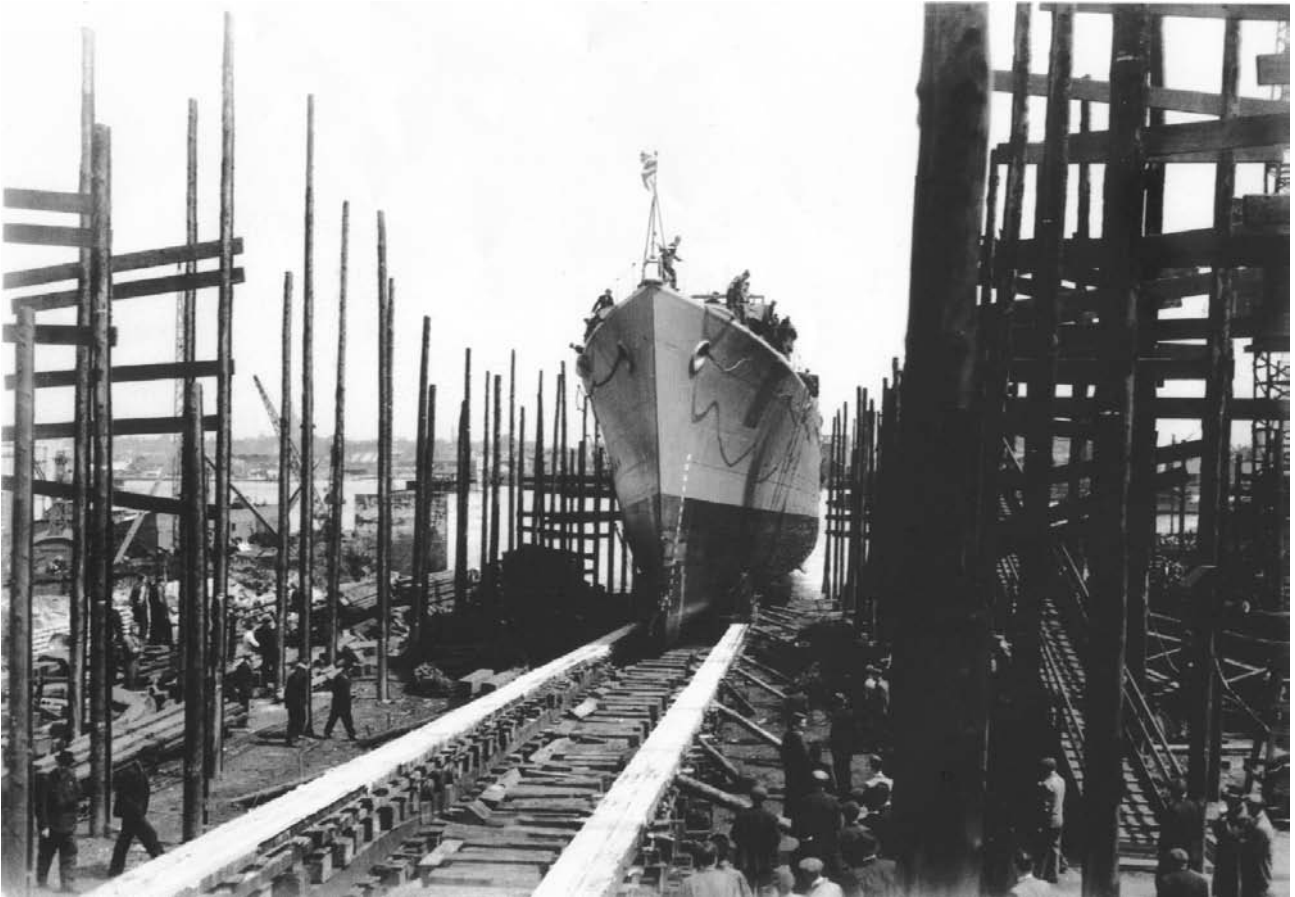
#### Career (UK)

Class and type:	C-class destroyer
Name:	HMS Concord
Builder:	John I. Thornycroft & Company, Southampton
Laid down:	18 November 1943
Launched:	14 May 1945
Commissioned:	20 December 1946
Renamed:	Launched as Corso Renamed Concord in June 1946
Identification:	Pennant number: R63 (later D03)
Status:	Arrived for breaking up on 22 October 1962

#### General characteristics

Displacement:	1,885 tons (1,915 tonnes) 2,545 tons full (2,585 tonnes)
Length:	362.75 ft (110.57 m) o/a
Beam:	35.75 ft (10.90 m)
Draught:	11.75 ft (3.58 m)
Propulsion:	2 Admiralty 3-drum boilers, Parsons single-reduction geared steam turbines, 40,000 shp (29.8 MW), 2 shafts
Speed:	36 knots (67 km/h) / 32 knots (59 km/h) full
Range:	4,675 nmi (8,658 km) at 20 knots (37 km/h) 1,400 nmi (2,600 km) at 32 knots (59 km/h)
Complement:	186
Sensors and processing systems:	Radar Type 275 fire control on director Mk.VI
Armament:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 4 x QF 4.5 in L/45 guns Mark IV on mounts CP Mk.V</li> <li>▪ 2 x Bofors 40 mm L/60 guns on twin mount "Hazemeyer" Mk.IV, or;</li> <li>▪ 4 x QF 2 pdr L/39 guns Mk.VIII on quad mount Mk.VII (Caprice only)</li> <li>▪ 4 x anti-aircraft mountings;               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Single Bofors 40 mm Mk.III</li> <li>▪ Single QF 2 – pdr Mk.VIII Mk.XVI</li> <li>▪ Single Oerlikon 20 mm P Mk.III</li> <li>▪ Twin Oerlikon 20 mm Mk.V</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ 8 (2x4) tubes for 21-inch (530 mm) torpedoes Mk.IX</li> <li>▪ 4 throwers and 2 racks for 96 depth charges</li> </ul>

## **Ships Launch**



H.M.S. Concord being launched at John I. Thornycroft & Company, Woolston

Southampton. 14<sup>th</sup> May 1945

Commissioned 20<sup>th</sup> December 1946

**Lord Cottesloe Commander John Fremantle RN  
Patron and former President  
The H.M.S. Concord Association**

It is with sadness, but great pride that I write my last contribution to the H.M.S. Concord Association.

It has been my privilege and pleasure (and these two do not always go together) to be your President and latterly your Patron. I am sad that ill health prevented me attending any of your functions recently – in particular the final reunion, dinner in Portsmouth Guildhall and would like to start by congratulating Peter Lee-Hale, and his Officers and Committee for keeping us going so well in spite of endless difficulties and setbacks. His tireless example was an inspiration to us all. I would now like to thank the Sea Cadet Corps, for their splendid support, a real hope for the future. And of course, I thank you all for the kind generosity and courteous consideration shown to Ann and myself it's so very, much appreciated.

Thank you all more than I can easily express.

I joined H.M.S. Concord in Hong Kong in January 1949 as an acting Sub Lieutenant. Very much a junior officer, training for a watchkeeping certificate, as I recall my pay was eleven shillings a day. They were exciting times involving the Malayan Emergency and later the Korean War. I was fortunate to get the job of Navigator and Communications Officer of a Fleet Destroyer in immediate post war years and I remember the "Yangtze Incident" and H.M.S. Amethyst's daring escape about which so much has already been written. These items stand out in my memory. First the flood of congratulatory messages from all over the world – most of which I saw, as we acted as W/T Guard Ship as she only had one exhausted telegraphist left.

Secondly our 'Chief', Lieutenant (E) Hans Hamilton who had been down in the machinery spaces all night, came up to the upper deck in his overalls to see H.M.S. Amethyst for himself. He said to me, I reckon you earned your second stripe last night Sub, and I have not forgotten that. So perhaps us "oldies" who are ready to criticise the young and often deserve it, we should remember that the odd word of praise does not come amiss.

Finally, I shall remember to my dying day, Commander Keran's triumphant signal, for it, was a triumph; "Have rejoined the Fleet south of Woosung. No damage or casualties. God Save The King".



Lord Cottesloe



## The Captains of H.M.S. Concord

Lieut. Cdr. William Donald D.S.C. 1946-1948

Lieut. Cdr. Nigel Rodney 1948-1950

Rear Admiral Ian McClaughlan C.B. D.S.C. 1950-1952

Vice Admiral Sir Charles Piercy Mills 1952-1953

Commander Christopher James 1953-1954

Captain Tony McCrum 1954-1956

Commander John Marryat 1956-1958



## Concord History – The Captains

### Lt Cdr William Donald D.S.C.\*

1946 – 1948

Born 1st July 1910



William Spooner Donald was born at Keswick, Cumberland, on July 1 1910, the son of a former mayor of Carlisle. After Dartmouth he served in small ships, mainly on the China station. He died aged 91.

He proved himself as one the most successful small ship commanders, during the Norwegian campaign in 1940, and then served at sea continuously throughout the rest of the Second World War.

When the Germans occupied Norway, Winston Churchill, then First Lord of the Admiralty, ordered the recapture of Trondheim, which lies astride the north-south railway line. As second-in-command of the sloop Black Swan, Donald organised the overnight loading of marines and sailors in appalling weather; and it was his skill which ensured she did not capsize when she sailed overloaded with stores, ammunition and field guns lashed to her upper deck.

Turning the weather to advantage, the four ships, led by Black Swan, steered a course along the Norwegian coast to the small town of Andalsnes, at Romdals fjord, which led to Trondheim. As Black Swan approached the jetty in the dark on April 17, Donald remarked to his officers, "I don't want to appear fussy, but are we going to be greeted by cheers and kisses from Norwegian blondes, or a hail of gunfire from invisible Huns?" However, the Germans had not ventured this far down the fjord, and the marines landed without opposition. A field howitzer was unloaded and rushed to the front to go into action against German parachute troops, who were occupying an important railway junction; they quickly surrendered. For a time the howitzer and a handful of marines and seamen were all that stood before the advancing German 21<sup>st</sup> Army Group; the occasion was the last in which a naval field gun was fired in anger.

Except for a brief visit to Scapa Flow for more ammunition, Donald's ship provided anti-air cover for the troops ashore throughout the next fortnight. He sat high up in his gunnery tower, directing Black Swan's six 4 inches, high-angle guns which were vital to her survival under constant attack. From dawn till dusk she steamed round the fjord's confined waters, avoiding falling bombs and bringing down at least five aircraft it was, he opined, "like bees buzzing in a lavatory". There were several near misses. On the last day, with only 17 shells left for the main armament, a bomb passed straight through Black Swan without exploding and went out of the bottom between the shafts, injuring only three men seriously Donald reported that it was a miracle that she had only "lost a few tail feathers".

The ship's crew soon learned that there was occasionally time between air attacks to pick up fish, which had been stunned by explosions. Donald could hardly disguise his glee when, on one of these "fishing expeditions", an admiral commandeered the boat to go ashore, and found himself knee-deep in dead cod. It was worth the reprimand he received, and did not stop him being awarded his first DSC.



Ships Co 1948

In *Stand by for Action* (1956), Donald's best-selling autobiography, which is written with humour and humanity, he recalls that he commanded the corvette *Guillemot* and the destroyers *Verdun* and *Ulster* on convoy escort off the East Coast, at the Anzio landings and the Normandy invasion. Later he was commander of a troop transport, *Glengyle*, in which he rescued internees from the Japanese prison camp on Stanley, Hong Kong. Donald's success owed much to his highly developed sixth sense for danger. In January 1941, on his first voyage in *Guillemot*, he told the gun crews to stand-to shortly before a Heinkel bomber was spotted – and shot down. On another occasion, he experienced an “overwhelming premonition of danger”, and ordered the sea boat to be lowered before an accompanying collier was mined and sunk, all the crew were rescued. Unsurprisingly, Donald's crews loved him both for this and the concern he showed them. Once, when they were being fired at from German artillery positions they could not see, he noticed that a nervous young rating was beginning to infect others, and quietly asked the youngster to go below to make tea.

In July 1941, he joined *Verdun*, which had brought home the body of the Unknown Soldier, and made it an effective anti-aircraft ship on the East Coast convoy routes. While commanding both these ships, he made more than 150 voyages through the dangerous “E-boat Alley” off the entrance to the Thames, without casualties.

Donald next took over the brand new *Ulster*, which was part of a squadron engaged in a melee with German destroyers in which the range was so close that he described the enemy fire as niblick shots – which went over his head. Steaming ahead of the other members of his squadron, he pressed home his attack single-handed on three large German destroyers of the *Elbing* class, firing at point blank range and setting the leading ship on fire. He broke off action only once, when his own ship was badly damaged. Recommending him for a Bar to his DSC, Donald's Captain (D) praised him for “determined leadership and gallantry, which was the outstanding feature of the engagement”. However, Donald, in his own report, gave full credit to his young ship's company, most of them in action for the first time.

Donald received further recognition when, north of the Straits of Messina, he dropped a depth charge on U-223, to put it off its aim. A day-long hunt commenced, with Donald in

Ulster and his friend “Beaky” Armstrong in the destroyer Laforey, taking it in turns to hold the asdic contact and con the other ship in to drop her depth charges. At nightfall Ulster was ordered in to Palermo to replenish depth charges while two American destroyers eventually forced the U-boat to surface and sunk by gunfire. Donald was mentioned in dispatches for his “skilful and resolute handling” of Ulster, but “Beaky” and more than 150 men from Laforey were missing.

Donald had a great affinity with cats, which went with him in his ships – he reckoned they brought luck. His first cat, given to him by his wife, saw action on Ulster in the North Sea, the Mediterranean and the Channel. It was known as Geordie until a litter of kittens was born in Donald’s sea cabin, whereupon she was rechristened Georgie.

As a result of progressive deafness, probably exacerbated by constant exposure to the sound of guns, Donald was invalided out of the Navy in 1948. He returned to live at Keswick, Cumberland, where he ran Castle Fisheries however, he used to stir abroad to visit Edinburgh regularly as Secretary of the Angling Co-operative Association, a post he held for seven years.

Donald married, in 1936, Elizabeth Housemayne, who died in 1996, he was survived by his daughter who has since died.



HMS Concord leaving Grand Harbour, Malta for China Station 1947

## Concord History – The Captains

### Lieutenant Cdr Nigel Rodney

1948 – 1950

Born 21<sup>st</sup> February 1917



- 1927/1935 Following education at a Prep School Nigel joined the Royal Navy as a Cadet aged 13.
- 1930/35 Dartmouth Naval College
- 1935/36 Midshipman on HMS Barham (West Indies), Air course on HMS Courageous, HMS Norfolk, HMS Emerald (Indian Ocean)
- 1938 Sub Lieutenant and Torpedo Officer HMS Caster
- 1939 Served on HMS Basilisk as Sub Lieutenant/ Lieutenant
- 1941 Served on a French ship F.S. CH13, commissioned as R.N. ship
- 1942 Executive Officer HMS Quantock
- 1943/1944 Served on HMS Queensborough as Lieutenant, mentioned in despatches Operation Avalanche allied landings in Salerno.
- 1943 His second mention in despatches for gallantry and outstanding service in the face of the enemy.
- 1944/1945 As Captain of HMS Brecon he was awarded his third, mentioned in despatches, for sinking of U-450 off Anzio, he was awarded his fourth mention in despatches for distinguished service during the period of 1944-45. The U Boat Captain was invited to have tea. We received a return invitation for tea in East Africa in 1966. This invitation took two years to reach us having been sent to the C.O. of HMS Brecon-Malta!
- 1946/1947 Lieutenant Commander and Captain, HMS Padstow, West Indies/Venezuela.
- 1947//48 Returned to U.K., for leave and joined HMS Matapan in the Clyde as Captain
- 1948/49 Lieutenant Commander (Executive Officer) HMS Aurora.
- 1949/1950 Joined HMS Concord, Commanding Officer. Hong Kong.
- 1951/52 Commander, Victory Barracks. Portsmouth.
- 1953 Commander, HMS Matapan for new sonar trials. Devonport.
- 1953/54 Commander, (Executive Officer) HMS Triumph. Malta
- 1954/55 Commander, (Executive Officer) HMS Glory.
- 1956/57 Commander, (Executive Officer) RNAS Lossiemouth
- 1958 Commander, RN Staff College, Greenwich
- 1958/59 Commander, Southern Area Sea Cadet Officer, on staff of Admiral Commanding Reserves.
- 1959 Joined Royal Naval Air Station HMS Fulmar
- 1960 He left the Royal Navy and became Executive Officer as Commander with the Sea Cadet Corps.
- 1960 Retired.

Unfortunately, Peter and I, with the aid of his wife and family, were unable to piece together his whole career in the Royal Navy, as you may have noticed several large chunks have been missed out, and some of the information is a bit short on dates, joining and leaving, but with what information provided by his wife and the Naval Authorities we have managed to cobble together what we could.



Ships Co 1949



Captain's Farewell Party

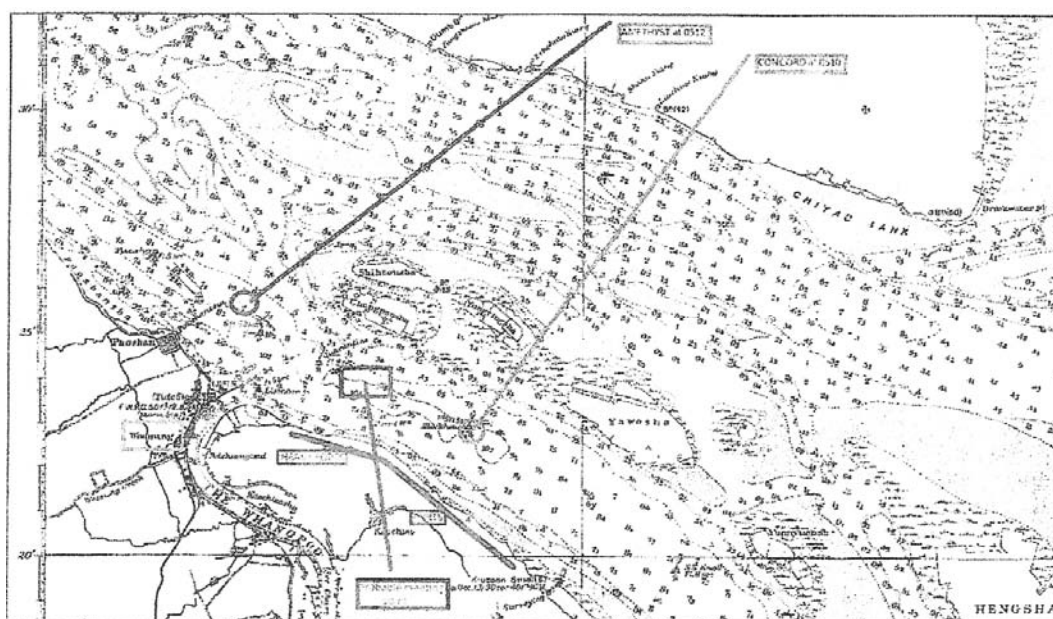
## Lieutenant Cdr Nigel Rodney - A Wonderful Feat of Seamanship

History has, for various reasons, ignored the bravery and top class seamanship shown by this Captain during the famous “Yangtze Incident” when he took his ship many miles up the river Yangtze for the sole purpose of giving protection to HMS Amethyst when passing the notorious Poasham Fort at Woosung.

When considering his navigational prowess it is necessary to examine the chart of the area at that time. One must also acknowledge the considerable ability of the young Sub Lieutenant John Fremantle, our Past President and now Patron, who was given the task of being Navigational Officer. Reference to the “Caution” printed within the chart emphasises the dangers of changing sand banks, buoys and other obstacles. It has to be realised that at the time of the incident it was a war zone and no buoys or lights in place. The passage up river relied entirely on radar and echo soundings which with speeds up to 22 knots was a remarkable feat.

When reaching Blockhouse buoy at 0510, approximately 4 miles from Woosung, speed was reduced so that the two ships would meet up at 0530 to enable them to pass the fort together. It has to be stressed that HMS Concord would have been in full view of the gun battery for some time and the expected gunfire could have commenced at any moment. Even so, as the two ships approached each other, Rodney signalled “Fancy meeting you again!” to which Kerans replied “Never (repeat) never, has a ship been more welcome”.

The Ministry of Defence has now acknowledged that HMS Concord did meet HMS Amethyst at Woosung and that the incident was treated as top secret at the time. In view of this, it should now be considered as an opportune time for public recognition of this achievement and worthy of medallic awards to these two gentlemen. The fact that no gun fire occurred is irrelevant and does not detract from the skill and bravery under stress they were subjected too.



## Concord History – The Captains

### Rear Admiral Ian McLaughlan CB D.S.C.\*

1950 – 1952

Born 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1919



- Jan 1937 Entered Royal Navy as Special Entry Cadet. Served in Training Ships Erebus, Frobisher and Vindictive.
- Jan 1938 Joined HMS Birmingham as Midshipman for commission on China Station. Jan 1940 Sub Lieutenant's course.
- Apr 1940 Joined HMS Berkeley as Sub Lieutenant. Promoted Lieutenant in 1941 and appointed First Lieutenant. Took part in Channel Convoys and Channel Operations including Dieppe Raid. Awarded D.S.O and twice mentioned in despatches.
- Oct 1942 Joined HMS King Alfred as Divisional Officer
- Jun 1943 Joined HMS Hardy as First Lieutenant. Took part in Home Fleet operations and Arctic Convoys. Mentioned in despatches
- Apr 1944 Joined HMS Apollo as First Lieutenant. Took part in intensive Anti U Boat minelaying operations and operations in support of Normandy landings.
- Jul 1945 Joined HMS Chequers as First Lieutenant for Mediterranean Commission. Operations included Palestine Anti Immigrant Patrol.
- Mar 1947 In Charge of HMS Modeste, sea cadet training ship, Portsmouth. Promoted Lieutenant Commander, October 1947.
- May 1948 Appointed in Command HMS Flint Castle. Second Training Squadron at Portland. Ship employed on Anti Submarine training.
- May 1950 Appointed in Command. 8<sup>th</sup> Destroyer Squadron on the Far East Station. Took part in Korean War Awarded Bar to D S.C.
- Dec 1951 Promoted Commander
- Jun 1952 Attended Joint Services Staff College
- Jan 1953 Attended Armed Forces Staff College, Norfolk, Virginia.
- Sep 1953 Appointed Commander HMS Jupiter, (Reserve Fleet, Clyde)
- Mar 1955 Appointed in Command HMS Chieftan, for service with the Home Fleet. Took part in fleet visit to Leningrad.
- Nov 1955 Appointed in Command HMS Chevron for general service commission. Activities included Cyprus Patrol and Suez Ops. Mentioned in Despatches. July 1957 Staff Officer Operations to the CinC, Portsmouth.
- Dec 1958 Promoted to Captain.
- Jun 1959 Appointed Assistant Director of Plans. Admiralty.
- Aug 1961 Appointed in Command HMS Whirlwind and Captain (F) 2<sup>nd</sup> Frigate Squadron. Jan 1963 Attended the Imperial Defence College
- 1964 – 66 Director of Naval Operations and Trade in Ministry of Defence
- Jun 1966 Appointed in Command HMS Hampshire: Expo'67 in Montreal
- 1968 – 70 Appointed Chief of Staff to the Commander Far East Fleet
- 1970 – 72 Appointed Admiral Commanding Reserves and Naval Recruiting. Retired





Ships Co 1952

### Korean War Awards 1950-1953

McLaughlin I.D.	Cdr.		DSC bar to DSC
Lowe A.F. A.M.*	A.B.	PJX 819579	DSM
Hamilton A.G.	Lt. Cdr.		DSC mentioned in Dispatches
Trinder R.G.E.	CPO	PKX86244	Bronze oak leaf ,mentioned in Dispatches
Black R.G.	Ch.El.	PMX49966	as above.
Mills C.P.	Cdr.		DSC
Evans J.	A.B.	PSSX845913	DSM
Burbidge A.A.	A.B.	PSSX819579	Mentioned in Dispatches
Sullivan E.J.	Lt. Cdr.(E)		Mentioned in Dispatches
Cox J.A.	O.A.	PMX	Mentioned in Dispatches

### Awards Conferred by the President of the United States of America Legion of Merit. Degree of Legionnaire.

Mills, Charles Piercy DSC Captain

\*Albert Medal (Later to be known as George Cross) awarded to Boy Lowe for his heroic Action. HMS Illustrious at Portland 17<sup>th</sup>.October 1948.

## Concord History – The Captains

### Vice Admiral Sir Charles Piercy Mills KCB CBE DSC

1952 – 1953

Born 4<sup>th</sup> October 1914.



He entered the Royal Naval College Dartmouth in May 1928 and went to sea as a cadet in HMS Hood in 1932. Between 1933 and 1939, he served in HM Ships Danae, Enterprise and Brazen. After completing the signal course in June 1940, he was appointed to HMS Renown as assistant to the Squadron (S) and (WIT) Officer. He subsequently joined HMS Hood where he remained until early 1941. For the next eighteen months until August 1942, he served on the Staff of Captain (D) Liverpool. After which he took part in the landing at Algiers. After a short period on the staff of Captain Training, Western Approaches. In 1943, he joined the Staff of the Allied Naval Commander, Expeditionary Force for the invasion of France. In August 1944, he married Anne Cumberlege and they had two daughters.

In February 1945, he was appointed to H.M.S Royalist as Communications Officer on the Staff of Rear Admiral Escort Carriers. It was while holding this appointment that he received a Mention in Despatches in the New Year Honours 1946. Early in 1947, he went to the Signal Division at the Admiralty and it was while serving in the Admiralty that he was promoted to Commander in December 1947. His next appointment in June 1948 was as Staff Communications Officer on the Staff of Flag Officer Air (Home).

In September 1950 he took the Naval Staff course and in April the following year the Joint Services Staff Course. He was next appointed in command of HMS Concord in January 1952. It was for service in the Korean War while in command of HMS Concord that he was awarded the DSC in December 1952. After relinquishing this appointment, he became Executive Officer of HMS Mercury in November 1953.

Promoted to Captain in December 1953, he returned to the Admiralty in March 1954 as Deputy Director of the Signal Division. His next appointment in June 1956 was as Chief Staff Officer to Flag Officer Second-in-Command Mediterranean. Early in 1957, he was appointed a CBE for services in the Suez operation.

In January 1959 he took command of HMS Daring and as Captain (D) 2<sup>nd</sup> Destroyer Squadron and on completion of that appointment he went in March, 1961 as Director of the RN Staff College Greenwich. He was promoted Rear Admiral in January 1963, having taken up the appointment of Director General Weapons. He was appointed a CB in the Birthday Honours 1964.

On 15<sup>th</sup> January 1966, Vice Admiral Mills hoisted his flag as the Flag Officer Second-in-Command, Far East Fleet. He was promoted Vice Admiral in August 1966 and assumed Command at Plymouth on 15<sup>th</sup> July 1967. He was the last Commander-in-Chief, Plymouth, where he served until May 1969. He was appointed a Knight Commander of the Bath in the New Year Honours List, 1968.

He left Plymouth in 1969 to become Lieutenant-Governor and Commander-in-Chief, Guernsey, where he remained until August 1974. He then retired to live in Aldeburgh.

Suffolk. Where he joined the Committee of the Aldeburgh branch of the RNLI, becoming Chairman and then President. Was also Captain of the Aldeburgh Golf Club in 1980 and later became President for five years, and was made an Honorary Life Member of both Aldeburgh Golf Club and Aldeburgh Yacht Club. He was Chairman and later President of the Aldeburgh Society, and was Chairman of the Aldeburgh Fishermen's Trade Guild and President of the 1<sup>st</sup> Aldeburgh Sea Scouts. He was Captain of the Senior Golfers' Society in 1985. He was President of the Aldeburgh Conservative Association and was Chairman of SSAFA in Suffolk.



Ships Company 1952



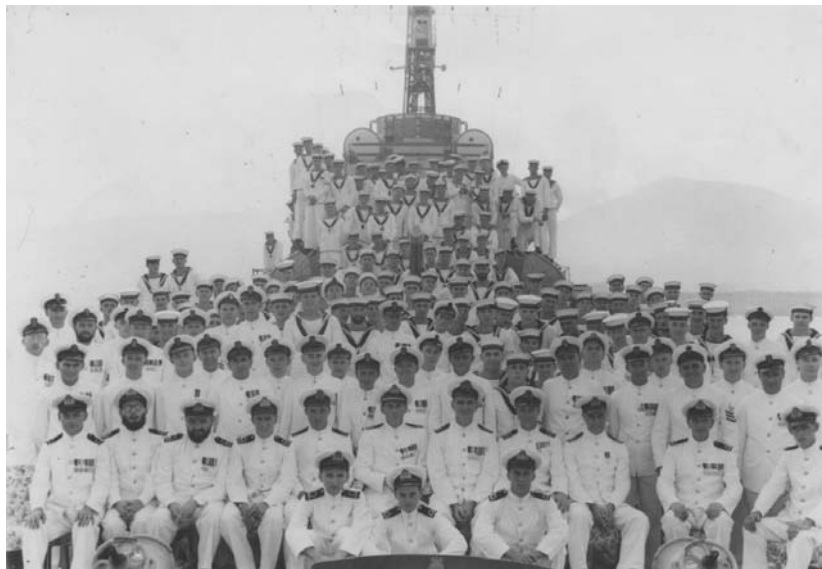
Commander Mills

## Concord History – The Captains

### Commander Christopher James

1953 – 1955

Despite all our efforts to date, we have been unable to unearth Commander James's naval history.



Ships Co 1953 – 1954



Commander James

## Concord History – The Captains

### Captain Tony McCrum

Nov 1954 – May 1956

Born 13<sup>th</sup> March 1919



- Sept 1932     Joined R.N. College Dartmouth, Drake term, as Cadet, aged 13.
- June 1933     Awarded three cuts of the cane, "general untidiness and slackness in falling in.
- June 1935     Winner of Graham Naval History Prize and English Literature Prize.
- April 1936     Passed out of R.N.C. Dartmouth, having failed three times to be promoted to Cadet Captain. Distinguished myself by coming bottom in seamanship and engineering in the passing out exams.
- April 1936     Joined HMS Frobisher, training cruiser, as seagoing cadet for sea training.
- Sept 1936     Joined HMS Royal Oak for further sea training.
- Jan 1937     Royal Oak for Midshipman training.
- June 1937     Failed to return onboard Royal Oak before she sailed on active service during the Spanish Civil War. Three-month leave stopped. This taught me a lesson I was never caught out again.
- Sept 1937     Joined HMS Basilisk for small ship sea training.
- Dec 1937     Rejoined Royal Oak for further training
- Dec 1938     Left Royal Oak on promotion to Acting Sub Lieutenant Attained First Class Pass in seamanship exams, better than coming bottom at Dartmouth.
- Jan 1939     Sub Lieutenants courses in HMS Excellent and HMS Vernon.
- June 1939     Courses abandoned due to looming World War. Drafted to HMS Skipjack, a Fleet Minesweeper in Reserve Fleet at Chatham. Navigator and Gunnery Officer. Commissioned her and worked her up.
- Sept 1939     Outbreak of World War II.
- May 1940     Promoted to Lieutenant.
- June 1940     Dunkirk. Skipjack sunk by dive-bombers off Calais. Nice swim
- July 1940     Appointed First Lieutenant of HMS Bridlington, a Fleet Minesweeper of the Bangor class, building on the Clyde.
- Sept 1940     Minesweeping in the Atlantic, the North Sea and the Channel, uneventful.
- Feb 1942     To HMS Mercury for Long (C) Course.
- Nov 1942     Joined HMS Mendip, Hunt class destroyer based at Sheerness on anti E Boat patrols. Appointment as Squadron Signal Officer to Captain D21. Very exciting.
- Feb 1943     To Combined Operations Training Centre at Largs in Scotland for training in Amphibious Operations. Very Cold
- Mar 1943     Joined HMS Largs, Headquarters Ship as Signal Officer.
- April 1943     Appointed to the staff of Rear Admiral McGrigor as Assistant Staff Signal Officer for the planning the first European D Day landing in Sicily. Based ashore at Djidjelli in Algeria.
- July 1943     Rejoined HMS Largs for Operation Husky, the invasion of Sicily.
- Sept 1943     Appointed to USS Biscayne, flagship of the Commander, Landing Craft and Bases, US Navy for the invasion of Italy at Salerno. Very exciting.
- Oct 1943     Appointed Staff Signal Officer on the staff of Flag Officer, Western Italy at Naples.
- Jan 1944     Joined HMS Boxer for the Anzio landings, near Rome.

Feb 1944 Assistant Staff Signal Officer Plans, on staff of CinC, Mediterranean, Algiers.  
Aug 1944 Joined USS Catoctin, flagship of Task Force Commander for the landings in the South of France at Frejus.

Aug 1944 Appointed British Naval Signal Liaison Officer, Riviera Coast, based at Toulon. To UK for foreign service leave.

Jan 1945 Joined HMS Tartar. Tribal class destroyer for service in Eastern Fleet at, Trincomalee. Appointed as Squadron Communications Officer to Captain D8.

Nov 1945 Returned to UK and paid off Tartar.

Jan 1946 Senior Instructor at Royal Naval Signal School. Devonport. (ex nudist camp near the present Plymouth Airport. No nudist left when we got there.)

Jan 1947 Flag Lieutenant to CinC Plymouth and Command Signal Officer.

May 1948 Promoted to Lieutenant Commander.

Jan 1948 Flag Lieutenant to CinC Home Fleet, and Deputy Fleet Communications Officer. HMS Duke of York and HMS Implacable.

Dec 1949 Officer. HMS Duke of York and HMS Implacable.

Jan 1950 Long Course Instructor at HMS Mercury, East Meon.

Jun 1951 Promoted Commander.

Dec 1951 Appointed to Staff of Flag Officer Royal Yacht for the forthcoming Commonwealth Tour of His Majesty King George VI.

Jan 1952 Joined T.S Gothic, which had been taken up from trade and prepared as a Royal Yacht.

Early 1952 The King was diagnosed as having cancer and Princess Elizabeth and Prince Philip took his place.

Feb 1952 The King dies. Tour Cancelled.

Apr 1952 Appointed Applications Commander (C) at HMS Mercury II. The Admiralty Signal and Radar Establishment on Portsdown Hill.

May 1954 Commanding Officer's Courses.

Nov 1954 Commanding Officer, HMS Concord.

Aug 1956 Commander, HMS Ganges.

July 1958 Promoted to Captain.

Aug 1958 Assistant Chief Of Staff (Communications) to CinC Northern European.

Jun 1960 Command at Kolsaas, near Oslo. A NATO appointment

Nov 1960 Captain Amphibious Warfare in HMS Meon in the Gulf. Very hot.

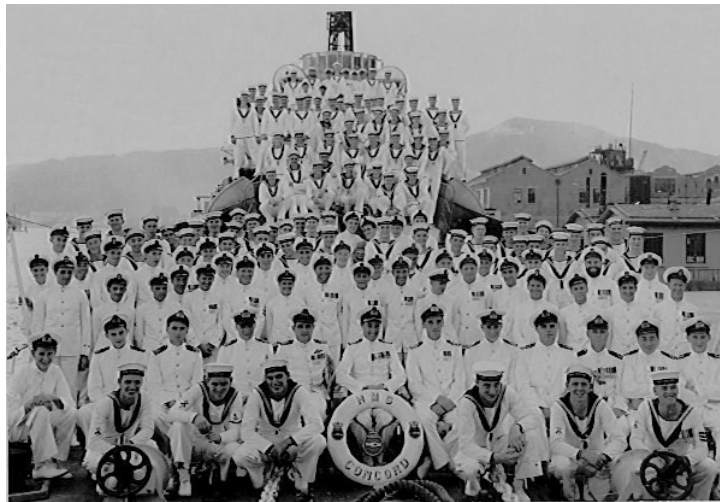
Apr 1962 Vice President, Admiralty Interview Board, HMS Sultan.

Apr 1963 Chairman, M.O.D Committee on the integration of Military Communications subsequent on the abolition of three Service Ministries.

Dec 1963 Resigned from the Royal Navy to take up appointment in the Steel Industry in Sheffield.

1964 – 1983 Positions in the Steel and Construction Materials Industries.  
Retired to Dartmouth; national park not the prison. Engaged in a number of voluntary and statutory organisations and took to long distance hill walking and toppling into rivers.

May 1983 86 and still breathing.



Ships Co 1954 - 56

**Skipperscape, circa, 1956.  
An ode to the Captain (with apologies)**

"Hard over Tony is my name,  
Thirtyfive to Starboard is my game.  
I like to give the boys a thrill,  
Never keep the ship on an even keel.  
The lads are having pot mess today,  
So down the voice pipe I will say,  
'Thirtyfive to Starboard Quartermaster',  
Hard over Tony is my name".  
By... he that shall remain nameless !!

(Sung to the tune of 'Champagne Charlie'.  
Taken from the commission book from 1955-56



THE 180° MAN

## Concord History – The Captains

### Commander John F. Marryat

1956 – 1958

Born 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1919

Educated at Marlborough College

1938 Joined the Royal Navy

1939-1945 Spent the war in destroyers, on Convoy Escort duties in the Atlantic and Mediterranean to Malta. Also helped to evacuate people from Holland in 1940

1946 Joined HMS Frobisher, training cruiser

1947 To Rosyth to convert HMS Devonshire to training cruiser, to take over from HMS Frobisher.

1948 To Glasgow to build HMS Broadsword, as 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant.

1949-1951 Joined C-in-C Portsmouth staff.

1951-1952 Joined J.S.S.C. at Latimer

1952-1953 Joined Mountbatten's Staff at Malta.

1953-1956 Promoted to Commander. Back to UK, joined HMS Hawke at Dartmouth Training Upper Yardsmen.

1956-1958 Joined HMS Concord as Commanding Officer. To New Zealand 'showing the flag' all the way. Returned to Portsmouth to be paid off.

1958-1961 Joined HMS Dolphin as Executive Commander.

1961-1962 Joined the Admiralty, (for NATO Post).

1962 To Fort Southwick, (for NATO Post)



Ships Co 1956 – 58



Final entry into Portsmouth Harbour showing the paying off pennant



## **Admiral Sir Jeremy Black GBE KCB DSO ADC**

After the award of the King's sword as a Cadet at the Royal Naval College, Dartmouth, Admiral Sir Jeremy Black saw action in the Korean conflict as a Midshipman in HM Ships Belfast and CONCORD. As a sub Lieutenant, he served in the Flagship of the Home Fleet, HMS Vanguard, during the last commission of a Battleship in the Royal Navy.

Having qualified as a Gunnery Officer, he commanded a minesweeper on anti-terrorist patrols during the Brunei uprising in 1962, being appointed a Member of the Order of the British Empire and the Stia Negara, Brunei. Other seagoing appointments included service in HM Ships Gambia, Diamond, Victorious, Kent, Decoy and Fife. (in command).

He was promoted Commander in 1968 and Captain in 1974, carrying out many sea going and shore appointments before taking command in January 1982 of the aircraft carrier HMS Invincible. His 15 months in command included a period of 166 days spent continuously at sea during the operations off the Falkland Islands. As a result of these operations he was awarded the Distinguished Service Order. Continuing his service both ashore and afloat, he was promoted Rear Admiral in 1983, Vice Admiral in 1986 and Admiral in June 1989, when he was appointed Commander in Chief, Naval Home Command. Created KCB in 1987 and GBE in 1991, Admiral Black is a Younger Brother of Trinity House, a member of the Royal Yacht Squadron, Commodore of the Royal Naval Sailing Association, a Fellow of the British Institute of Management and a Member of the Institute of Strategic Studies.

His lifelong connection with the sea began when he was born in Plymouth in 1932, and continues on his retirement from active duty with the Royal Navy.

Married with one daughter and two sons, he now lives near Southampton.

Sir Jeremy and his wife attended our final reunion in Portsmouth, and took the final salute of our Association in 2010.



Admiral Sir Jeremy Black

## Innocents Abroad

After surviving almost a year at HMS Ganges on a seaman and gunnery course and three months in the training destroyer HMS Whirlwind, which from memory, consisted of washing the ship's side in temperatures approaching zero, and parade training in Rosyth dockyard, coupled with the occasional trips around the north of Scotland, which in winter doesn't exactly qualify as a pleasure cruise.

We eventually arrived in Portsmouth, where we were rapidly drafted into Barracks. There we were processed, and sent on Foreign Service leave. On return, and once more doing the required routines, it was bag and hammock into the lorry for a quick trip to the dockyard to join our first ship as ship's company. The introduction to HMS Concord was reasonably painless, although the mess deck we were put in to, being the canteen flat wasn't quite as spacious as the after mess deck we had enjoyed in Whirlwind, but we all found a place to sling our hammocks even though some found out eventually that a billet too close to the lockers or the bulkhead could be a bit painful when it got rough at sea.

Being comparative newcomers to joining a ship's company we found things quite different, we already knew we were bound for the Far East, but finding Chinese stewards already on board was a definite novelty, and another new experience was being allowed ashore, even though the leave that was granted to boy seamen was a bit restricted, it did allow us time to become acquainted with some of the pubs in Portsmouth, not to any excess though, as we were still on boys pay, which didn't do a lot for your social life. We then found out the pleasures of storing ship.

I think I still have some scars remaining from that little episode, especially from humping boxes of 4.5 rounds from the barge to the iron deck. This didn't last forever, even though it felt like it. Other little exercises cropped up from time to time, spreading awnings, alongside the wall in Pompey in March! But who were we to wonder, for all we knew it might be quite commonplace all this going on but not being allowed to interfere with our main employment of scrubbing down, polishing the bright work, and painting ship. At long last everything that had to be done, was done, and the day came when we slipped and headed out into Spithead, not to the mysterious East just yet, but to Portland. This was only for a couple of days, and then we left heading for Gibraltar.

The last sight of home was Portland Bill slipping below the horizon, and there it would stay for a couple of years. Gibraltar, the first foreign port us boys had ever seen, so a trip ashore was a must alas the girls orchestra in the Trocadero was nowhere to be seen, mind you, this was the afternoon, but a disappointment none the less, but the warm weather and all the goodies on show in the shops helped, but still being very short of the readies it was window shopping only I'm afraid. One of the last words being bellowed into my ear by Bill Poole, the Jimmy, before going ashore was 'Get a haircut', so to the barbers I



Len Tindall and the lads on a run ashore

went, still recovering from the attentions of the barber in Shotley, it was nice to order the haircut I wanted, at the end he asked if I wanted a Bay Rum, that's a nice foreign custom I thought, have a haircut and they offer you a tot!! 'Yes please', I said and he started to shake the bottle all over my newly cut hair, talk about a let down. Another few days and it was back to sea again en route to Malta.

Exercises all the way, action stations, fire drills, away seaboard's crew, and anything else that came to mind. Arrival at Malta took us into Sleima Creek to join up with the flotilla of CH destroyers based there,(see following article for a listing of CO and Ch destroyers) with HMS Phoebe as RAD at the head of the line, mooring head and stern to two buoys, not the easiest job, especially if your billet was in the middle, all right for the Fo'cstle with the capstan to help, but down aft, you really earned your corn trying to get the ship into the right fore and aft line demanded by the bridge. We weren't given too much time to enjoy the sights of Malta as we were there to work up, and it was a case of exercising with the local flotilla and Phoebe day and night, dropping depth charges, (the fish were welcome) firing torpedoes, main armament shoots, in fact a busy time was had by all. Of course there were times for runs ashore, but once again the financial state of the boy's mess didn't allow too much in the way of full enjoyment of the local facilities.

The work came to an end at last, and once more we were on our way to our eventual destination. Next stop Port Said, arrival and mooring stem to, quarterdeck muscle again, we were quickly surrounded by bumboats, selling everything and anything, the most memorable was a character calling himself Wee Jock McGregor, wearing a tartan nightshirt, as were all his business rivals, speaking in a broad Glaswegian accent, the fact that he was as black as the ace of spades, added to the newness of the occasion. The trip down was uneventful, endless sand, can after a while losing any interest it had, even to us newcomers, the only interruption was anchoring once in a while to let ships pass, that were going the other way. We bounced in and out of Suez with just enough time to drop the Pilot, and then it was into the Red Sea bound for Aden. Those who were lucky enough to grab a camp bed when they appeared found a billet for the night anywhere where there was room on the upper deck where it was fractionally cooler than the mess deck. The unfortunates who missed out on a camp bed slung their hammocks anywhere they could find.

Aden was also a quick stopover, mainly for refuelling, although a Banyan was organized to a small beach outside of town. It had a rather moth eaten shark net around it that was definitely more holy than righteous, and the other attraction was a NAAFI bar which sold warm beer in glasses that seemed to be made out of the bottom half of beer bottles, still it got us off the ship for the afternoon. The next leg of the journey saw us on our way to Bombay, I can't remember much about that, except for being part of a working party sent ashore to a jetty at the 'Gateway to India' to collect a few baskets of pineapples, and a short run ashore, with an eye open for the 'Street of Cages', we had been told about by the more experienced hands. But with the usual state of boy seamen's finances, not a chance of anything more desperate.

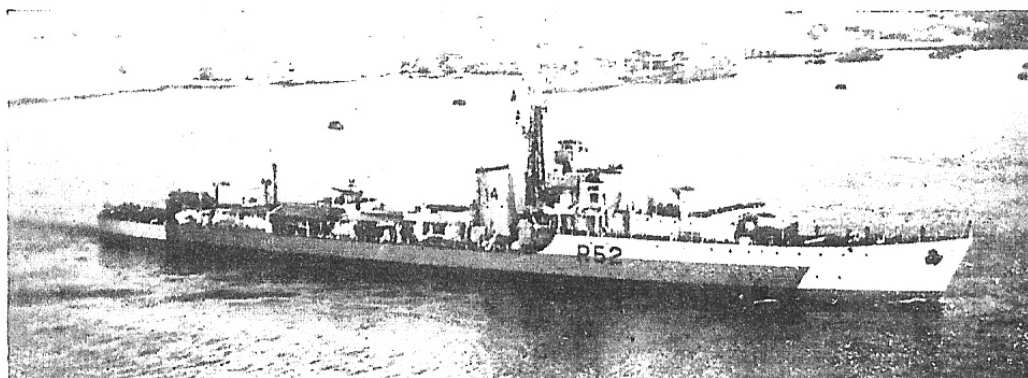
Next stop Trincomalee, where a banyan was organized for the boy's mess, somebody came up with the idea it would be educational to let us learn something about eastern culture, so we were transported to Andurapura, to view all the temples, and the ruins of more temples there. The only thing that sticks in my mind about the place was the amount of carving of stone elephants, and the fact that the pavements, or what passed for them, were painted bright red, it wasn't until a lot later I found out another foreign custom, chewing betal nut, and getting rid of the results in the handiest place.

The 'Innocents Abroad' had progressed a bit further up the learning curve!

Penang, and Port Swettenham were two short stops along our journey, eventually finishing up in Singapore. And there, the first thing that caught our attention, were the working parties of Japanese POW's clearing up damaged buildings in the Dockyard. The second, was the appearance of pots of paint and brushes, needed to smarten things up before the last leg of our journey to Hong Kong. We eventually arrived at what was to be Concord's Home Port for the majority of her active life. Being the last Co Class Destroyer to join the 8<sup>th</sup> Flotilla, we were, of course, the Canteen Boat, but in some respects it did have it's compensation. But, as they say, that is another story!

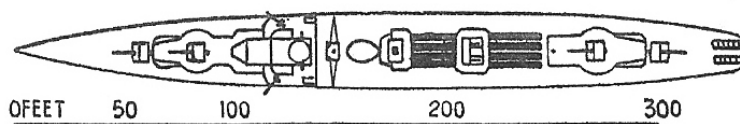
## John Merrett, Boy Seaman/AB 1947-49

### 26 "C" Class



CHAPLET.

1946, London Studio.



- 2 Clydebank : **Caesar** (ex-Ranger, Feb. 14, 1944), **Cavendish** (ex-Sibyl, April 12, 1944). (Ldr.)
- 2 Denny : **Childers** (Feb. 27, 1945). (Leader), **Chivalrous** (June 22, 1945).
- 4 Scotts : **Cambrian** (ex-Spitfire, Dec. 10, 1943), **Carron** (ex-Strenuous, March 28, 1944), **Chequers** (Oct. 30, 1944), **Chieftain** (Feb. 26, 1945).
- 3 Stephen : **Cheviot** (May 2, 1944), **Chevron** (Feb. 23, 1944), **Consort** (Oct. 19, 1944).
- 4 Thornycroft : **Chaplet** (July 18, 1944), **Charity** (Nov. 30, 1944), **Comus** (March 14, 1945), **Concord** (ex-Corso, July 14, 1945).
- 2 Vickers-Armstrongs (Tyne) : **Constance** (Aug. 22, 1944), **Cossack** (May 10, 1944).
- 5 White : **Carysfort** (July 25, 1944), **Cavalier** (April 7, 1944), **Contest** (Dec. 16, 1944), **Crispin** (ex-Crucher, June 23, 1945), **Creole** (Nov. 22, 1945).
- 4 Yarrow : **Caprice** (ex-Swallow, Sept. 16, 1943), **Cassandra** (ex-Tourmaline, Nov. 29, 1943), **Cockade** (March 7, 1944), **Comet** (June 22, 1944).

Displacement: 1,710 tons. Dimensions: 362 $\frac{1}{2}$  × 35 $\frac{3}{8}$  × 10 feet (*mean*), 16 feet (*max.*). Guns: 4—4.5 inch d.p., 4—40 mm. A.A., 2 to 6—20 mm. A.A. Tubes: 4—21 inch (quadrupled), except *Caesar* group, 8. Machinery: Parsons geared turbines. 2 shafts. S.H.P.: 40,000 = 34 kts. (38 kts. reached in service). Boilers: 2 Admiralty 3-drum type. Complement: 186 (Leaders 222).

Notes.—These destroyers were built as 4 flotillas, i.e., *Caesar*, *Chequers*, *Cossack* and *Crescent* groups. Otherwise, there appears to be little difference between this class and those immediately preceding it, except that the more recent of above destroyers are of all-welded construction. Two of this class, *Crescent* and *Crusader* will be found in R. Canadian Navy, and four more were sold to Norway. *Cavendish* and *Childers* probably displace 1,730 tons.

## **David Whitfield – The Singing Sailor**

It was in the early 1950's when serving in the RN that his fellow ratings, when out for a pub crawl, discovered that David had a particularly good singing voice, so much so that they pushed him into a talent competition which promised a broadcast on the Hughie Green programme on Radio Luxembourg for the winner. The programme was 'Opportunity Knocks' and David won his way to the finals. Afterwards, he returned to his life in the Navy thinking that was the end of the matter.

After leaving the Navy he returned to his previous employment as a cement mixer in a Hull Stonemason's yard. He sang in working men's clubs for a few shillings a night. However, Hughie Green had not forgotten the sailor with the big voice, and sent David an invitation to appear in a charity concert in London. Having been given special leave from his workplace he boarded a train for London and luck being on his side discovered that the Impresario for the concert was the well known Cecil Landon, who was so impressed with the ex sailor that he went back stage to meet him and offered the surprised Yorkshireman an engagement in cabaret at a well known West End hotel. As a result of this break the promotion chief of one of the leading record companies Bunny Lewis, offered David a recording contract. A test record was made, which so impressed the recording executives that it was put on sale straight away, leading to sales in excess of 20,000 copies. A second record had an even greater impact and the general public began to take notice.

So began his incredible success leading to Mantovani offering him the chance for singing the vocal for his new recording 'Cara Mia', a record which earned him a Gold Disc for selling over a million copies. Success in the United States earned him an appearance in the Ed Sullivan Show. His success continued until the advent of 'Rock and Roll' which reduced the demand for straight singers. David changed to singing in operettas and finally moved to Australia where he had a big following. Unfortunately he died not long after.

### **Shipmate Harry Russell AB 1947-49, writes:**

I first met David in the HMS Black Swan. I was in his mess from Malaya to Hong Kong. We met again when he boarded HMS Concord to do the last few months of his commission before returning home for his demob. Before leaving for home and becoming a famous singer, AB Harold Cooper and I had a few runs ashore with him. When I came out of the Navy I went to see him at the Birmingham Hippodrome. We had a few drinks together in a pub just around the corner and we talked about old times and our Navy days. That was the last time I saw him. 'He is with the lads now!' 'GOD BLESS THEM ALL!'



**Nobby Garrett 50/51**

## **“A Bit of a Blow”**

But the weather was awful!” How often we hear those words at home! However, many folk in this country do not realise that the English climate is far more “stable” than in many other parts of the world. At any rate, we are not visited by typhoons. Typhoons are revolving storms that form up in the wastes of the Pacific Ocean and travel in a north-westerly direction towards the Philippines and the coast of China. The centre of the storm moves at about 15 knots, and the influence is felt for hundreds of miles, depending on the intensity.

The big danger of these typhoons from the seaman’s point of view, is that the wind blows very fiercely from one direction, and then there is a lull as the centre of the storm passes over, then the wind blows equally hard from the opposite quarter. At sea, the result is that mountainous and confused seas are produced, in which a ship can be easily overwhelmed, and indeed many have been.

Towards the end of the last war, three American destroyers steaming along in a squadron near the Philippines were overturned, and not a soul was saved from any of them, most officers and men who have served in the China Seas will have experienced typhoon conditions some time or another, and for me there are two memories which are outstanding. On 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1937, I was First Lieutenant of HMS Pandora, one of the submarines of our China Flotilla. We had arrived in Hong Kong a few days earlier after buffeting from the edge of a typhoon off Shanghai, and I have no doubt that all of us made a pretty good story out of our experiences had we known what was in store, we would not have been so garrulous.

On the morning of 2<sup>nd</sup> September, HMS Pandora entered the dry dock in Hong Kong Dockyard and was soon snugly berthed down. Warnings of an approaching typhoon were received, and all the usual precautions were taken by the ships afloat, who raised steam, put out extra bridles of cable to their buoys, and so on. Being in dry dock, there was nothing much we could do beyond shut all the hatches, etc., and most of us went ashore in high spirits at the thought of our friends retained on board in their ships out in the harbour!

As the sun set, the sky was just one great coppery glow; there was not a breath of wind and in the oppressive heat, hundreds of dragon-flies were buzzing about, sure harbingers of a typhoon. My wife and I were out for a walk and it must have been about half past eight when a gentle breeze sprang up, and by the time we reached our flat, it was blowing strongly. We had an excellent view of the harbour, which was a solid mass of junks and sampans scurrying before the wind for shelter; in the gathering gloom, “white horses” were visible all over the water. I started to go back to the submarine, but as soon as I emerged from our doorway into the street, I was blown completely flat and my umbrella was whisked away like a handkerchief.

It was necessary for me to cross the harbour by ferry boat and as I reached the jetty, the last ferry that ran that evening was just coming alongside. It pranced and curvetted up to the jetty like a lamb in spring, after an almighty crash, it was eventually secured and a drenched and scared mob jumped ashore. In a few seconds all were scattered like leaves before the wind, and I realised there was nothing for me to do except to go home, too. With a following wind, I am sure I beat all sprint records that night; up to the last stretch to our flat I must have touched 50! The only thing that passed me was a rickshaw, minus its coolie – just before it crashed into a shop window. My wife and I put up the “Typhoon shutters” on all the windows, and peeped cautiously out at intervals. The wind was making

a noise like an express train, and the rain was positively horizontal against the street lamps. I wondered how the chaps were getting on out in the harbour, but there was nothing I could do about it, so after a little while I turned in. By eight next morning, there was only a gentle breeze blowing and the typhoon was over. The wreckage was unbelievable. In Hong Kong harbour, no less than 27 ships were aground, others had been in collision and were severely damaged, and hundreds of junks and sampans just blown to matchwood. Some of the former included ships of 20,000 tons, and two warships, HMS Suffolk and HMS Duchess, were among those damaged. Many Chinese were drowned when their junks were destroyed. The maximum wind force recorded at the Royal Observatory was 164 miles per hour. So I for one, will always remember the 2<sup>nd</sup> September, 1937.

Almost exactly 11 years later, I had another and even more exciting experience of a typhoon. I was Captain of HMS Concord then, and we were on our way from Hong Kong to Shanghai. Just after leaving the former port, we received a signal warning us of a typhoon, however information indicated that it would pass well to the southward of us, so we did not worry unduly. Further reports later in the day confirmed our impression. Next day was fine, but not so sunny, and it was clear that the typhoon was making its intensity felt for many miles. A long low swell began to follow the ship and some nasty black clouds appeared. We arrived off the Yangtze in a cold, grey miserable dawn. It was blowing freshly from the east and raining slightly as we turned up the Whangpoo, I was in two minds whether to anchor or press on up to Shanghai. I decided on the latter, it was the wrong decision. Just after I had made it, a signal arrived which read; "EMERGENCY Typhoon has turned North and is moving rapidly up the China coast." Almost as the signal arrived, the weather got worse very quickly. The wind increased and the rain came down in great driving sheets. After a little while, I realised we would have to turn round and go back to the more open river and anchor. Turning round in the narrow, crowded Whangpoo was an absolute nightmare. Concord was 120 yards long, and the river was only about 200 yards wide with jetties and ships all over the place. However, we managed it and proceeded down stream in practically "nil" visibility to the Yangtze River, where we let go both anchors and hoped for the best. All that day the rain beat down and the wind roared like Sandy Macpherson on the organ; twice during the afternoon, ships that were not under control barged past us with a few feet to spare. Junks and sampans bottom up, drifted down river, sometimes with Chinese clinging to them, but we could do nothing to help. At eight in the evening, the tide started to ebb and the double strain on the cables was terrific. Darkness rendered the situation more unpleasant, but we could only sit and hope for the best. "Quite a party. Sir," said the First Lieutenant.

Coming up to the bridge at midnight, during the middle watch, the wind began to "back" and by morning it had died down to a gentle breeze. At midnight it had been blowing nearly 100 miles an hour. Next morning we proceeded up river to Shanghai and secured to buoys off the famous Bund of Shanghai, second only to the waterfront of New York. At six o'clock that evening, the Consul-General and his staff, an American Admiral and some of his officers and many other senior officials were entertained on board to a party. Gone were all traces of the typhoon, the ship had been cleaned and polished till she looked like a new pin. "I must congratulate you on the appearance of your ship," remarked the Consul-General, "you certainly don't look as though you've just weathered a typhoon ". The First Lieutenant grinned, "There is nothing, the Navy cannot do, Sir," he replied, smiling.

**Commander William Donald, D.S.C., R.N. (Retd.)**

## **Postscript to “A Bit of a Blow”**

I recall this incident very clearly, particularly due to seeing an unfortunate individual floating past us clinging desperately to a large tree being dragged down river in the fierce current, someone threw a line to him which he managed to catch but then, nonchalantly, he tossed the rope back into the river. Obviously he preferred to take his chance in reaching a haven down river instead of being taken into a warship full of British sailors. Little did we know that just over a year later we would once again be just off the Whangpoo river watching, with a great deal of trepidation the heavy gun battery at Poa Shan. I think I preferred the typhoon!.

Most of those serving in the Far East will have memories of typhoons, I believe I experienced around four of them. There is usually at least one which, in its ferocity, outshines all others and appeared to place the ship in great danger. The one I particularly remember took place at night when, as usual, RN Ships were ordered out to sea to make sure that they had enough sea room to manoeuvre freely. Apart from those on watch, the ships company were ordered to their messes, to secure them by closing all deadlights and watertight doors and sling their hammocks. This may appear strange but at sea there is nowhere more comfortable than a hammock, it would be difficult to fall out of one and apart from the extreme circumstance when the deckhead could become a bulkhead it was unlikely that the occupant would bump into anything. This particular night, the winds became hurricane force and the helmsman was having real problems in keeping head to wind, the occasional beam sea made the ship lean so far over that it seemed righting itself would be impossible. Indeed, the following morning the Engineering Officer was heard to state that if we had not taken on fuel that morning the ship would very likely have turned turtle. The immense pressures the bulkheads were subjected to created very unusual noises and many an eye peered at the deck below to check if any sea water had entered. The heavy seas divided the ship into two as the raised catwalks from forward to stern became too dangerous to traverse. One rather amusing thing during that terrible night was that someone had placed a quantity of ‘pussers’ peas (dried) in a fanny to soak and all night long we could hear this wretched utensil sliding repeatedly across the deck from one side to another yet although not much of the water was left, most of the now swollen peas were.

The following morning presented a scene of devastation, the skimmer had disappeared and many of the steel lids of the deck lockers were peeled back like a banana skin. Below decks was a shambles and it all added up to demonstrate the mighty power of nature and who is indeed master.

**Derek Hodgson**



## A China Forty-Niner

They were exciting times in 1949 on the China station, where I was fortunate enough to be First Lieutenant of 'Concord', one of the 8<sup>th</sup> Destroyer Flotilla.



The year started with a spell as a guard ship at Nanking and a hectic social round it turned out to be. We had taken that most charming of Admirals, Sir Alec Madden, up with us from Hong Kong and he did much to ensure our being well entertained. The British Ambassador, Sir Ralph Stevenson, invited anyone in the wardroom, keen on shooting, to be ready for his car to pick them up at dawn, to go after snipe and wildfowl. One thing about January in N. China, the cold soon blows the cobwebs away.

To cope with the sheer number of invitations our eight-strong wardroom split into two watches, one watch, say, would go to curry lunch at the Indian Embassy whilst the other watch dealt with Bols gin and dinner at the Dutch Legation. The pace, like the curry, was really hot.

By chance, we met several times and got on well with the Russian military attaché. Colonel Dubrovny spoke good English, had a great sense of humour and, when we invited him and his party onboard, he took advantage of the Air Force attaché's visit to the heads to tell us that was the KGB man, and we all had to watch it when he was present. Most unusually at that stage of the 'cold war' we were invited to dinner with the Russians a few days later. It was quite an evening and with all of us the first experience of that forest of glasses by one's place; innumerable toasts and 'small chow' but no apparent sign of dinner till the vodka was coming out of our ears. For one of our number it was too much, but Dubrovny, hospitality itself, provided him with a bed for the night – well, nearly all night.

Halfway back to the ship, my gallant Captain convinced himself that his young officer would be smuggled away to Siberia before morning, turned the taxi round and, braving the attaché Alsations, hammered on the front door and demanded that his officer be returned forthwith. All rather embarrassing, and particularly the sight of a semi-conscious and dishevelled officer, being supported down the stairs by perfectly sober Russians.

We received orders before leaving Nanking to discharge about 100 tons of FFO into 40 gallon drums, presumably against an emergency. It was a long cold job for the Chief Stoker and his men; the oil could only be discharged through a small-bore hose and the line of barrels seemed to be endless. There was, however, a very important sequel when 'Amethyst', coming up the Yangtze for her turn as guard ship some 3 months later, was fired on, disabled and interned by the Chinese Communists. Lt. Cdr. Skinner, her Captain, was killed and Cdr. Kerans, who was at Shanghai, flew up and took over. He knew of the stock of FFO at Nanking and I am told that he persuaded the Chinese guards that unless he was allowed to receive the oil his machinery would grind to a halt, and, in the heat of summer, disease would break out amongst the ship's company. Thus, in due course, our oil found its way down river and in to 'Amethyst's' fuel tanks where it remained until she made her historic break-out in July, which is when we happened to be the ship to meet her.

Throughout the time 'Amethyst' was incarcerated, destroyers and frigates of the Far East fleet took turns to patrol off the mouth of the Yangtze ready for the day all hoped she would make a break. And mighty boring waiting it was; trying to keep the ship's company

amused but alert, devising dogwatch entertainment (no films or videos then); anchoring at night and always with a watch closed up at the guns. I think it was on our third spell up there that a small tanker bound for Shanghai appeared, and signalled that she had been boarded by Chinese Nationalist soldiery who were demanding to be taken to Taiwan. The British Master, anxious to get rid of them, suggested that we persuade an ex-US LST, already loaded with many more Nationalist soldiers and anchored nearby, to take his lot. Captain (D), whose 'black top' we were 'wearing' on this occasion, sent myself and the Flotilla (G) off in the motor-boat to do the persuading. It was pouring with rain and in the pocket of my pursers Burberry, I had, rather unwisely, a .32 automatic inherited from my predecessor. As we got alongside the LST, some underwater object holed the motor-boat, which filled and sank, stranding both of us officers and the crew. I had never before boarded an LST; it appeared to have a side like a cliff. Guns and I, eventually reached the upper deck to find ourselves facing a very large and hostile mass of soldiery, so much for my automatic. They had virtually no weapons, which was a relief, wore shabby uniforms and gym shoes and each had, of all things, an electric torch slung on a lanyard. Small wonder the Communist armies were sweeping all before them. We had our brightest Chinese steward with us as interpreter and, although he found his Cantonese different from their dialects, by 'spelling out' the characters on the palm of his hand, he told us that they would not agree to being joined by their erstwhile mates. Finally, the whaler's crew, battling against a 4-knot current, got us all back to the ship, mission very successful.

Restored to a private ship we returned to the Yangtze in July when on the night of the 31<sup>st</sup> July we got the signal that 'Amethyst' was making her break, followed by another shortly afterwards saying she had run aground. Fortunately it was a brief grounding because, as dawn broke, she appeared. From her foremast flew a clean battle ensign and from the main another, literally shot to pieces. Forward at her only serviceable mounting a helmeted gun's crew could just be made out in the half light. We took station on her starboard side intending to engage the shore batteries at Woosun with our 4.5's if they opened up.

It seemed incredible that they hadn't been alerted, but nothing happened. Once clear of possible danger, both ships anchored and I went across to see what 'Amethyst' wanted in the way of victuals etc., Kerans was almost dismissive of my enquiries; yes, they would like beer and a few essentials but no, there wasn't really anything else. A very cool, unforthcoming man who did not match up with the 'Amethyst' we had known so well. She was one of our chummy chips; Skinner, Captain and good friend; Weston, the First Lieutenant and a contemporary from cadet days; Peter Berger, badly wounded and evacuated; Hett, who navigated her down the river; we knew them all. However, it was not long before the two ships got together again in Hong Kong on the occasion of 'Amethyst's' celebration cocktail party alongside the dockyard.

What a night that was. The party was in full swing when a typhoon warning was received and the fleet put to sea. In 'Concord' we were still in calm water until near the Lyemun Pass, but ahead, 'Whitesand Bay's' stern light suddenly started to climb as she hit the first big sea rolling in. Then it was our turn and it needed all 60,000 hp to battle our way past 'Whitewash Corner'. Keeping a lookout was almost impossible into the driving sheets of rain and the radar soon packed up. Still, we did have the horse-power, unlike the frigates; one of them very nearly ran on the rocks off Stanley.

When daylight came our upper deck was a sorry sight; the Captains skimmer and my pride and joy consisted of just the engine on its trolley amidships, plus a few planks; guard rails bent every which way, and as for the shambles down below. The fleet, in modern parlance, had done its own thing to get sea-room and we found ourselves not far from

'Triumph', who had also had a nasty time. We exchanged pleasantries by light and that, in itself, was a relief to my Captain, because 'Concord' was in particularly bad odour with her Captain, 'Tubby' Hutton.

Our wardroom, a few nights before the typhoon, had decided to raid the carrier. The skimmer took the Gunner, plus a couple of others to 'Triumph's' buoy where they climbed the bridge. Once onboard, they separated, and well supplied with Chinese fire-crackers, proceeded to make mayhem. Bugles sounded, Marines manned the lower booms, searchlights swept the harbour but the skimmer remained undetected... In fact, the raiders would have got clean away had not the Gunner decided that the Jauntie must have some rum stashed away in his caboose, and he duly found it – with the Jauntie. Result, one Gunner in the ship's cells and a furious Commander who demanded that our Duty Officer repair onboard forthwith to identify this man who claimed to be the Gunner of 'Concord' in due course, my Captain was bought across from Kowloon where he and his wife had a flat, having to report to the Captain of 'Triumph' in No.1's, sword and medals.

Hutton made it clear that the Gunner would almost certainly be court-martialled. Fortunately it is an ill wind which blows no-one any good. Thanks to the mutual and hazardous experiences of both ships, 'Triumph' relented and my Captain was informed that the Gunner would be let off with a logging.

Soon afterwards it was our turn to go south for another spell of anti-insurgent patrolling off Malaya, this time on the east coast between Mersin and Trengganu. This side is so much more attractive than the Malacca Straits, particularly such lovely islands as Tioman and the Perhentians. The latter in those days were exactly as tropical islands should be; fine, white sandy beaches with palm trees bowing out over them and sea which shaded from deepest blue to viridian green in the shallows.

To show willing, one first went ashore with a couple of armed sailors to question the Tungku or headman about whether any terrorists were on the island. We never found any.

All we seemed to do was frighten the living daylights out of the natives who had never seen armed sailors before, particularly when monsoon rain had caused the blanco on their caps to form white streaks down their red faces – no doubt they were thought to be Ju-Ju men of the worst kind.

I have a photograph of the DGO and myself, both bearded and in bathing trunks talking to the Tungku of one of the islands with the aid of a Malay phrase book.

Of course the bathing was fabulous and it will come as no surprise to read that we fielded two water-polo teams. A standard drill, on coast patrol, having anchored, was to send ashore anyone off watch who wanted to, and to place shark sentries armed with rifles and hand grenades, while the wardroom stewards prepared a banyan meal for us to take ashore in the evening. It was a rough old life.

My wife helped to make the last day of 1949 a memorable event. She had to come out to Hong Kong on an indulgence passage in the infamous 'Empire Windrush' which unsurprisingly burnt to the water-line on a later voyage, fortunately without any fatalities. The ship's company took to Betty in a big way, partly because she had come out from England with a large draft for 'Concord'.

We were at our usual buoy in Hong Kong for New Year's Eve and I thought it would be rather fun to have a small party amidships for the duty part of the watch, who would be

missing all the celebrations ashore. A bowl of 'punch' was brewed in the wardroom and taken down just before midnight, when the youngest rating onboard rang 16 bells and all the ships blasted off on their sirens. There seemed to be many more than just the duty part present – did the buzz about 'punch' get around? My wife kicked off her shoes to dance with anyone who asked her, and a couple of the gunner's party grabbed their leading hand (a very staid 3 badgeman) and threw him over the side. They hadn't realised he could not swim but a rescue operation soon had him back inboard.

I'm afraid I could not resist adding insult to injury by getting the Coxswain (dear old 'Daddy' Wakeham, trying to look serious) to bring the dripping leading hand in front of me on a 'charge' of improperly leaving the ship and being unable to swim, well he'd probably never faced a charge in his entire career. So ended an eventful and memorable year. We were certainly a lucky ship. Pompey manned of course, and I believe she was a very happy one.

**J.G. Roe**  
**Lt. Cdr. 49-51 1<sup>st</sup> Lt.**



HMS Concord at speed

## **Foreword to the Yangtze Incident**

The following pages concerning the Yangtze incident include a great deal of information which up till recent times has been either top secret, or purposely been kept from public viewing. The fact that it is now available is mostly due to the investigations and research carried out by a shipmate from HMS Consort who actually served during the Korean War. Willie Leitch who has gathered a dossier covering all aspects of the Yangtze Incident, including the sometimes embarrassing behaviour of the Atlee Government. It was he who discovered the files lodged within the archives at Churchill College, Cambridge by Admiral Sir David Scott, files which included signals, telegrams and letters fully covering the escape of HMS Amethyst and the assistance given by Concord. The result of his methodical search has proved to be the basis of articles written by others including me.

We the few survivors remaining from the ships company of the time, actually knew very little of the events following the escape although we do recall the excitement and fear we experienced during the period 28<sup>th</sup>. to 31<sup>st</sup>. July 1949. The euphoria of going alongside Amethyst when reaching safety will always be remembered, it is such a pity that subsequent certain comments rather soured this event to a degree due to the attitude of certain gentlemen. We were ordered not to mention the events afterwards anyway. Willie Leitch even organised a Petition to the Scottish Parliament, in an attempt to emphasise what he considers vital in order to carry out his campaign to gain recognition for what he strongly believes to be a courageous act. We Concord veterans owe a great deal to Willie as without his efforts on our behalf, we would have been unable to formulate the true story.

We should also remember that it was due to the thoughtfulness of our own Rose Redrup (widow of Ken Redrup who acted as Welfare Officer for many years) that we became aware of the reappearance of our ships log within the archives at Kew. It so happened that she had a friend who worked at Kew who very kindly took a photocopy of the entry for 31<sup>st</sup>. July 1949. This entry described the actions of Concord entering and proceeding up the river to Woosung. This added to the stupid remark made by the Minister Bob Ainsworth became the start of our campaign to publicise Concords participation.

**Derek Hodgson**

## **The Story of an Unrecognised Brave Ship**

The account of the attack on HMS Amethyst, HMS London, HMS Consort and HMS Black Swan by the Chinese Communist Forces on the 20<sup>th</sup>./21<sup>st</sup> April 1949 has been well documented and quite rightly acclaimed as an example of HM Ships going to the aid of a colleague in distress. All four ships companies were later awarded the Naval General Service Medal together with certain bravery awards (published earlier in this book) to particular men who distinguished themselves for outstanding devotion to duty, during and after the attack. In the case of HMS Amethyst it was later decided to extend the criteria for the NGSM to include anyone serving one day, during the following 100 days to the 31<sup>st</sup> July 1949, as being the only criteria for receiving the award. It is now commonly accepted that the involvement of HMS Concord became top secret and would have been an enforced restriction on the two Admirals, Brind and Madden to give voice to the actions of Concord even if they wished to. The near faux pas of Admiral Brind's words to the Singapore Press appear to have been safely covered up.

During mid July 1949 HMS Concord set sail from Hong Kong in company with Captain "D" in Cossack and the cruiser Jamaica for alleged exercises. At 2200 on the 27<sup>th</sup>. July, Concord was detached and sent into the entrance of the Yangtze River, Chinese territorial waters in fact.

The Captain of Concord, Lt. Cdr. Nigel Rodney, had previously been advised of the proposed escape of Amethyst and that assistance would be required, both for sweeping the river for mines and then giving protection to Amethyst from the known guns at Woosung 38 miles up the river. Early entry into the river on the 28<sup>th</sup> July, was necessary for carrying out the sweep and also to prepare the crews of the 4.5 guns and others of Concord for action. At 0555 29<sup>th</sup> July two White Ensigns were hoisted to the yard arms to enable two jackstays to be moved and cleared for its main armament. It was during the evening of the 30<sup>th</sup>. that Nigel Rodney was advised that Amethyst would slip at 2200 and that Concord should meet up with her at 0530 off Woosung. The armaments of Amethyst were severely disabled and the ship was virtually unprotected so that if it should have any hope at all in carrying out the escape it was vital that Concord should be at this critical point to engage should she be fired upon. The Captain of Concord was also ordered to make smoke if necessary. It should be remembered that this passing of Woosung would take place in broad daylight, not as some wayward reports have suggested under searchlights from the nearby riverbank and Fort.

It has been assumed that once having passed Woosung, the escape was successful. This is not a legitimate claim as the CinC Admiral Brind had signalled both ships warning them of further gun batteries down river for which he had no intelligence. It is a matter of record that the Chinese now controlled all the land to the open sea and it would have been very possible that further attacks could have occurred. It was therefore necessary that both ships remained at action stations until well clear of the river, this is confirmed by the fact that both ship's companies were not stood down after passing Woosung for nearly one and a half hours. It must be remembered that this great river has a very strong current and the speed of both ships over the ground must have been well in excess of thirty knots.

The elation in both ships when eventually going alongside each other can be imagined, a highly dangerous exercise had been carried out without further loss of life. One can imagine the disappointment of the men of Concord when, during the morning of the 1<sup>st</sup>.

August, Captain "D" in HMS Cossack appeared on the scene, to take over the accompanying of Amethyst back to Hong Kong. This was not the only set back; Captain "D" also relieved the ship of its log and replaced it with a new one. A final insult was when Lt. Cdr. Nigel Rodney on the 2<sup>nd</sup>.

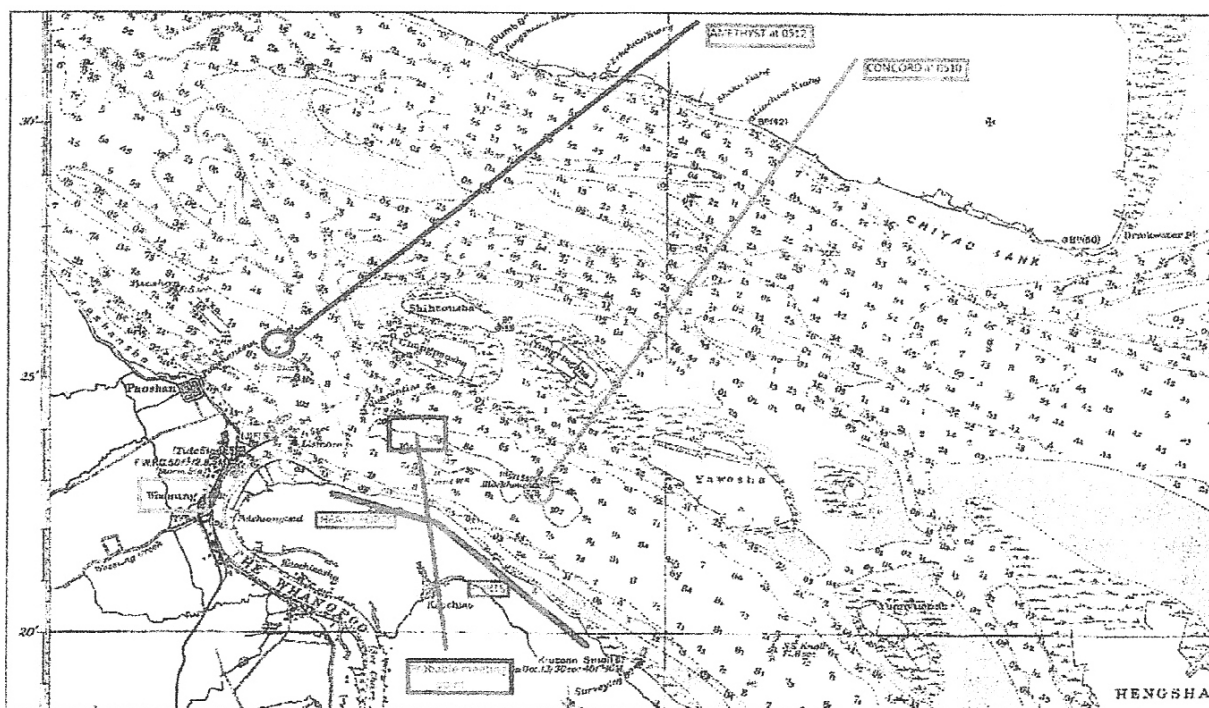


July 31, 1949: This rare photo shows HMS Amethyst F-116 shortly after emerging from the Yangtze River after making her escape was taken by Derek Hodgson from the HMS Concord R-63 about 08:00.

August 1949, cleared lower deck to issue an order that no rating was to discuss the recent event to anyone when returning to the base in Hong Kong. This would be some time later as the ship was sent up to patrol Japan, well out of the way. In any case the official secrets act would have prevailed.

History has unfairly reduced this operation down to an insignificant affair and not worthy of any praise for the Concord ratings, much, quite rightly, has been made of the escape of Amethyst but as a result of an order from the then British Ambassador Sir Ralph Stevenson that no publicity should be given to the fact that HMS Concord had entered Chinese territorial waters, little is known concerning the support given by Concord and most stories of the escape allege that she only waited at the river mouth in case Amethyst was in trouble.

The truth is that HMS Concord was sent on a covert operation into the Yangtze River for the sole reason of giving protection to Amethyst from the heavy guns known to be in place at Woosung. If one reads the personal account of Commander Dickens on the staff of the CinC Afloat now available for viewing at the Churchill College, Cambridge it will be found that, like Commander Kerans, he was of the opinion that this section would be most critical. The operation was severely restricted by the narrowness and known shifting shoals prevailing in this section of the river, the terrible tragedy of the previous April would have made all involved very aware and conscious of the dangers prevailing and the enormity of the consequences of a further gun battle. In normal circumstances the Captain, Lieut. Commander Nigel Rodney and Navigation Officer John Fremantle, now Lord Cottesloe of HMS Concord would have received an award for their devotion to duty and the high risk taken in the carrying out of such an operation. How can anyone maintain that there was insufficient risk and rigour suffered by their ship in carrying out its duties.



A chart of the Yangtze Delta, showing the position of Amethyst and Concord at 0500 on the morning of the break out and the probable meeting point.

**Derek Hodgson 1948/50**

## Red Shore Batteries on Lintin Island Exchange Gun Fire

Hong Kong newspaper headlines dated Thursday, August 7<sup>th</sup>. 1950 covered this attack in great detail but the one covered by a Special Correspondent for an unnamed paper explains the incident with few, but explicit words. Communist shore batteries in three islands south of Hong Kong fired on a British destroyer, HMS Concord, 1700 tons, as she was approaching Hong Kong yesterday. The ship was not hit, but there was one minor casualty on board from a shell splinter. The Concord, commanded by Lt. Commander I.D. McClaughlan returned the fire from one island, the Navy stated. The communist batteries on Tai Ta Mi, Puntin, and Lintin Islands, opened up on Concord in sequence as she passed each one. The fire from Lintin was returned. Chinese Communists hold a crescent-shaped group of islands south west of Hong Kong. Three attacks by shore batteries on merchant ships were reported within three days earlier this month, but the attack on Concord is the first officially reported on a British warship.

A letter to Maritime Quest, from Alan Lewis, a serving member of Concord during this period gives a very informative account of this attack and reads as follows: After leaving the Yangtze we were sent to Singapore for a refit. On our way back to Hong Kong we were entering from the East (this was quite unusual). I was sitting on an ammunition locker in my No 3's, ready to enter harbour talking to a stoker who had served during the war, when suddenly, there was a splash just off the port quarter, \*\*\*\* he said, we are being fired upon and jumped to the alarm on the nearest bulkhead and sounded the alarm.

We closed up at action stations and returned fire and as I understand it, with some great effect. We had on board a Willy Piggy, who had a large piece of shrapnel in his upper left shoulder which hit the bone and removed the flesh for a couple of inches. Willy, of course, should not have been there as he was an Asdic operator and was rolling a fag in what he thought was a safe spot!! He was heard to say "I've been hit before".

The only damage to Concord was a damaged gash shute from the first shell. There was another casualty. Our Chinese tailor had a number of suits finished in the after flat when a piece of shrapnel entered through the ammunition port and penetrated every suit, both jacket and trousers.

Our Captain was up on the bridge directing the ship's movements and trying out to count the shots from the battery. It was alleged that 96 shells were fired but they were poor shots and men were seen to flee from the battery.



HMS Amethyst

**Alan Lewis L.S.**



## **Nanking, China Station – January 1949**

During the Communists uprising in China in 1949 we were tied up in Nanking in order to assist in the possible evacuation of the British Embassy and others, or so we were led to believe. To this end it was decided to send radio equipment to the Embassy to improve communication links with Concord. The equipment was loaded on to a Jeep and provided with a driver by the Embassy. There was a further Jeep to carry an escort consisting of Lieutenant Scofield and two ratings. We set off with me and the radio in the first Jeep. The situation in Nanking at the time was absolutely chaotic. The streets were severely congested with refugees fleeing from the North either on foot or in all sorts of shaky old transport. Needless to say the two Jeeps quickly became separated and just to add to the confusion, a Chinese Military vehicle collided with my Jeep writing off the off-side front suspension.

Added to this the Military exercised their authority and disappeared with my driver. So there I am, stuck in the middle of Nanking with a knackered Jeep and valuable radio equipment and my useless pick-axe handle for protection. Quickly I became the centre of attraction in a milling crowd and Chinese layabouts that you would not normally associate with. Religion had never been my strong point but the thought that if there was ever a time for prayer, this was it did cross my mind, when a voice from the crowd shouted, 'Hello Johnny, you O.K.?' Coming towards me was a Chinese Nationalist naval rating who quickly informed me that he had done training in Whale Island, Portsmouth. Explaining my predicament, he went away to phone the Embassy giving my location, he then returned to remain with me until help arrived in the form of my escort. After transferring the equipment to their transport and almost shaking the hand off that Chinese sailor in thanks, we set off again to the Embassy where, upon arrival, a few rums were greatly appreciated. Who says miracles don't happen!

## **Bill Yeomans LSA 48/50**

### **Gunnery Branch**

Always listen to the Gunnery Officer- then do it your way.

Take plenty of time doing "Preps for firing"- You are allowed ten minutes.

Be prepared to make anything- at any time-with no materials.

Always be polite to the G.I- it spoils his whole day.

Always be clean and tidy- cheerful and willing- abstain from drinking and smoking- if you can do all this, you should not be in the gunnery branch.



Lt. Rodney Agar-Gunnery Officer

## **River Yangtze Remembered** (Nanking Naphtha Naval Notions)

Prior to the Yangtze incident involving the Amethyst, as most will know, all the ships of the fleet took turns to 'stand by' up river at Nanking. On one occasion we were duty ship and where we were tied up there was an Australian chicken factory, there must have been thousands of chickens in the building of 3 to 4 storeys high. As the Communists were getting closer in their advance across China, the factory management did not want to leave all the chickens to feed the Chinese armies so they were put out into baskets and sent down to the pontoon alongside our ship.

A couple of old Chinamen employed by the factory were told to clean the chickens and give us all that we could eat (I think this must have sickened me and turned me off chicken for life, as even to this day I do not care for chicken).

At the riverside where we were tied up there was an old shed which was taken over as a canteen, we would go there for a few hours in the evenings. Beer was sold there and this was taken on board as there were no real facilities for drinking it ashore, also we were not allowed shore leave to the town. There was nowhere to go anyway, and then there was the hostile environment to go with it. Some of the PO's took it in turns to act as barmen but you needed to take your own cups to drink it from. In my mess, No.1 mess we had no cups left at all as they got smashed in the 'roughers' coming through the Formosa straits. To improvise, we drank out of the tickler and 50 cigarette tins. Talk of hygiene and food poisoning was unheard of in those days.

Whilst we were there, for some reason or another, we had to move the large steel pontoon that we were tied up alongside, so a gang of us seamen and a PO were left on shore, the ship had to slip and anchor in mid-river until the manoeuvre was completed. We eased the pontoon along a bit and all things went to plan, the river was very fast flowing and we tied up and secured all points. We started to clear away all loose ropes and wires and I bent down to pick and make up a hand line when I stepped back, I caught my heel on a wire and fell over the side and into the river and found myself under the pontoon. It had all occurred so fast that I did not realize just what had happened but as luck would have it, as I fell I grabbed hold of a loose but tied rope. I was washed down under the pontoon and came up the other side and as I surfaced hands grabbed me and pulled me back onto the pontoon.

I am for ever thankful for those 'hands'. We were all dressed in thick winter clothing and thick leather sea boots and of course, with the ship still anchored out in mid-river, we, having no way of getting in touch and me freezing, I am sure it was the closest call of my life. I was eventually taken back on board to thaw out and after a few minutes. PO Jacko Jackson came in with a tot of 'neaters' for me and suddenly all the cold was gone. 'Thank you all again lads'.

During the stint there, the Embassy was running out of oil they used for their heating system, the powers that be decided that we supply them with our oil on board so that they could keep going. So the next thought was on how to get it to them from ship to shore. They managed to find a large stock of oil drums so we rigged up jackstays and runner to the shore, the drums were swung on board, filled by the stokers from the ships tanks then slung ashore by our seamen via the jackstay.

The weather was so cold but we all worked so hard we kept warm, if I remember correctly we worked in watches until the job was completed. I believe we transferred 260 drums full of oil and by the time we had finished we had arms like anthropoid apes.

About 6 or 7 years ago I was watching a documentary programme on BBC2 about China and the Yangtze River and in a part of it they showed the berth we all used in Nanking. They showed some old rusted oil drums and parts of which had been left to rot and the narrator said that they were left there by a bygone age. Little did he know of the sweat and toil involved with those oil drum Naphtha is oil distilled from coal apparently.

**Taff Dixon**  
**AB 1948/50**

It is interesting to note the mention of the oil drums. It would appear that the Embassy did not use very much, as it was this oil that enabled the Amethyst to make its escape.

**Korea – The Forgotten War**

It is sad that the majority of people today appear to know very little about this very, sometime very dirty, war even though the losses to both sides were horrific. It is said that over 40,000 Americans were killed and goodness how many were injured or captured. Britain had far fewer personnel involved but still incurred 1078 killed, 2674 wounded and over 1000 missing.

It may be of interest to the reader, whether involved or not, to learn just how this war started. World War 11 divided Korea into a Communist northern half and an American occupied southern half, divided at the 38<sup>th</sup>. Parallel. The Korean War (1950/53) began when the North Korean Communist army crossed the 38<sup>th</sup>. Parallel and invaded non communist South Korea. As Kim Il-sung's North Korean army, armed with Soviet tanks, quickly overran South Korea, the United States came to South Korea's aid. General D. MacArthur, who had been overseeing the occupation of Japan, was put in command of the US forces which now began to hold off the North Koreans at Pusan, at the southernmost tip of Korea. These forces gradually pushed the North Koreans back above the 38<sup>th</sup>. parallel and continued to pursue them all the way back to the northernmost provinces of North Korea. As a result of this the People's Republic of China secretly sent an army across the Yalu River and forced the American army back to the 38<sup>th</sup>. Parallel. The new C- in- C of the US Army Lt. General M. Ridgway managed to hold this line and peace negotiations were started but continued for months. In the meantime, heavy losses were being incurred on both sides and the fighting men had also to put up very severe conditions.

The North Korean navy was soon destroyed, and allied ships were mainly involved in supporting ground troops by bombardment and supporting landings. Our ship Concord's operation's, were in the main giving support to the US ships. The Royal Navy ships spent weeks and weeks at sea, firing hundreds of shells at targets ashore. The very cold winters often iced up the decks and superstructure and ice axes were in continual use to retain the balance of the ship.

## **H.M. Ships and Auxiliaries**

### **Served in the Korean War 1950 – 1953**

HMS Ladybird – Royal Naval Headquarters Ship, Kure, Japan  
HMS Tyne

#### Light Aircraft Carriers

HMS Unicorn  
HMS Triumph  
HMS Theseus  
HMS Glory  
HMS Ocean

#### Cruisers

HMS Belfast  
HMS Jamaica  
HMS Kenya  
HMS Ceylon  
HMS Newcastle  
HMS Birmingham

#### Destroyers

HMS Charity – July 50 to January 51, July to September 51, December 51 to March 52, August to November 52, February to April 53, June to July 53.

HMS Cockade – July to November 50, March to August 51, October to December 51, January to March 52, December 52 to January 53, April to July 53.

HMS Comus – July to November 50, March to August 51, October to December 51, May to September 52, November 52 to February 53.

HMS Concord – September 50 to January 51, April to May 51, August to December 51, January to May 52, June to November 52, May to July 53.

HMS Consort – June 50 to April 51, June to September 51, May to August 52, November 52 to February 53, March to May 53.

HMS Constance – October 50 to March 51, June to July 51, November 51 to February 52, June to December 52.

HMS Cossack – June to October 50, February to May 52, July 52 (2 weeks), September 52 to January 53, May to July 53.

#### Frigates

H.M.S. Alacrity, Amethyst, Alert, Black Swan, Cardigan Bay, Crane, Hart, Modeste, Morecombe Bay, Mounts Bay, Opossum, Sparrow, St.Brides Bay and Whitesand Bay

Royal Fleet Auxiliary, Hospital Ship

Maine (Hospital), Fort Charlotte (Naval victualling and stores issuing ship)

Fort Langley, Sandusky and Choysang

**Joe Savvery, Secretary**

## Memories of Concord – Korean War March 1952

Some youthful memories of Concord's activities during the Korean War are shown in extracts from letters home to his parents by Lieutenant Rodney Agar (Gunnery Officer) starting March 1952. Note, the peace treaty was finally signed in July 1953.

7<sup>th</sup> March 1952

We are due back in Sasebo tomorrow so we will get some more mail which I am looking forward to... I transferred at sea successfully and it really is most interesting here, and it will be even more so on our next patrol which is inshore work. This ship is undoubtedly jolly good, with a very nice crowd in the wardroom and I'm thoroughly enjoying life! The next two years should be great fun and a great experience. Last night we did a short bombardment of an enemy held village, and boarded a couple of junks. Not very important incidents but my baptism!! It is really rather fascinating creeping in and out between these masses of small islands in narrow channels, all of which are continually being captured and re-captured by the enemy  $\square$ ah-jong $\square$ s. Apparently the possession of these islands are pawns in the truce talks game, and are the stepping stones for spies and intelligence officers. The guerrillas creep about in junks and set up gun positions ashore and it is our job to continually harass them, and prevent them from capturing islands and also bombard them out of the islands they have already captured. During the day we have been escorting one of the American carriers, who flies off strikes from dawn till dusk. We also go to action stations every dawn at 0630, irrespective of what's been going on the night before! This the last day of the present patrol, and tomorrow we are due in at Sasebo till March 12<sup>th</sup>

8<sup>th</sup> March 1952

I am continuing this to-day as I didn't have time to finish it last night. We have gone to the help of a Chinese ship carrying the Chinese Ambassador that has run aground, and have been delayed as we shall have to tow her off! They ran slap up the beach on a large island, I have now taken over as Ship's Gunnery Officer and Divisional Officer and there is plenty of work to do, so will be very busy. We also keep watch on the bridge 1 in 3, which means 4 hrs on, 8 hrs off all round the clock except from 1600 – 2000 when it is split into dog watches...I have started to grow a beard and it's doing quite nicely I think! I shall send you a photograph when it's properly established and trimmed!!!

11<sup>th</sup> March 1952

Many thanks for your various letters, some of which took some time getting here!!! If you get a Forces Lettercard, which is brown and the same type of thing as the air letter you are sending at present, you can send that for 2 ½ d. Which is cheaper and is just as quick. The last one of Daddy's was very quick, only taking 7 days.

Not a great deal of news since I wrote last, a great deal to do and time simply flies; it'll be no time before I am back home again! I have been arranging shoots on our way back to the coast. We are leaving on Friday (March 14<sup>th</sup>) for a fortnight's patrol on the West Coast. Mostly inshore bombardments and helping the South Korean  $\square$ ah-jong $\square$ s. It should be tremendous fun, I wouldn't be missing this for the world!

Tomorrow we are taking Admiral Scott-Montcrief, who is our boss up here, to Nagasaki to call on the Japanese Governor and I'm in charge of the guard of honour. They've been drilling today and getting themselves smartened up. We return to Sasebo on Thursday to take on ammunition before sailing on Friday. Also we've been getting the ship smartened up for the Admiral, and she's looking very nice. The men work damned hard-although they look and are dressed like a ruffianly crew as you'll ever meet! A large number of them

have grown beards; on the whole they are a good bunch, and this Korean business makes everyone very keen.

18<sup>th</sup> March 1952

Well, we are going to fuel with an oiler and this is the first opportunity of sending mail since the patrol began, so I shall get this letter off to you... Well, we seem to have gone on non stop and really is the greatest fun and most interesting. We are patrolling a group of islands in the Haeju area on the West Coast, preventing the enemy from capturing them, and also investigating junk traffic. We have a number of Korean □ah-jong□s on the islands, with some American marines, and they sally forth to make raids inland. The enemy are building up strength on the mainland and have occupied villages and dug trenches so our job is to keep them quiet. We have bombarded every night except one. The first night we fired at two villages, containing troops, and destroyed several houses and saw two big explosions. Later on that night we repulsed an enemy invasion of one of the islands by 4.5 gun fire and everyone was very pleased, though we were using a very Heath-Robinson method of fire control with me and the proper fire control parties not even turned out!! We were lucky to hit the target really.

The next two nights we fired the odd shell at trenches and villages and bombarded lookout positions with Bofors. We usually fire starshell during the night as it has a good moral effect and lights up the mudflats across which the enemy have to advance. This and keeping watch one in three keeps one very busy and life is not dull!! Yesterday I went ashore with the Captain to look at the main island which we are responsible for, and we met the three US soldiers who are there, one of whom was the garrison commander. It was very interesting and the Americans were very nice. We had them back for lunch and gave them magazines, booze etc, and they had baths on board! Life is rather primitive for them.

There are about 5000 refugees on this island and they do live in appalling squalor, but all appear to be in good spirits which is the main thing. Well that just about covers our activities to date. I find my cardigan beautifully warm and have really brought too many sweaters and things, as we are issued with lovely fleece lined coats. The days are lovely, with a clear sky and blazing sun and so far it has been calm as a mill pond but it seems to be blowing up a bit just now. The scenery is most attractive really, rather like the West coast of Scotland except there are very few trees about.

28<sup>th</sup> March 1952

Well, it is nice to have a rest for a change and we shall be in Kure for maintenance till 8<sup>th</sup> April when we sail for the East coast and do another patrol of 18 days – rather longer! It is really good fun and thoroughly interesting – last patrol we fired nearly 500 rounds at enemy troops and villages, observation positions etc. with quite good results, so we gather. The weather has been very kind to us except for a few days when it blew, and at the moment we are just entering the Inland Sea in Japan where it is just like an English Summer's day. My beard is coming on a pace...

1<sup>st</sup> April 1952

Not really much news since I last wrote. We arrived here in Kure on 29<sup>th</sup>, after a lovely passage through the Inland Sea, and since then have worked fairly hard getting the ship shipshape and carrying out maintenance jobs with dockyard help. We are taking in nearly 1000 rounds of ammunition which, as you can imagine, means a lot of work, and several key ratings have left or are about to leave the ship, so I shall have to fiddle around with the

watch organization so that we have an efficient action set up. We sail on the 6<sup>th</sup> for an 18 day patrol with the Americans up the East Coast, finishing on 24<sup>th</sup> and then down to Hong Kong which will be nice! We have taken on, or will have done after Thursday when we ammunition, half our outfit of ammunition again, in anticipation of a lot of firing!! Kure is quite a nice place with prices better than Sasebo. It is also much less dirty and there is hardly an American to be seen, which, although I shouldn't say it, is nice! It is a huge dockyard, one of the biggest in Japan, where they built their secret 80,000 ton battleships and the slipway and dockyard where they launched them is fairly close to us. Also, of course, the surrounding islands are rather pretty, but the town still smells the same as the rest of Japan when you get to leeward of it! I have also taken over as sports officer and we have got quite a good programme here.

14<sup>th</sup> April 1952

Just a short note to catch the replenishment ship! I fear that my last one may not have done so and there will have been a rather large gap between letters, for which I apologize. A Merry Easter to you all and I hope the weather was nice for it. We spent Easter Sunday doing 10 hours at Action Stations during a big operation up to Chongin with an American cruiser and aircraft carriers and destroyers which was most interesting. Aircraft were strafing the town and bridges around it and bombardment was going on all day. We fired 165 rounds, our highest to date. It was a perfect day, with a hot sun, and was interesting but tiring. We have just heard that our patrol is to be extended by 3 days making it 3 weeks solid up here! Mails will be very infrequent as we give them to the supply ship when we replenish, she may be up here for another 6 to 7 days, so that is about 11 days before they even get to Japan!

Life is very hectic as we are keeping watch 1 in 3, 4 hrs on, 8 off and during the 8 off you have to eat, sleep and carry out your normal routine work, go to Action Stations if necessary (which is usually the case), so it doesn't leave much time for much else. Consequently I haven't done much reading or painting. However life is most interesting and I enjoy the gunnery thoroughly. We have so far fired 700 shells this patrol!!! ...

16<sup>th</sup> April 1952

Well, since last writing, not much has happened except the same sort of routine every day. Although it is still interesting we shall be ready for a rest when the patrol is over. Though our relief has unfortunately been delayed and we are staying up here for another 3 days! This means that we now don't get to Hong Kong till the first week in May, and there may be some anti-submarine exercises to do which will put us back even further. However, we know that we will be there till the beginning of July or end of June, when we come up here for another three months. After that, I think we go down to Singapore for a long re-fit.

During the last week or so we have fired 1000 rounds which isn't bad going! We had a great day on Easter Sunday, which I can't remember whether I told you about, watching a grand stand view of an air attack on Chongin. We have also had the occasional duel with enemy shore batteries which keeps interests alive and does the ship the world of good! So far they have not got very close to us! We put out a tremendous number of shells the other day and nobody realized we were firing so quickly! Not very accurate though, I don't think, because spotting was difficult and these gun emplacements ashore are almost impossible to hit. The weather is very variable, sometimes being quite cold and blowing up, and the other days being absolutely perfect. Just like a holiday cruise in the Caribbean except that we are being paid for it! As for trains, we have had bad luck and haven't seen any to fire at which is unfortunate.

29<sup>th</sup> April 1952

Well, at the moment we are just north of Formosa on our way down to Hong Kong, having finished with Korea for about two months! Our last patrol, which lasted 21 days, was just about long enough, and the last week was particularly eventful, when we were fired at quite a lot and eventually were hit by a small 75mm shell, which I gather you have heard about! However, nothing to worry about as it did very little damage and the only very sad tragedy was the two poor chaps getting killed. Most of the days when they fired at us they were very inaccurate, except for the one day when they seemed to get the range! The patrol as a whole was quite interesting; though I think everyone had had enough after three weeks and now is in need of a rest. We fired 2,700 rounds which isn't bad going, most of our targets being railway lines and installations. We only hit one train, but hardly had any to fire at which was bad luck! Otherwise the weather on the whole was good and the food not too bad, so it could have been worse! We only stopped at Sasebo for a few hours on our way down here to refuel and collect mail, and then pressed on being due in Hong Kong on 1<sup>st</sup> May.

**Rodney Agar**  
**Lt. 1952-53**

### **Burial at Sea – April 1952**



"Y" Guns crew

A/B Bravington 3<sup>rd</sup> from right. A/B Greenwood, far right. Both killed in action.



## Burial at Sea – April 1952



"Y" Gun damage caused by 175mm shell



Burial at sea service

### Buried at sea

Cast their ashes away on a wind swept sea  
The remains of these seafaring men,  
Returned at last to the elements they loved,  
To the ocean where their lives began.

Cast their ashes away, to the crested waves  
They sailed o'er times long ago,  
To join again those shipmates once known  
In times of delight and woe.

Cast their ashes away, to be cradled within  
The arms of the billowing main,  
To sail once more to yon distant shore  
Never to return again.

Cast their ashes away, their last dying wish  
Not for them the earth, the land,  
Let the tempest take them, far away,  
Maybe to some golden strand.

Cast their ashes away, to Neptune's domain  
For this life they have seen,  
They'll soon be surrounded by dear friends of old  
Dancing on "Fiddlers Green" \*

#### \*Fiddlers Green

That happy land imagined of seafarers, where there  
is perpetual mirth, a fiddle that never stops playing  
for dancers who never tire, where there is plenty of  
grog and unlimited tobacco.

Authors prerogative.

And no health and safety!!

## **Was It A Russian Sub?**

I wonder if any of the 1951-53 commission can remember when our ship was escorting the aircraft carrier HMS Ocean up the east coast of Korea, from Kure Japan in 1952, When suddenly the monotonous tone of the asdic changed from the normal 'Ping' to the unmistakable rapid return echo of an underwater contact with a large object off our port bow, the Captain ordered full speed ahead, and the carrier and escort cleared the area at full speed, after holding the contact whilst verifying if it was friendly or not, we did a couple of depth charge runs over the spot, and then the echo was lost. Maybe some of the 51-53 Commission can throw some light on this, especially the T.A.S. party members of the Association, or indeed any of the officers, the reason that I ask is because whilst browsing in the local library I came across a book named 'Korea', and it contained a reference to the Russians losing 3 subs during that conflict, 2 being accounted for, but one had mysteriously disappeared. I don't know who the author was but it seemed to contain a great deal about the British side of the war, it was only after this years, RN Korean Vets Reunion that I got talking to a PO who was on the Ocean at that time, and I mentioned this incident to him. He said he remembered hearing about it, but said that the 'Yanks' had claimed credit for the loss of this sub, but if my memory serves me right, the escort for the Ocean was all RN. Can anyone shed any light on this?

Then, we had the incident of dropping a depth charge from the port quarter thrower, whilst going alongside the Black Ranger off the West Coast of Korea to fuel up. This was when the U.N. decided to starve the islanders out, by not letting the fishermen do any fishing, we used to collect the fishing sampans and then assemble them into groups, after removing their crews then attempt to tow them to the U.N. held islands. The Captain soon gave up after it proved impossible to tow these blunt nosed craft at any speed, so they were set on fire and sunk, we had to go to the oiler, ammunition and then provision ship whilst underway in that order, but on this occasion the ships were at anchor in the lee of a friendly island. As we went alongside, port side to, the swell nudged the Concord sharply into the oiler's starboard side and then the thrower brushed against her side which in turn tore the depth charge off the rack and down it dropped between the two ships. Everyone thought that this was it; because we could never had gotten away from the area in time. Luckily for us the water was too shallow to activate the detonator but as you can imagine, we couldn't start the engines so we just had to slip and let the ships drift apart a fair distance. When all ships had cleared the area and were safely away, the Captain carried out a few depth charge runs over the spot to detonate our unwanted present to Davy Jones's Locker. There were no more than breaths on hold on that occasion on the upper deck.

**Joe Savvery**  
**AB 1951-53**

## **Remembrance**

Every year on Remembrance Sunday, the nearest Sunday to the 11<sup>th</sup> November, Her Majesty the Queen, and members of the Royal family, will lead the senior politicians, members of the Commonwealth countries and armed forces to a Memorial service at the Cenotaph in Whitehall, London. They will, at 11 a.m. with the remainder of the country observe a two minute silence, to honour those who have given their lives for their country.

The word Cenotaph, comes from two Greek words, “kenos” meaning empty, and “taphos” which is a tomb, The cenotaph is a monument to servicemen whose bodies have been laid to rest elsewhere in the world, and indeed buried at sea.

The Cenotaph, in Whitehall was unveiled in 1920, the same year that the body of an unknown soldier was buried in Westminster Abbey, and it represents every serviceman/woman who died in the defence of our country.



### **Story of ML 1323**

The fighting in Korea had stopped, an armistice had been signed, but we continued to operate in the Yellow Sea. After a while Concord sailed for Hong Kong leaving behind such curiosities as that American triumphant arch at Sasebo with its sick making inscription “Through this arch, the god-damn best fighting men in the world pass”.

On September the 9<sup>th</sup> Concord was acting as duty destroyer in Hong Kong, and in the late afternoon received orders to proceed with dispatch to the Pearl River Estuary, it was a spectacular dash through Victoria harbour off Kowloon dodging junks and the keeping to the north of Cheung Chau and the Soko islands until we reached the western tip of Lantau island. By this time there was more news available about our sudden departure from Victoria harbour.

During the afternoon Harbour defence motor launch ML1323 had been on a routine patrol in international waters, south of the Pearl river estuary, HDML1323 was stationed in Hong Kong as part of the local defence vessels, some of which were other HDML,s. She had been built in Australia about 10 years before and was one of the Admiralty type of HDML. Her armament was 20mm Oerlikon and she had a speed of 11 knots. On that day she had a complement of eleven, one officer of the Royal Hong Kong Defence Force was also a passenger on board.

Whilst on patrol HD1323 had sighted and then closed a Communist Gunboat. The gunboat became annoyed when photographs were taken from a distance of about ½ mile and ordered the ML to stop engines. HD1323 then altered course towards Lantau Island intending to seek the safety of the nearest harbour, Tai O. The gunboat opened fire firstly with small arms and then with a gun of about 4.5 calibre. Two shells had hit the ML killing 6 of her crew including the Captain and also the RHKDF officer. The remaining five crew members were wounded with one having serious injuries. HD1323” had been unable to return fire; her steering was damaged causing ML to go round in circles and the engine could not be stopped.

The incident was seen by a Royal Hong Kong police launch stationed at the Tai O, which had signalled information about the attack and then sailed from the police pier to assist the ML. The gunboat had by then steamed back towards the safety of Chinese waters. Two unarmed RAF training aircraft were circling the HDML and whenever they flew near the gunboat they were fired upon. On reaching the HDML. Both vessels were brought back to

Tai O pier, arriving at about 1630. Meanwhile Concord having failed to find any trace of the gunboat, had arrived off Tai O about 1830, in company with other HDML,s. Plans were made immediately to land a party off at Tai O to deal with the casualties and to look for an unexploded shell believed to be aboard the HDML1323. It was unlikely that my TAS responsibilities would be required if Concord returned to the Pearl River and so I was chosen to go ashore with a small bank of men which included the Doctor and the Gunner.

On landing I was met by the Tai O Sub inspector and taken to where HDML1323 was berthed.

I found that the bodies were still where the men had died and the wounded were sitting around on the upper deck. Priority was given to the work of the Doctor, who had to examine and treat the wounded and prepare the bodies of the dead for removal to Concord. The Gunner could not find any trace of an unexploded shell, but made sure that the ML's outfit of ammunition was in a safe state. Whilst the work was in progress, the rest of the party was preparing HDML1323 for towing back to Hong Kong the next day. Some holes above the waterline had to be filled and the hand steering arrangements aft were checked, as the main steering wheel and motor could not be repaired. When the Doctor reported that all the crew of HD1323 was ready to be taken to Concord anchored off at Tai O, the transfer took place. I was aft with the landing party at the Police station to make sure that all was well overnight. I walked along the pier to the HDML and its sentry several times during the night, the only movement I saw was from those large repulsive cockroaches known to some as Bombay runners, scurrying about their gory business.

### **Tony Goldsmith**



Damage to HMML 1323



Pompey Lill

Harry Russell thought of a lovely homecoming to Pompey Lill, and had aspirations of marrying her but did not have the spare 7/6d at the time!!

## Running the Gauntlet

HMS Concord making her way slowly along the east coast of North Korea under 'darken ship' conditions would, every few minutes during the night, fire off a 4.5 inch star shell round from X gun; just to keep the 'Commiss' on their toes. Being the LEM having the middle watch in the forward switchboard meant two or three times during those four hours you would have to leave the comfort and warmth of below decks to make your way aft to the tiller flat and check the steering motors.

Opening the forward screen door onto the iron deck the night was a 'black as your hat'. It required a few moments to become accustomed to the darkness before moving off. Remember? – We had those steel wires for 'strap hanging' rigged up port and starboard from the forward superstructure along the deck to the after structure (very useful when she was rolling and the oggin' was coming over green). As you set off you hoped not to meet anyone making their way forward on the same wire – could be painful, followed by much cussing from both parties (being so dark you didn't know who it was). Passing the galley and then the torpedo tubes; this is where you had to make your choice. X gun was aimed to port as by now you could just make out the shape of the barrel.



You could pass below the gun on the port side and take the chance of having your ears blasted off as she fired or take the starboard side and risk the huge brass cordite case missing the recoil mat on the gun deck to come hurtling down from above – 'The choice was yours'. Even if you did hear the brr, brr of the firing buzzer from the bridge as you approached, it gave barely a second to nip past before the bang! Managing so far with your ears still ringing, it was

only a matter now of making your way through the maze of quarter-deck hatches, bollards and shell cases to find the hatch cover for the tiller flat, get below, make sure the steering motors were well oiled and not too hot before 'running the gauntlet' back again. You hoped by now there would still be a hot mug of 'Kye' going in the galley, as long as the watch on deck hadn't drunk it all.

**David Miles**  
**LEM 1951-53**

## Odd Abs Concord Recollections

It was with of great interest when I read a comment from George 'Wally' Wallis, ERA, about AB Frampton and what a Concord Character, he was, I remember him shuffling along the port passageway, passing the TS carefully clutching a box of 'Bluebell' to his chest, and heading for the Forward messdeck. I asked how come he was walking as though treading on broken glass and, he replied that he did not want to mix the contents of the tins. I was puzzled by this but left it at that, thinking he must have been having one of his blank days. I proceeded to the upper deck and sat talking to 'Krauts' Cowell and John Madden and mentioned the odd behaviour of Frampton to them, they both split their sides with laughter when I innocently said that he must be going to do a hell of a lot of polishing on the messdeck with 36 cans of 'Bluebell', when the laughter subsided they explained to a red faced oppo. That the spirit floated to the top of the tins and if undisturbed the white abrasive matter congealed at the bottom., therefore allowing the alcohol to be drunk. I felt a bit of an idiot not realizing that. But I do agree that AB Frampton was a brilliant seaman and an excellent 'buoy jumper'.

I recall being on the Fo'csle when entering harbour with the Fo'csle' party under Lt. Campbell and PO Cameron when we were instructed to go to the buoy,- away went the motor boat with Leading Seaman McPhimster at the helm and AB's Frampton and Charlie Power as buoy jumpers. As the ship approached the buoy the Captain asked Lt. Campbell where the buoy lay, I do not know to this day how it happened but the ship struck the buoy resulting in both buoy jumpers being well and truly dumped in the bay but fortunately the canvas bag containing the lead slugs, shackles, hammers and spare parts had already been tied to the buoy ribs by Frampton, true foresight on his part, otherwise, it would have been a real disaster without the tools of the trade.. Soaked as they were and having a good dip in the true sense of the word, Frampton still let rip a right mouthful about officer's parentages.

Then we had AB Bill Daragon who invented the 'screaming shell'. Like the James Bond boffin 'Q' he had this idea of piercing empty baked bean tins with lots of holes, (There was certainly no shortage of baked beans tins on the messdecks). He placed one over the nose fuse of the 4.5 shell and you can imagine the screaming noise it made when the shells were fired (By the way they were only used during night shoots). When the first Daragon experiment was fired from 'Y' gun at night and well and truly in flight screaming, and on its way to target on shore, there was a stunned silence on the bridge and PO Cameron commenced to leave the bridge to put a stop to it. Lt. Agar called him back and asked him to imagine what the receiving end felt like. After that A/PO Jim South used them whenever he could, as did PO Shiner Wright on B gun. We also had two more characters aboard Concord, (among as many as were!). Ordinary Seaman Rose, of the 'laughing blue eye', a proper bundle of laughs and AB Jock McKinnell, who was a very nice shipmate (when sober), but when the beers and whisky chasers started to flow, he became a different character altogether. Whenever he went ashore the duty watch was detailed to escort him to his hammock in 10 mess. He always liked an argument on 5 mess, Jock did. One night LEM Alan Stewart had to isolate the mast because Jock was on the ship's awnings which could have resulted in a nasty accident, if he had made contact with the wires on the way up.

The incident occurred during a typhoon in the Formosa Straits. The stoker involved was Harry Andrews, (B football team winger) He was proceeding down the weather side, (starboard) and as he approached 'Y' gun he paused to speak to AB Jim Barwick, TAS, who was on Life-buoy lookout. 'Andy' left him to nip over the Quarterdeck to ditch a bucket

of gash over the stern when a large roller struck amidships and when Jim picked himself up he could not see any sign of the stoker, only an empty bucket rolling across the Quarterdeck, - he flung the life-belt over the side and pressed the life-buoy' alarm and then called the bridge with 'Man overboard' message on the tannoy situated for this purpose on the aft superstructure. The lifeboat was launched and happily Harry was spotted off the port quarter, the lifeboat pulled him from the water and returned him safely back on board where he received a reprimand for trying to swim back to the ship, it was expected in man overboard circumstances that you keep away from the ship owing to the revolving screws and that you let the lifeboat rescue you. Harry was then taken to the sick-bay to have a leg wound treated along with his many bumps and bruises, he was a very lucky shipmate indeed. I hope these recollections can jog other shipmate's memories.

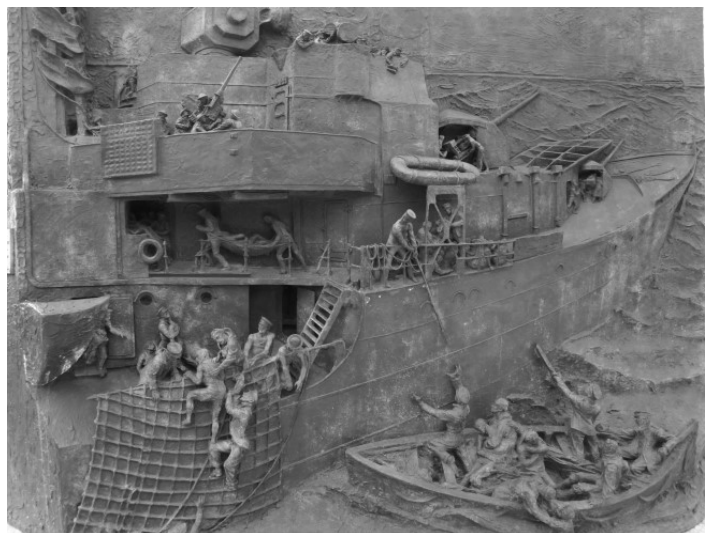
**Joe Savvery**  
**AB 1951-53**

### **To Serve in a Destroyer**

Destroyers were ships that imbued a special spirit in the men who served in them, to serve in destroyers brought a certain "kudos", intangible and hard to define, but one which inspired many to great acts of heroism. The "destroyer spirit" was a remarkable and unifying force that set apart both destroyer and the men who served in them.

The above statement was made within the programme of events at the dedication of HMS Cavalier as the National Destroyer Memorial held on the 14<sup>th</sup>. November 2007. The Duke of Edinburgh, himself an ex destroyer man, unveiled the Destroyer Memorial Monument. It will forever be a poignant reminder that by the end of the 1939/1945 War, 142 destroyers had been sunk with the loss of over 11,000 men.

We, the veterans of HMS Concord should count ourselves fortunate to not only have served in destroyer but to have been selected to do serve in Concord, a ship loved by all who sailed in her. Such was the strength of our feelings that now, over half a century later, we should be recording the memories of those far off times. It is of course, very sad that age has reduced our numbers considerably but it is hoped that this book will act as a reminder to our descendants of an age so very different, sometimes exciting and yes, quite hard and rigorous on occasions. For many months she was the only h we knew and it created our own world well apart from everyone, she was always there for us, through typhoons, some quite dangerous and other occasions of considerable stress.



The National Destroyer Memorial

It is sometimes alleged that a ship makes the man and I am sure that it probably does but I believe that to a certain extent there are on occasions when the men also have something

to do with it. The bonds and friendships forged between messmates in many cases continued to the present day and a Concord pal has proved to be a genuine one, lasting and highly valued.

Each commission was fortunate to include within its ships company a number of men who had served for a number of years, even during the war, who had the knowledge and experience to help and advise the often very young novices. They included three badge AB's who, by choice, were happy to remain so, but whose ability and experience were invaluable, in the running of the ship. There was also quite a number of one and two badge "Killicks" who again were the backbone of the ship. Wonderful characters, all of them!. Great story tellers and full of fun. Mind you! They could occasionally send us sprats on a wild goose chase, but that was a tradition.

### **Derek Hodgson**



Roughing it!

This Destroyer memorial is situated in the Historic Dockyard, Chatham, and is open from to the general public from February each year. Opening times vary throughout the year, however a phone call or visit their website to find out relevant details. Tel. No 01634 823800

Other exhibits are listed below.

The Royal Dockyard museum  
Historic Warships RNLI Lifeboats  
Wooden Walls  
Smithery  
Railway workshop  
Victorian Ropery  
The Big Space  
Shop and Restaurant



## **Memories – HMS Concord, 1951/53 – A Slow Boat To China**

We, the new commission of HMS Concord after assembling in RN Barracks, Portsmouth left Southampton in May 1951 on the troopship 'Empire Medway'. With us were a few hundred soldiers on their way to Korea; the Argyle and Sutherland Highlanders were one of the regiments.

On board I met up with the new Electrical ratings, including 'Bungy' Williams (LEM) – we had previously met before in HMS Collingwood on course. 'Bungy' being from Liverpool had grown up with ships all his life. I was soon to find on our four to five week voyage to Hong Kong that it was to be a rapid learning curve about our then large merchant navy fleet. On our way down the English Channel we were to come across large liners out of the Port of London, white with yellow funnels-these I learnt were P&O ships on their way to the Far East. Next were the smart 'Castle' ships out of Southampton bound for South Africa and the dark blue Cunarders on their fast run to New York, also Royal Mail ships sailing to South America.

As we moved across the Bay and into the 'Med' 'Bungy' began to point out the large numbers of cargo ships, many from his home port of Liverpool. There were, to name a few, as I remember, the Clan Line, Blue Funnel Line, Elder Dempster Line, Blue Star Line, Ellerman City Line, all with their own distinctive paintwork. Black and white funnelled British India Line (remember we were to return to the UK in 1953 on the SS Captain Hobson of that line). Foreign ships we passed were the very clean 'Mearsk' ships, I think from Norway and Japanese ships that always ended with 'Maru'.

Once the usual jobs of 'sweeping down the flats' (how do you keep hundreds of pongos and matelots busy on a troopship for weeks?) had been done we could spend the dog watches on deck. By now a few of us had met up with some members of the crew of the troopship and were able to enjoy a beer or two and of course talk ships. In those days 'Bungy' could spot a ship in the distance, tell us the line, where she had sailed from and where bound and with a good sense of the cargo too. It certainly passed those long days at sea and set me up for the rest of my time in the RN, being able to speak with some knowledge on our merchant navy fleet.

After runs ashore on the way, in Port Said, Aden, Colombo and Singapore we finally arrived in Hong Kong to meet up with our new ship the 'Concord' alongside in the dockyard. Our Electrical boss, Roy Bigden had already been aboard for some months, and I remember one of his eager young E.M.s, Frank Lees of the advance party, who couldn't wait to show us 'new hands' around. We soon fitted into the routine in 'Tamar' and found that the 'dress of the day' was white No.10's with a furled umbrella, a new pair of shoes or a shirt could be made in a day for a few HK dollars, but it took two days for a jacket and trousers. What we had to look forward to! The monsoon rain, riding in a rickshaw, the 'Star Ferry', Wanchai, the 'click-clack' of mah-jong pieces and the China Fleet Club, life in the Orient was certainly going to be different.

**David Miles**  
**LEM 1951-53**

## Modernisation in Singapore – Winter 1952

I served as a Gunnery Officer in our memorable ship HMS Concord from February 1952 to April 1954. Whilst doing my Gunnery Course before joining I had heard that Concord was a 'good ship' one of the best in the Far East Fleet. So it proved to be. When I joined over a jackstay at sea from HMCS Athabaskan off the west coast of Korea, the Concord had that indefinable air of an efficient well run happy ship. As a 'new boy' to start with, gradually becoming an 'old hand' I like to think that I grew with and absorbed the spirit of the ship. I always felt we had wonderful Ships Companies who were the salt of the earth, and I served under two excellent captains in Charles Mills and Kit James. Throughout my 25 years in the Navy, having joined as a 13 year old cadet at Dartmouth, Concord was among the most remarkable of commissions and a happy experience which left its imprint on my life.

Our Editor has asked when Concord's conversion took place. I was on board and directly involved when this took place during our refit in Singapore Dockyard in the winter of 1952/53. Our 4.5 'X' turret was removed to be replaced by the Anti-Submarine' mortar system instead of depth charges, which left us with the remaining three 4.5 turrets. We were rather sad at the time at losing a gun turret, but realized that the squid A/S system made us a much more all-round fighting unit. At the same refit, our ancient 'fire-control clock gunnery control system was replaced with a new electronic Medium Range System called 'MRS 3'. This took some time and much heartache to set to work before it improved our gunnery!

The ship was stripped and refitted from truck to keel. In dry dock, the duty fire watch had our food delivered on board in a haybox contraption to keep it warm. An abiding memory is that of the cockroaches who peered over the edge of my plate constantly! We all moved ashore out of the ship to the barracks at Terror and 2 weeks station leave was given to both watches. Some went up country to stay with the Army or friends, and others to rest camps in the Malayan hills or Trincomalee. I myself flew to Ceylon, courtesy of the RAF, to stay with my cousin who ran a tea estate. Our aircraft developed a defect in Car Nicobar where we were stuck in the rainy season and mud for two days. I had only one uniform suit of whites – long sleeves for flying! – which gradually turned brown.

In Concord, some of you will remember that we were due to recommission in July 1953 – most ships in the Far East Fleet were on two and a half years unaccompanied foreign service commissions. Due to the signing of the peace treaty in Korea, the troopship to take our ship's company home was diverted to take back the 1000 odd British prisoners of war so Concord's had to wait a further 2 months before going home. They completed 2 years 7 months away from the UK as a result and I remember with such respect the stoical way this news was received.

The 'C' class destroyers were built of poor steel during World War 11, but were a first class maid of all work and we were justly proud of our ships in the 8<sup>th</sup> D.S. in Concord.

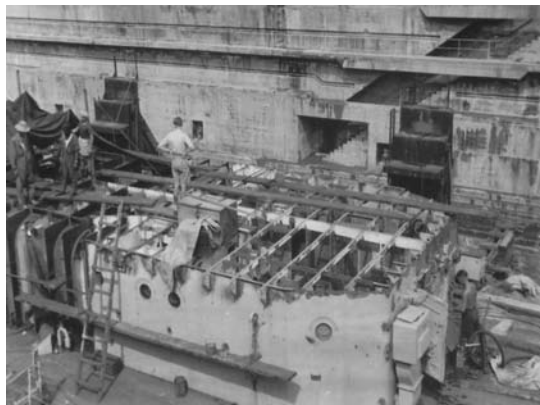
In 1952 we were hit in a gun duel during one of our patrols off the East Coast of Korea. Tragically two members of 'Y' guns crew were killed, and four wounded when a 105mm shell ripped through the side of the turret. On this occasion we had just started hitting a troop train from about 300 yards offshore when we were straddled while proceeding slowly towards inshore. By the time we had turned 180 degrees and worked up speed we had over 30 straddles and were lucky not to have been further hit. Our guns were in direction control and firing back as fast as they could including the bofors. This was the third shore

gun duel which we experienced, the other two being at greater range and we were not hit, but our American chummy ship the USS 'Endicott' was hit up the stern.

On the west coast of Korea as one of the bombarding ships we would creep in at night among the islands, or by day carry out air-spotted shoots, in support of the Army's flanks.. We eventually wore out our gun barrels and when the Gunner passed the 'plug bore' tests the plug just fell out of each barrel! As an escort we also screened the carriers Ocean and Glory and an American whose name I forget. A typical carrier duty would be to fly operations for 4 days – then one day's replenishing – then a further 4 days and back to Japan. The Poor Bloody Escorts i.e. Concord and 2 others then took over the next carrier! The British flew Sea Furies and Fireflies, aiming for seventy sorties a day. The Americans flew Marine Corsairs, Panthers and Banshee Jets. The routine for us in the Concord was approx. 3 weeks on patrol followed by 7 days in Japan and so on, rotating 3 months in Korea and 3 months in Hong Kong. In the event, no allied ships were attacked by enemy aircraft or submarines during the war but one never knew what was round the corner. Like most patrol work, busy periods were interspersed with routine – uncomfortable but never dull. We relieved some of the quieter moments by 'self help' and once had an impromptu pulling regatta against our chummy ship Charity whilst at anchor inshore north of the 38" parallel on Korea's west coast.

Incidentally, later in 1953, after recommissioning, Concord won the 'Cock' at the 8<sup>th</sup> DS Squadron Regatta in Hong Kong and I think we won 7 out of the 9 races. The First Lieutenant and Shipwright had devised a 'dry trainer', an assembly of planks, sawn off oars and hydraulic rams to resemble a whaler's thwarts, on the squid deck for training while underway at sea. This caused some ribald comment and sore backsides and muscles but it paid off!

**Rodney Agar,**  
**Lt.**  
**1952- 54**



Replacement of 4.5" X Gun , by Anti Submarine Mortar system

## **The Saturated Signal Satire**

During my commission I was coxswain of the official mail boat. Whilst in Hong Kong we used to work one day on and one day off, our crew consisted of myself, a stoker who was Chinese and the Postie' who was bowman as well.

On this particular day, a Sunday, we were on "stand by." Up to now neither crew had ever been called out on a Sunday. The day previous a Typhoon had been threatening and by Sunday the Black Cones were out and the weather was very bad. After dinner the signalman from the tower came in to our mess with a signal for Stonecutters, it was in a pink envelope which meant it was secret and urgent. Myself and the Postie went down to the Boat Basin where the stoker was waiting for us, he was less happy than we were. The standby boat was one of the better ones that we had but it was open to the weather apart from a small canvas cover over the engine compartment and I recall that it had a powerful engine. The store where the life jackets were stowed was locked and no one seemed to know who had the key but we set off anyway.

It was relatively calm in the Basin but in the open it was a much different story. The Star Ferry was still running, but apart from that and us there was very little movement. I recall seeing a Junk that was making heavy weather out of it and was listing very badly. Our Chinese stoker was cursing in his own way, no doubt voicing our thoughts as well. We ploughed on through the worsening weather, the post bag was already wet through and so was the pink envelope. As we approached Stonecutters I sounded the klaxon to call the attention of the sentry who should have been on the jetty but to no avail. After all, who would expect a visitor in this weather? Eventually, when he did turn up, he waved us away. It was obvious that we could not pull alongside the jetty but by some quirk of luck the signal was past from the Postie to the sentry but on turning away from the jetty the stern of the boat hit something which damaged the prop and we began to take water. The engine didn't sound too good either.

The journey back to Tamar Boat Basin took a lot longer than the journey out. We were taking water quicker than we could bale it out and the weather was getting worse. I recall that it became very dark. By some good stroke of luck we eventually got back into the Basin and as we got alongside, the boat sank.

The next day I had to make a statement and answer some questions which didn't seem to make much sense to me. One being, 'Why didn't I have a chart?' Another one, "Who gave the order to take the signal? And 'Why did you not have life jackets?'. At the time I was wondering where the Signal Officer was. As it was, everything turned out OK. This is the big joke though. After it had died down the Boat Officer told me the contents of the signal,. It was to warn Stonecutters of a coming Typhoon!!!

**David Griffiths**  
**AB 1950-51**

## **The Battle of Manus Island – 1953-54**

Concord had been involved in exercises in the South West Pacific with navies from several Commonwealth countries and also the United States. Following the exercises, short leave was given to the participating ships to proceed ashore on Manus Island for a leg stretch at the Australian commissioned shore establishment HMAS Tarangau. As there were not enough amenities to accommodate the entire task group at the same time it was determined by the 'powers that be' that ships companies would be trickled on shore on a rotational basis.

The greatest attraction, I believe was in fact the 'wet canteen'. My father explained to me that as there was some concern about putting the RN 'matelots' ashore at the same time as the 'yanks' for fear of any trouble arising following a few cold beers, it was considered that it would be much more appropriate if they went ashore at the same time as their Australian cousins from the RAN.

As the Concord men got settled in the 'Old Fleete Wette Canteen' as it was known, some rude remarks were allegedly passed in the direction of my father and several of his companions from a group of Australian sailors. Something to do with them resembling 'kippers', being two faced and having 'no guts'. My father's group directed an equally flattering term of phrase back at the Australians likening them to 'bananas'. When asked to explain what this was supposed to mean, they obliged, responding... 'born green', turned yellow and died rotten'. I also understand my dad was an early casualty at the hands of the irate Australians, and that the ensuing battle made the events of the Pacific War pale in comparison! Eventually fire hoses were used to quell the situation, and I had to smile when I read my father's caption under the photo in his album, which simply reads 'Manus Battle Field'.

Ironically, this story was repeated several times by my father, here in Australia where he settled, after leaving the RN, and where two of his sons, me and my younger brother Lindsay, both went on to have 20 plus year careers in the RAN!

**John Perryman Lt.Cdr RAN  
Canberra, Australia**



Ye Olde Fleete Wette Canteen

## **The Silver Pagoda Story**

Members will remember that in the last newsletter I requested information about the Silver Pagoda presented to Concord for rescuing a Korean Junk.

What follows now are entries from Sir Charles Mill's personal diary.

### **Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> March 1952. On passage from the west coast of Korea, to Japan.**

In the early hours we were ordered to proceed to a position on the North Coast of the island of Quelpant where a Republic of Korea vessel, the FS902 had gone aground. She had the Chinese Ambassador and two of his staff onboard. We arrived at 0730 to find H.M.S. Charity (Captain John Henley) already there, having been there all night. We had calm weather all the way south, and found it calm on arrival, except for a heavy swell, however the previous day it had been blowing a gale.

We each sent our motor boats in to examine the situation. The First Lieutenant, Lieutenant Commander Hamilton, went in ours and in order to get ashore and on board the grounded vessel he had to swim the last bit, He found her aground on the only bit of sand for miles around, having missed all the rocks on the way in, and apparently undamaged. The Ambassador and his staff had gone ashore wisely, and we saw no more of them. Charity tried to get in close enough to pass the towing hawser but could not, and she then departed, north to the operational area.

Our plan was to lay out a kedge anchor during the afternoon, and with the aid of this to tow her off with a South Korean Minesweeper which had arrived by this time, on the evening high tide. The First Lieutenant and a party of stalwarts took the motor boat and whaler with wire and kedge, and laid this out with much difficulty in the swell and seaweed. The wire from the anchor to the vessel was passed around the shore and through the surf by local school children and the crew from the grounded vessel, all wading and swimming in the water. We hoped to attempt to pull her off on the evening's high tide with the aid of the Kedge anchor and the South Korean Minesweeper ROK AM5510, but this had to be abandoned as our motor boat, on its way in to pass the tow, was holed by a ROK motor junk.

It returned hastily to the ship and was hoisted. After dark, a United States Tug Arihava arrived and the weather improved considerably so prospects for the morning were brighter. We remained at anchor all night.

Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> March 1952. In the morning there was a westerly breeze, from which the grounded vessel was sheltered and the swell had gone down. The tug was confident that she would be able to pull her off and we left at 0900 for Sasebo

### **Sir Charles Mills**

## Night Raid

(The Campbell – Cossack Caper) - A Concord Captain Remembers

I wonder if any of your readers from the 1951-53 commission remember a daring raid carried out on 'Cossack' in Tolo Harbour on the night of 1st/2<sup>nd</sup> July 1952. We had been out exercising off Hong Kong and went to Tolo to anchor on completion soon after midnight. I tried by flashing light to report ourselves to Captain (D) as we approached but, despite trying to make contact over a period of about 15 minutes, there was no response.

The following day the two ships carried out competitive General Drill and, regrettably 'Cossack' defeated 'Concord'. This was disappointing and I wondered how best we could exact our revenge, especially as they had been keeping such a poor look-out the night before. Accordingly, I sent for the 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant and told him that I required 'Cossack's' Deck Log brought to me during the night. I suggested the early part of the middle watch as being the best time for a raid, so, soon after midnight, Lieutenant Campbell and one other member of the ship's company, (I am afraid I cannot remember who), set out by Carley Raft and paddled across, it was a very still night.

Somehow they managed to board 'Cossack' and acquire the Deck Log without being accosted. I am not sure how they did this, possibly over the lower boom. But anyway there was a knock on my Cabin door at approximately 0150 hours by the 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant with Lieutenant Campbell carrying 'Cossack's' Deck Log.

What to do now? I looked at the log, including of course how pleased they had been to beat us at General Drill. I kept it until 0700hrs, then I signalled to give the time at which it was taken and that it was being returned by motor boat. I then waited for the reaction. I am happy to say that Captain Adair took it in good spirit and Lieutenant Campbell attended the investigation at his defaulters table. I do know his alertness, (and perhaps Cossack's' as well) was very considerably increased, and it would have been very difficult to nick anything from the upper deck at night, - especially the Deck Log or even the Tampions.

This item was written and sent by Vice Admiral Sir Charles Mills, Commander, and Captain of Concord 1951-53. The unknown companion carrying out the raid is believed to have been AB Freddie Frampton.

DID YOU KNOW...?

'Archers Direct', the Travel Company have now included in their new brochure, 'A YANGTZE RIVER CRUISE'. Just thought it worth a mention for those of Concord who missed out in 1949. Presumably the big guns at Woosung will not fire.

## **Those Damned Cockroaches**

As I was on board during the Korean conflict and one day was much the same as the next for 22 months. We did, of course, do a lot of bombardments of various targets during the coastal patrols and had the trauma of a shell hitting us and killing two of our gun crew, however that has been covered many times in previous newsletters. There were the runs ashore in Sasebo and Kure when most of us got up to some unmentionable antics with the local population, with some disastrous results! These of course are taboo for the newsletter!

However, on a lighter note one thing that sticks in my mind, probably not something that our superiors would like repeated, was how lousy the Concord was with cockroaches. I recall us ERA's arming ourselves with a strong rubber band each and waiting for a brave cocky to present him/her self on the bulkhead of our mess, whereupon five tiffs would take aim and compete for who delivered the killing blow. My hammock billet was situated below a lagged hot water pipe and many a time I was awoken by a cocky, either falling or jumping off his/her hot water pipe walkway into my bed, usually onto my face. I had a terror of twins invading my nostrils.

Aft of the tiffs mess was the ERA's pantry — a veritable haven for cockroaches. As we were all classed as bordering on being Technical ratings, a means was needed to be devised as to the method of destruction of the enemy. After several methods were discussed, the winning design was to be a large coffee tin filled to about half an inch in the bottom with ground coffee. The inside rim was then smeared all around with butter, the tin placed on the work top in the pantry and a small access plank placed from the work top to the top of the tin.

Cockys love coffee and find it hard to resist, so up the plank they went to their doom! Having coated their feet with butter on the decent there was no upward escape. The climb to the top after filling their bellies was impossible. And so there they remained until the morning, a writhing mass of literally dozens of unhappy insects. Their termination was gained either with a shower of boiling water or a swift heave of the whole apparatus over the side. (Some say they saw a few of them swimming after the ship!)

Aft of the pantry was the Engineers office. At one point, I decided that a better sleep might be obtained by crashing on a camp bed in there. Upon a call of nature about 0300, changing the pitch black darkness of the office to the brilliance of artificial light sent a million (?) cockys scurrying for cover. It appeared that the whole office actually moved! Result? Back to the hammock in the mess!

**Brian Hale**  
**ERA 1950-52**



## Hardships of serving on a destroyer

Life on board a destroyer during the fifties, was not very different to that experienced since the beginning of the century. An open bridge which during the Atlantic, Arctic and Korean wars where almost arctic conditions were experienced during the winter, was a terrible experience for those on watch for hours on end. The ratings mess, was a highly suitable name, many men were crowded together in an unimaginable confined space where they were expected to eat, sleep and spend their time off watch. The men took turns to be "cook of the shack" when they were expected to conjure up a meal twice a day, when stores after a few days at sea when they were in short supply. In the early commissions, fresh food ran out after four days and a lot of imagination had to be used to produce a decent meal out of tinned, and disgusting dehydrated ingredients. Mind you, six years of war, and its severe rationing helped us.

Again in the early commissions, fresh water was in short supply and showers used salt water. No one used them, as the stink of stale sea water smelt like rotten eggs, so that meant bathing either from a hand basin or a bucket, as for trying to shave before going ashore, many a bleeding face resulted. Imagine the scene when preparing to go ashore trying to look "tiddly", someone trying to do a late bit of ironing, others frantically looking for clothing stored in seat lockers which usually contained loads of cockroaches, as well as the item of clothing being searched for. A London Tube is a luxury compared to a mess deck preparing for liberty.

But you know what! We would not have missed it for the world such was the comradeship, the caring for others, the humour, honesty and being part of a service which instilled a pride and spirit almost unknown in any other walk of life

Reunions of recent years have demonstrated that this unique spirit amongst ships companies of the time, has been passed on to our families and loved ones to this day. We are after all, one large family, and it is our hope that this book will always be a constant reminder of these days and will in some way help our relations, present and future, to understand our past.

## Derek Hodgson



Toughing it!!

## **Over the Mast to Canteen Mess Boys to Men**

**A. Barlow, R. Cross, B. Darrington, D. D. Drummond, R. Fletcher, D. Kent, A. Nuttall, B. Nuttall, W. Porter, J. Farrell, P. Stephenson, A. Strudwick, R. Twell, A. Wilkinson.**

H.M.S. Ganges, November 1954, the day of our final kit muster had arrived all kit sewn in and neatly rolled and laid out for inspection, it was with sighs of relief that we had completed and passed that last hurdle, we mustered back at Rodney sixteen mess where the long awaited draft lists were promulgated, fourteen of us were listed to go to H.M.S. Concord in the Far East. The excitement soon came down to earth the following day when we were transported by bus to Colchester to the Military Hospital for our yellow fever inoculations, we soon found out that Pongo's make the most of this opportunity to inflict pain on the Senior Service! Peter Stephenson swears the needle went right through his arm!

Our final hours at Ganges were spent trying to get our kit including tin hat boxes into our kitbags and lashing up our hammocks which had only ever been used prior to this for laying out our kits on. Finally, at 0500 25<sup>th</sup> November our instructors gave us an unusually gentle wake up shake, we mustered for the last time in Nelson Drill Hall to collect our draft chits and travel warrants along with the customary brown paper bag meal before proceeding to our various Port Divisions. The next task we encountered which had been overlooked in training was for our small boy seaman wearing greatcoats to be able to march and carry at the same time a kitbag, hammock and brown attaché case down to the pier. It was approximately one year and eight days since our first arrival as Nozzer's, we were now Boy Seamen 1<sup>st</sup> class boarding the MFV to take us across the harbour to Harwich to start our great adventure.

We finally arrived late evening at H.M.S. Victory (Barracks), it was freezing and had been snowing, we were accommodated in B Block which was only two storey, the third floor had still not been repaired after the damage suffered during World War 2. This was a culture shock for pampered Ganges boys!! It was a huge mess deck with open fire places at each end but no fires due to coal rationing, there were a few tables and benches but not a bed in sight, only hammock bars, slinging hammocks was something they had not taught us. After doing our joining routine (too quickly) we were marched to the Dockyard to undertake a day's sea training 'mobile chipping party' on H.M.S. Redpole, it was our first experience of being cold and wet and a long day on the Solent, we were then sent on foreign service leave and on completion we were to report to an Army installation in London for final flight arrangements. This barrack was some kind of bunker from WW2 down four levels underneath the underground tube network, once again we had to carry our cases down narrow iron spiral staircases, there was a lift provided but the sign read "Non Commissioned Officers only" and a burly redcap stationed by the door to ensure that we observed this ruling, one night there was enough!

As we were to fly over and stopping in foreign countries our passports were stamped Government Officials, this also meant we were all kitted out to look inconspicuous i.e. brown shoes, grey suit, pink shirt with matching tie and grey trilby hat if desired.

Each flight was then transported to Blackbush aerodrome, as we were on the second flight we spent another night in the 'Big Smoke', a hotel just off Hyde Park. The following morning we left for Blackbush, it was snowing lightly, but when we arrived at the airport it was snowing quite hard and freezing. We sat in an unheated Nissen hut for a couple of

hours. We finally boarded the plane and got seated and given the customary barley sugar sweet and a brown paper bag for emergency use only, after a short time the pilot informed us that we would not be taking off due to the heavy snow fall.

After disembarking we were split up into small groups and dispersed to local hotels for the night, our group were transported to Frimley Hall, Camberley, a private residence for the elderly, my memory of that night was of the indignation of a retired army officer because Able Seaman Littleproud sat in his fireside chair 'My man, I have sat in that chair for 36 years, remove yourself'. The following morning we returned to Blackbushe and after another long wait, finally took off en route for Rome.

Here, we caught up with the first flight who were stranded with engine trouble. Some of our flight were swapped with them and after refuelling, continued on to Beirut for an overnight stop. We were put into the Capitol Hotel (quite flash) where, we made good use of the entire hotel facilities, signing everything to our allocated room. Our journey continued with further refuelling stops in Karachi, Calcutta and another overnight stop in Delhi. Here we received the rich white treatment, this was where, as, Ambassadors of the Royal Navy we were for the first time waited on by Indian house boys who did our dhobying. From there a further stop in Bangkok, and then to our final destination, "It Ain't Alf Hot Chief". After a few relaxing days in H.M.S. Terror, waiting for the remaining flights to arrive, the ships company finally assembled in the dockyard to commission.

H.M.S. Concord advance party were already aboard, three things I remember from this day. As a group the boys were walking over the gangway of a destroyer for the first time, standing by the QM were two seamen, one a three badge AB who remarked to his oppo 'Boy Seamen!, that means more work for us'. That quote turned out to be the quote of the Commission, he should have changed his name to 'tap' as he was continuously dripping for the next eighteen months.

When we were all aboard, lower deck was cleared and we mustered on the jetty for the Commissioning service, the Skipper welcomed us all and presented the Officers. But he was not a totally happy chappy, he had received a signal from their Lordships at the Admiralty who had taken a dim view of being charged for our expensive activities whilst at the Capitol Hotel. Consequently we were all docked a sum from our pay over the coming months.

When we located our mess deck in the canteen flat, it was a bit smaller than we had been used to and the under seat lockers were a bit small for all the kit that had to be stowed in them, and there was also not enough hammock space for all of us, we were, however, fortunate to have good Killicks in charge of our training and welfare whilst we were in the Boys mess. Gordon Oakley, Bill Foreman and Roy Butler. Gordon, being first up had to teach us how to prepare meals for canteen messing, clacker and roasts, sticky duffs that boys liked. Bill was the more protective type and on more than one occasion he disappeared down the hatch into five mess to pull a certain bullying stoker into line, nobody argued with Bill. Roy encouraged us to learn to splice wire and loved sailing, especially when in Hong Kong and we would take out a three masted sailing ketch for the weekend.

Being the youngest aboard I had traditional duties to perform, Christmas Day meant I was to be Captain for the day, and togged up in the Skippers spare jacket and cap, and carried out the mess deck rounds before Christmas dinner. Later in the day, after having a few sippers, I was coerced into going ashore with the cast of the sods opera where, two able

sailors persuaded me to loan them my Captains jacket and cap, which was put to good use when entering a certain military establishment. It was a great run ashore even though it ended up with me in the rattle for the first and only time in my career.

Being the youngest also benefited me when we went to Australia. The ship had just tied up and the ship to shore phone was connected. The first call the QM Able Seaman Peter Hale received, was from a young lady asking for the youngest person aboard, 'she could have got the Buffer', anyway my D/O, good old Ron arranged for me to have extended leave with certain conditions. Nothing to do with Pusser!!! Which I fulfilled and consequently got a short weekend with the same lady.

The highlights of the commission was, moving to the forward mess deck, as it would have been lonely in the boys mess on my own. The high speed dash up to the Formosa Straits, leaving some of the crew ashore, when we went to assist a merchant ship in trouble and the two trips to "OZ" where a certain seaman decided to extend his time 'down under'. On the down side were a couple of incidents which happened, Boy Signalman Dance, who injured his knee at a beach Ban-Yan and had to be repatriated home along with Able Seaman Pincher Martin, probably the most popular sailor on board.

On a more humorous note, nearing the end of the commission we were required to nominate our preferential draft. In my case, being an O/D, I did not have much choice other than a branch course. I was summoned to my Divisional Officer's (Ron Flint) cabin, I was standing in front of his desk and he asked me which branch I wanted, "to which I replied 'Gunnery' sir, H.M.S. Excellent". Ron, aghast with surprise said 'sit down lad, in all my time, you are the first I have heard to volunteer for Whale Island"!

Well Ron, it was the best decision I ever made, it was the best kept secret in the Navy once you had finished your courses and became ships company, especially XP Party. It was home away from home for the next nine years, all my shore time was spent there either XP or Field Gun at Whaley.

Unfortunately, after Concord I never met up with anyone from that commission or Ganges after many trips back to the UK. It was not until 2005 when my wife and I attended the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary reunion at Bournemouth that I met up with old shipmates. It was a great weekend, I also tried to catch up with Ron but he was unavailable to see me when I rang him when passing through his village. It was, without doubt, the best weekend I have spent since leaving the "Andrew". Well done Peter, perhaps you could get a grant to have one in Singapore.

### **Dave Kent (Dutchy) Boy Seaman 55-56**

Dutchy above, referred to the "Andrew" as the Royal Navy was, and indeed still is referred too. And the possible explanation is as follows.

During the time of Naval Press Gangs. A certain Captain, Andrew Miller, was notorious for the number of men he "pressed into service". Farm labourers were snatched from their work in the fields, men from prison and drunks from the taverns. At one point, the Lords of the Admiralty Board, referred to him as owning two thirds of the navy.

## **Thrills and Spills in the Indian Ocean – Typhoon Wanda**

Why did they always give hurricanes and typhoons female names? I could give you one or two guesses. It's all been changed now and hurricanes are bisexual. There we were in the idle of the Indian Ocean and Wanda blew up. What were we doing there? Protecting the Aussies from atom bomb fallout. These were the first atom bomb trials by the British (1956) on the Monte Bello Islands which were some 80 miles off the Western Australian coast and our job was to track the upper winds and report if their direction endangered Ausieland. Pretty boring stuff, sending hydrogen balloons into the upper atmosphere every two hours and tracking them by radar.

Wanda soon put a stop to that as it was coming our way. Provided you know where the eye of the storm is there is a simple drill for avoiding the worst of it. American storm spotter aircraft report the eye and the typhoon direction at frequent intervals and all a Captain has to do is to make certain course changes and this should keep his ship clear of the worst of the storm. Doesn't always work, three American destroyers foundered in one such typhoon. I was keen to avoid their fate. I have never been interested in performing that ancient ritual where the Captain of the sinking ship stands to attention on his bridge saluting the white ensign as the sea slowly rises around him. Glug, glug and he has gone.

The storm avoidance drill was going well but even so the torrential rain and colossal seas were awe inspiring. What it must have been like nearer the centre concentrated my mind on making sure we were running well away from the worst of the storm. Then disaster struck. Colin Awmack, our Engineering Officer, white faced, appeared on the bridge. 'We have a leak below the waterline in the stoker's mess'. What fun, the stokers could soon have their own swimming pool. I tried to remember what the Duke of Wellington said at Waterloo when faced with a disaster. Sang froid must be preserved. HMS Concord had been built during the war without any quality control systems of peacetime ship building. She was a rust bucket and if you tapped a hammer on the upper works you were likely to make a hole. I was not a happy bunny.

Going down to see the damage my mind whirled with actions to be taken. Better see the damage first. There was a long horizontal gash in the ship's side about a foot below the waterline and the repair parties were making heroic efforts to build an inner skin to plug the leak. Lots of briny sloshing around the mess deck and more coming in all the time. Definitely a thrill. The danger was the gash opening horizontally along its line. I went back up to the bridge to make my reports to base and turned the ship for port. Eventually the engineers staunched the flow of water but it was a nightmare not knowing how long it would hold. Slowly we battled our way back to Fremantle, where, on arrival I was greeted by a request to do a radio talk to the Women of Western Australia on our 'Hurricane Horror!' When all I wanted was a strong drink and a sleep...

**Tony McCrum**  
**Cdr. 1955-56**

## **A Run Ashore in Hong Kong – 1955**

The Captain of one of Her Majesty's Ships is as near to being god on this earth as is possible. As Captain of HMS Concord, a fine destroyer, I could marry couples, bury the dead, conduct religious services, imprison crew members for six months and generally create mayhem on board. I was the Great White Chief who lived in solitary state, attended by various functionaries. But there was a downside to all this grandeur. My social life on board was confined by naval protocol. To bolster my moral and preserve my dignity I was required to live a life of monastic loneliness on board. I lived, fed and slept (naturally) alone, confined to my cabin in splendid isolation. I was only expected to mingle socially with my officers in the wardroom when they invited me, which wasn't too often. They didn't want me listening to the antics they got up to ashore. Only on rare occasions would I go with them for a 'run ashore'. This was the naval tradition in 1955; maybe it has now changed. For a comparatively young and social 36 year old it all seemed a trifle heavy, but I knew my place.

So how could I let my hair down? An occasional 'run ashore' with other commanding officers or friends from other ships; a quiet dinner in a local restaurant with a few bottles of wine and good chat and then back on board to my solitary bunk. After such an evening ashore I was returning to Concord, walking through the naval dockyard in Hong Kong, enjoying the evening air, when I espied a huge pile of timber; wooden baulks that are used as vertical supports for wooden jetties. About 15-20 feet high. Now I have always been a keen amateur historian and when my inner parts have been well lubricated with wine the imagination is apt to flower. When I saw this pile of wood it immediately reminded me of one of the great moments in British history- the capture of Quebec in Canada from the French, which gave us the whole of Canada for the British Empire.

In case you don't know the story, the French army occupied a strongly fortified Quebec high above the St. Lawrence River. On the river side the city was protected by a precipitous cliff, considered by the French to be impregnable. The British commander, General Wolfe, reckoned he could find a way up this cliff and surprise the enemy, which he did and won Quebec and as a result, the whole of Canada for the Empire, but he was killed in the hour of victory.

In my overheated imagination I decided the pile of timber represented the cliff leading to Quebec and I started climbing up it, calling out to my astonished friends 'Follow me; I am General Wolfe and we will surprise the French and Take Quebec'. I clambered to the top and looked down but it wasn't Quebec, instead there was a Hong Kong Dockyard policeman looking up at me.

**Tony McCrum**  
**Cdr. 1955-56**

## Oz – Land of Dreams

In 1956 my ship, HMS Concord was part of a naval task force taking part in atomic bomb trials in the Montebello Islands off the west coast of Australia. From time to time we were allowed what was called R and R- Rest and Recreation in Fremantle the port of Perth. Rest was the last thing my ship's company had in mind. They were determined to enjoy the best run ashore ever. Australia was renowned for giving sailors a wonderful time.

The only snag from my point of view, the Captain's, was that Australia was so wonderful that many sailors were tempted to stay there. What's more Australians (including the police) were quite friendly towards the deserters. Had not the early settlers been minor criminals or fugitives from Justice? An unhappy ship could lose 20 or more such deserters. Every Captain felt challenged to keep his score to a minimum. It would be a black mark for McCrum if my chaps took off into the bush.

So I delivered myself, one of my more pompous addresses to the Ship's Company and warned them of the dangerous consequences of deserting, of the damage to the honour of the Royal Navy of Great Britain, the Empire (we still had one then) and the effect on their mothers, plus any other fatuous thought that came into my head. I concluded by saying 'have a wonderful time, but be back on time'

I was determined to have a wonderful time too. We had been in harbour about a week and a lovely Australian family decided to show me Western Australia. So far we had only had two serious absentees.- Able Seamen Kennedy and Wilson (a pseudonym as he is still alive). So I felt I could take a few days leave.

Driving south down the coast we ended up after a couple of days in Albany, a small port in the extreme south west which reminded me some of our Cornish ports. We were hundreds of miles from the ship and duty-very relaxing. We planned to stay the night in the local hotel and drive back the next day. Sitting drinking in the bar I espied a familiar figure.

Surely this was one of my deserters? – Able Seaman Kennedy. I looked again, yes, it certainly was. What an amazing coincidence. The wretched man had run hundreds of miles to get away from the ship and me and there was the enemy. I felt for him. What now? There was no naval patrol to call on. I knew the local police were unlikely to arrest him. He had committed no offence in Australia. I could just see myself telling the local bobby to arrest Kennedy. 'On what charge mate'. He's a deserter'. 'Are you a deserter mate', 'Not me I'm just a visitor'. Local Bobby to me 'On your way mate I've got better things to do'.

I couldn't let things slide so I went up to Kennedy and rather feebly said 'Hullo Kennedy what are you doing here'? No reply. Not a flicker of recognition. I tried again 'Kennedy I know it's you, 'er! Have the other half. He was drinking beer. That clinched it. We had a drink together and I managed to get him to tell the story. Yes he was meaning to desert. His father had repeatedly physically abused him as a child and he could not face going home in about six weeks time. He was only 18 and he wanted to start a new life.

For a moment I thought why not. He was a good lad and would be a good worker, he would have a great life in a great new country. Let him go. No one would know except me. Then tradition and orthodoxy took over and I decided I had to get him back if I could, If he really did not want to go home I could try and arrange for him to 'stay on station' and in the ship for the next commission. I explained this to him. By the time he eventually came

home he would be of age and his father would have no authority over him. We had the other half and he talked and talked. Eventually he said 'I'll come back'. Sigh of relief by self-but would he really.

There was no way I could restrain him and we were not returning till 8am the next morning. There was only one thing to do-trust him. 'We'll be leaving at 8 outside this hotel and we'll meet then. I said hopefully. 'Yes Sir' he replied but I had my doubts. Next morning at 8 there he was and I apprehended my first deserter. It was an awkward drive back to Fremantle but I delivered my charge to the Coxswain and felt mightily relieved. Of course he had to be punished but I decided that he was an absentee not a deserter. This meant a much lesser punishment which could be carried out on board instead of a detention centre ashore. I was able to arrange for him to 'stay on station' and he recommissioned the ship with the new crew.

We were due to sail next morning and our deserter score was quite reasonable- just two men had not returned. We cast off our mooring wires from the jetty and we were going astern out of harbour. Suddenly from the inshore end of the jetty there was a shout – 'Wait for me', 'Wait for me'. It is somewhat unusual for a naval rating to tell his Captain to wait for him as if he were a London bus driver and it was quite tricky manoeuvring the ship back alongside. He was one of our two absentees; Leading Seaman Cundall; a very fine seaman and I was disappointed in him. He was extremely drunk and had to be hauled on board. Then we set off again.

Final score one deserter, 'Wilson' who cleverly mingled with the crew of H.M.S. Melbourne which was also in port. Although one of their matelots gave him an Aussie uniform he was soon rumbled and returned to the R.N. but not to Concord. I have never personally arrested a matelot before or since. But you never know what to expect in the Navy-sheep's eyes in the Gulf, nearly knifed in a bar in Barcelona or transporting a bull to the Seychelles. Never a dull moment.

Some time I may tell you why I had my leave stopped for three months when I was a midshipman in H.M.S Royal Oak

**Tony McCrum**  
**Cdr. 1955-56**



## **A Concord Captain reflects on his Commission – AJ McCrum 54-56**

“This is a time for memories and letting the mind wander across the months of our commission. As my thoughts slide back over the past eighteen months my earliest and gloomiest impression is of standing very early one January morning in the cold, London slush, peering into the murky dusk at some 30 young men dressed in the strangest assortment of Admiralty Pattern Civilian Suiting’s and the latest in Edwardian (1955) Styles – my new Ship’s Company-to-be.

After that, days were spent sitting in frozen airport waiting rooms, surrounded by screaming babies, worried mothers and dripping sailors. Then Changi airfield, stifling heat, the smell of warship and fresh paint.... “Count the money’....”Muster the C Bs... “ She’s all yours – Good luck – Cheerio”...Divisions and the Commissioning Service....Tens of white faces upturned, forming one huge white blur, vague and unknown, without individuality and without purpose H M S. Concord had started her new commission.

Then came weeks of harrying, Away Seaboat! Fire in the Spirit Room! Drop a Lifebuoy! Off Caps, On Caps! Quicker, Quicker. The vague white blur grew into men; men with names; men of all sorts and shapes, men who began to realise they were the new Ships Company of H.M.S. Concord. Sultry Singapore was followed by the brazen lights of Hong Kong.

Hard-a-port... Hard-a-starboard... Just missed her... Another junk lived to sail another day. Full speed ahead, Action Stations and the Formosa Straits. Long weeks of exercising at sea, exercising alone, exercising with Australians and New Zealanders, exercising with the French and with the Americans. That unknown white blur of yesterday had sharpened into men with characters, men who could do things well or not so well, men who liked the gay life and men who preferred it quiet. And slowly each one came to realise he was part of the same mob, all of one Company, and all with a part to play.

Then came our taste of Japan and its interesting cultures, so varied and unusual... a night of folly climbing Fujiyama... “Perfect sunrise from the top old man, you mustn’t miss it” on our morning it didn’t rise (as far as I could see)... “What nice lads you have on board”. “You’ve a mighty fine crew Cap’n’. Kind words at Tokyo from British and Americans It’s a pity they couldn’t see them as I sometimes did. I have used different expressions!

Then long months of refitting, and boring heat-laden toil for many, and the lousy beer of Singapore and the heat of the dry dock. A testing time, and except for the occasional battle with the Pongo Police, there was little to ruffle the waters of the Johore Straits. I grew proud particularly during the heat-oppressive, back-breaking days of cleaning up muck and filth of Singapore dockyard after four months of chaos. With the Awful Speed of Judgement Day came The Inspection and my amazement and inspiration at the efforts of so many in the face of great difficulties we struggled as a team and won, just!

Since then more weeks at sea...”28 knots, 6 knots”....”Starboard 30”... “Don’t hit Cossack”....”Try to keep up with the Carriers”. South to the islands of the atom bomb and the land of the Kangaroo... Hit the high spots... some did... but they all came back... eventually. And now it’s time to say good bye and we’ve come a long way from that first Sunday when the upturned faces looked to me like one huge white blur, vague and unknown and without purpose. Each face is now known as an individual with qualities and failings, as a man who knows his job in his ship, as a man who plays a certain part in the whole Company.

## Crossing the line

The two day event (evening and day) is a ritual of reversal in which the older and experienced hands take over the ship from the officers. Certain minor physical assaults are tolerated and even the inexperienced are given the chance of taking over. The transition flows from established order to a controlled chaos of revolt, re-order is gradually regained during the initiating rites as the fewer but more experienced hands convert the newcomers through physical tests leading to the previous order of officers and ratings.

After crossing the line, the newcomers receive orders to appear before King Neptune and his court (usually including his first assistant Davy Jones and her Highness Aphrodite and other senior personnel who are all represented by the highest rated seamen), who officiate at the ceremony, often preceded by a beauty contest of men dressed up as women. Every branch is required to introduce one contestant dressed for a swim. Later, some participants may be interrogated by King Neptune and his entourage often using a 'truth serum' (hot sauce plus aftershave) and whole uncooked eggs put in the mouth. During the ceremony, the initiates undergo a number of embarrassing ordeals such as wearing clothes inside out and backwards; crawling on hand and knees on deck; being swatted with short lengths of hose; being locked in stocks and pillories and pelted with any messy food available; crawling through rotting rubbish; kissing the Royal Baby's belly coated with grease, haircutting etc., largely for the amusement of older experienced hands.

Once the ceremony is complete, the initiate receives a certificate declaring his new status as one who has 'Crossed the Line'.

## Derek Hodgson



Crossing the line ceremony

## Now You See It Now You Don't!

I was intrigued by Ralph Moore's account of the exercise where Concord was made to look like a town-class cruiser, because, besides being an EA in Concord's first commission, I was in the Newcastle during the 1955-7 commission as a Sub-Lt @, responsible for all of the radar and radio equipment and was very much involved in the events of that exercise. Newcastle's Captain was a clever tactician and in this instance he drew on experience gained during World War II, where aircraft continually identified surface contacts as being heavier than they actually were. For instance, the Swordfish flight that had a go at the Sheffield, thinking she was the Bismarck!

1. November 1956 Newcastle was at Melbourne for the Olympic Games (rugged duty) on completion of which she sailed for Hong Kong, arriving there on Christmas Eve.
2. After disembarking the Admiral and Staff, Newcastle sailed in the second week of January 1957 for Trincomalee where she embarked the C-in-C East Indies and proceeded to cruise, visiting Bombay, Karachi, Muscat, Dubai, Abadan and Basra.
3. This cruise completed in early May 1957 and Newcastle was back in Trincomalee having disembarked C-in-C East Indies and ready to start a fleet exercise.
4. The scenario for this exercise was as follows:
  - a. Newcastle was a surface raider which had been operating in the western parts of the Indian Ocean and was to return to her base at Singapore.
  - b. The Cruiser Newfoundland with the Admiral 2<sup>nd</sup> in Command Far East embarked and the 8<sup>th</sup> D.S. minus Concord, together with units of the Royal Australian Navy which included an aircraft carrier, had to locate and destroy Newcastle before she entered the Sumatra Strait.
  - c. Concord was believed to be in self refit but was in fact ready for sea and after Newfoundland and her squadron had sailed from Singapore, the C-in-C (without informing the squadron) placed Concord under Newcastle's orders. Newcastle (Captain A.R. Kennedy) signalled Concord to disguise herself as far as possible to look like a town-class cruiser when seen from the air, slip and take up station about 400 miles from Newcastle's intended course.
  - d. Both ships were to keep strict electronic silence, absolutely no radar or radio transmissions being made after sailing. Newcastle to keep listening watch on VHF monitoring all the frequencies that were known to be used by the search aircraft.
5. For the first three or four days all that was heard was the chatter between aircraft and reports and orders to and from the carrier. Suddenly a very excited pilot announced that he had found Newcastle and proceeded to broadcast a position 400 miles away from her. He had, of course found the Concord and shadowing aircraft kept in touch with her from then on and the squadron manoeuvred to get the carrier in position to launch air strikes. These were duly delivered a couple of days later and Concord continued to make all the expected responses.

The plot then thickened because another aircraft, on routine screen patrol, suddenly announced that he had found another town-class cruiser and proceeded to report Newcastle's correct position, course and speed. This aircraft was in sight from Newcastle and we heard her ordered by the carrier to take a closer look. Newcastle then broadcast on the same frequency, and using an Australian accent, reported that the previous report had been an error! There was quite a bit of amusing traffic on that frequency for a while and confusion reigned until the carrier ordered all aircraft to stay on task and shadow, and to observe and report of specific details of the two contacts. Newcastle had fully depressed

the outer barrels of her turrets and covered the secondary armament with awnings but we couldn't do anything about the large crane on the boat deck and Concord didn't have one.

So the truth was out but by then Newcastle had gone to full speed and the squadron were in no position to mount an air strike or intercept with the surface units before Newcastle reached the safety of the Sumatra Strait. On completion, Captain Kennedy ordered Concord to station close to us which is when I think Ralph's photograph of Concord was taken, It shows the bogus triple turrets, the dummy funnel and the awning spread amidships to look like a cruiser's boat deck. The exercise wash-up meeting was a riot with Concord and Newcastle representatives wearing big smiles and the rest crying 'foul!'.

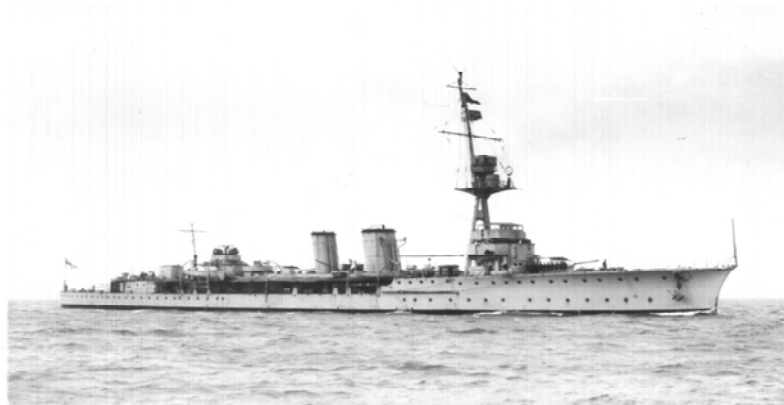
6. Newcastle's ships company had a great time during the exercise. It was mostly lazy sailing with everyone being kept informed of events, and the knowledge that the rest of the ships involved were working their butts off. It all happened forty years ago though, and it is a sobering thought to think that today, with satellite surveillance, Newcastle wouldn't stand a chance.

My thanks to Ralph for stirring up some pleasant memories of the 'old navy'.

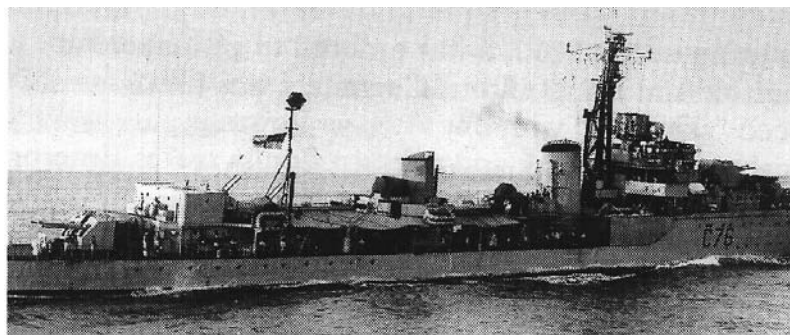
### **Victor Webb**

**Concord 1947-48, Newcastle 1955-57**

### **Spot the difference!**



H.M.S. Newcastle



H.M.S. Concastle

## **The Final Commission 1956/1958**

The crew having flown out from Stansted Airport over a period of three days, were billeted in H.M.S. Terror, and on the morning of the 20<sup>th</sup>. June 1956, all 190 officers and crew were assembled inside the Dockyard, at Deptford Gate before marching to the ship for our commissioning ceremony.

Most were seeing the East for the first time, and no doubt have their own opinions on the heat, sweat, smells, delicate ladies, tigers (real and alcoholic), crickets, thunder and lightning are just a few.

Our Captain, John F. Marryat welcomed all on board before taking us out to work up in the calm seas off Malaya. Air conditioning was limited to the T.S. and W.T. Office, so during this early period we were introduced to the delights of Palau Tioman, a delightful tropical island for the first of a number of banyans, and a good way to cool down under the palm trees, and frequent dips in the sea.

We sailed for Hong Kong and arrived on the 14<sup>th</sup> July, marvelling at the breathtaking beauty as you enter the harbour. This was the first of a number of enjoyable visits to this wonderful island the likes, sights never before witnessed by many of the crew.

As part of the Commonwealth Strategic Reserve we sailed through the beautiful Inland Sea into Kure, Japan, from where a number of crew members ventured to Hiroshima where the atom bomb was dropped. We carried out various exercises before entering the huge American Naval Base in Yokosuka where we met our host ships who we exercised with for the next ten days. A crisis near Formosa (now Taiwan) resulted in the tanker that was to refuel us, being diverted and shortening our stay in Kobe to travel back to Kure for a short fuel stop. Typhoon Charlie was causing trouble in the Pacific, so we made an urgent dash back to Hong Kong in what was possibly one of the fastest passages on record.

We went into refit early in September having covered 10,000 miles in two months. The vast majority of the crew were then based in the Fleet Accommodation Barracks and H.M.S. Tamar during the refit. The Dockyard virtually stripped the ship apart and remarkably managed to put it all back in the right places in preparation for the remainder of our Commission. After a great Christmas concert party in the China Fleet Club we returned on board on the 27<sup>th</sup>. December

The New Year saw us busily squaring off and making ready for sea again. On the 7<sup>th</sup>. January, we sailed out into what proved to be a stormy night for that area and the seas did their best to make us regret being so long ashore. The next fortnight a certain amount of shaking down came about before we had to turn our backs on Hong Kong, little realising that many months were to pass before we returned to that fascinating colony. We left on the 24<sup>th</sup> January and sailed for Singapore.

There was to be no rest for us. At 0600 the next morning we followed our Captain (D) out of harbour to begin our post refit work-up, From then until the end of February we saw a lot of Palau Tioman, a beautiful tropical island, from which we sailed to carry out exercises and where the banyans and swimming parties were enjoyed by the majority of the crew. At the end of this time we cruised up the west coast of Malaya and visited Port Swettenham. Here many of us tasted pineapple for the first time, when a local grower brought many sacks to us for distribution to all messes on board, as we were on canteen messing it

brought pleasure to all the mess caterers, realising that their budgets did not have to be debited for good wholesome fresh fruit. Before sailing we were honoured to embark Rajah Muda, son of the Sultan of Selengor, and we gave him and a number of senior R.A.F. and Army officers a shop window.

Returning from this short cruise to the Malayan area at the beginning of March, we sailed again on Sunday the 10<sup>th</sup> March, to join the fleet for a period of weapon training, under the code name of Exercise Ardua. The 10 days spent with the fleet were of great value and interest, as the first time since our Japanese days that we had company. We ourselves were COMESDIV 16, with COMAS under our care.

On return from Ardua, we had a maintenance week and cleaned our boilers. We also prepared ourselves for Captain D's inspection. The harbour inspection was carried out in pouring rain, as indeed was the sea inspection. However like all things good and bad, the inspection came to an end and we all followed our leader across the Equator and parted company as we were to visit Christmas Island, securing to buoys in Flying Fish Cove. There we celebrated crossing the line and the first timers suffered the ceremony.

After a weekend at Christmas Island, we had to return to Singapore at high speed, to land one of our C.P.O.'s, an attempt to take him back by Sunderland, having covered 800 miles at over twenty knots. History does not relate how much fuel we had left at the end of this passage.

In a different form we sailed again from Singapore to take part in Exercise Tradewind, an Anzam exercise. We were disguised as NEWCASTLE as a result of great efforts of everyone, we in a very short time rigged up a second funnel, extended the forecastle with canvas sheets added extra antennae and obviously changed our pennant number from D03 to C76, our role was to confuse the "enemy" air search for the real Newcastle. This we succeeded in beyond our wildest dreams, the Australian flyers, as the enemy, being misled for five hours. After the remaining exercise we had the privilege of leading the fleet into harbour, a long line of ships reaching down Johore Strait.



H.M.S. Concastle leading the Fleet into Singapore after a successful exercise

Easter weekend proved to be a frantic rush and after it we sailed again for the SEATO exercise Astra. The first half was more weapon training and fleet work. After the weekend, spent again at Palau Tioman. We sailed as part of a convoy escort to the Gulf of Thailand. After exercises the following Monday, we returned to Singapore on the 6<sup>th</sup>. May, for our self refit,. During this period we moved into Terror, which afforded us plenty of opportunity

to play inter departmental games and generally relax. Early June we returned on board and on the 9<sup>th</sup> June sailed for New Zealand.

Calm seas favoured us en route and we called at Kudat, North Borneo; Sorong, Dutch New Guinea; Manus in the Admiralty Islands; Rabaul, New Britain; Honiara, British Soloman Islands and Noumea in Caledonia, before arriving one perfect winter morning, 8<sup>th</sup>.July, in Auckland. All these ports en route were small but interesting to see and we had a pleasant passage, which at times might have been mistaken for a pleasure cruise. Imagine how much it would cost with P.& O. Or Cunard, and we were getting paid for it. During the voyage we crossed the South China Sea, Sulu Sea, Celebes Sea, Solomon Sea, Coral Sea and part of the south Pacific Ocean.

Our main duty was to train a variety of personnel of the R.N.Z.N. and the Cadet Forces. Whilst in New Zealand we showed the flag in the following Ports, Tauranga, Wellington, Nelson, Port Lyttelton, Timaru, Dunedin and the Southern Sounds, before leaving New Zealand to return to the Far East station at the beginning of October. During this period many were invited and indeed encouraged to take station leave with local families in many parts of N.Z. On our return to Hong Kong, we also called in at Apia Samoa, Suva in Fiji and Manus. Our final visit was back to Singapore, before we sailed for the U.K. On our passage home we called into Colombo, Aden, Malta and Gibraltar arriving home to Portsmouth on the 11<sup>th</sup>. December 1957. It was wonderful to be greeted by so many family and friends, however it was very sad that we knew that the future of our beloved Concord had almost come to an end. Apparently it did have another role for a little while running out of Rosyth training Artificers, before she was finally put to rest in Inverkeithing.

We were so fortunate to be able to see so much of the Far East and visit so many wonderful ports during this very ARDUOUS commission, still I suppose somebody had to do it.

We steamed 57,000 miles and were under way for 3300 hours or 20 full weeks.

Commander John Marryat, Captain, wrote in our paying off magazine, and to quote, "During this commission we have been particularly privileged to be able to show off the British Navy in parts of the world where Royal Navy ships are rare visitors.

I like to think that we have done our best to show our pride both in our Service and in our ship and that we have been a credit to what we represent. Never before, has it been so important that we should have succeeded in this, faced, as we are, with a feeling that the days of the Navy are over. We have had the opportunity to disprove this and I hope that we have taken it".

53 years later who would have thought that our present Navy is so much smaller, and indeed, with the scathing cut backs being implemented at extreme pace, it is very confusing and worrying as to what our future role will be.

**Alan Ausden  
1956-58**

## **My National Service in the Royal Navy**

At the end of January we sailed for Singapore, and from then to the end of April we did various exercises with our Captain D and with the Fleet plus the Australian Navy.

All of this, was shared with welcome breaks to Paula Tioman Island, we also paid a visit to Port Swettenham and Malacca on the west coast of Malaya. Somewhere between the two we were visited by the Rajah Muda, the son of the Sultan of Selangor. We gave him a Gun Salute, (I forget how many). I remember he came down into the boiler room and shook hands with all of us on watch.

It was on the way back to Singapore, that the Captain announced that we were going to New Zealand at the beginning of June. Finally we had Captain D's inspection in harbour; and at sea, and were declared a fully trained; fighting ship. We parted company, crossed the Equator and visited Christmas Island anchoring in Flying Fish Bay. Here we celebrated the Crossing the Line Ceremony. Nobody went over the side though; you could see the sharks swimming about in the clear water, unfortunately the Chief Stoker was badly beaten up ashore, and we had to rush him back to Singapore for emergency treatment. We sailed 800 miles doing 20 knots. Glad to say he recovered ok.

It was during long spells at sea that we used to have our mail delivered by helicopter and also would you believe by parachute. I remember one instance when a Sunderland flying boat flew over, dropping the mail in a watertight canister that floated down into the sea nearby and lowering the whaler to go and pick up our valuable mail.

Again, up to the beginning of May we exercised at sea and after one final weekend at Paula Tioman returned to Singapore where we went into a floating dry dock for a self refit. We moved back into HMS Terror during this time enjoying the swimming pool, playing football and having the occasional pint of tiger tops. This was a glass of tiger lager with a dash of lemonade which supposedly helped you avoid a hangover in the morning. Remember you had to pay a shilling deposit on your glass and you had a raffle ticket stuck on which made sure they got their glass back, and you your shilling.

At the beginning of June, we set sail for New Zealand. Our first stop was Kudat in North Borneo. It was here we visited a long house built on stilts, with the whole village living inside and various domestic animals penned underneath. Then onto Sarong in Dutch New Guinea and then Manus, Admiralty Islands, Rabaul and New Britain islands. Honiara on the island of Guadalcanal part of the Solomon Islands. It was here we saw relics of the war against Japan. Wrecks of ships sticking out of the water every low tide and a rusting hulk of a Merchant ship on a beach where we went swimming.

The locals said they were still finding skeletons in the jungle. Then onto Noumea the Capital of the French islands of New Caledonia. Finally arriving at our destination, Auckland or rather HMNZS Philomel, the Naval Base across the bay at Devonport. This would be our base for the next 3 months. From here we visited Mount Manganui, Tauranga and Wellington on the North Island and then onto Nelson where a guy in full regalia piped us into harbour, and also piped us out stood on top of the bridge, the pilot boat taking him back. Then on to Port Lyttelton, (Christchurch) Timaru, Dunedin and Milford Sound, all on the South Island.

The rest of our time was mainly spent in and around Auckland. I remember that a churn of milk was delivered by the Gangway every morning. Tea tasted really strange for a while



after using tinned stuff for so long. The licensing laws were also very strange. The bars were open all day and closed at 6 pm so when we went ashore at 4 pm, it was a mad rush to the ferry and in my case to a favourite bar at the top of Queens St the main road through Auckland. The beer was served in a large glass jug which filled your glass 5 times and cost around 2/6 old money. Then usually it was onto a party somewhere with a few beers under your arm.

The highlight of my stay in New Zealand though was when we were invited to stay on a sheep farm for a week. We were paired off and sent to various farms in the middle of the North Island known as, The King Country. We went by train to a place called Ti Kuiti where we were met by our hosts and in my case taken to a farm just outside a village called Aria. We really did have a great time. The farmer and his wife hadn't been married long. She had been a nurse in Auckland. When they took us to the mountains in the national park and started to get higher and higher until we eventually hit snow, we stopped so she could pick some up. She'd never seen it before and we finished our climb on a chair lift and watched the skiing from the warmth of the Ski Lodge. On another trip we visited the World famous Waitomo Glow Worm caves, where you are rowed along an underground stream in pitch darkness with thousands of Glow worms all around you. There was one cow on the farm which supplied the house with milk. Being a farmer's boy I milked it every day I was there. I think he was quite serious when he offered me a job at £10 a week after my demob from the navy.

Sadly at the beginning of October it was time to say farewell and there were a lot of sad faces around as a lot of strong relationships had been forged ashore. On our way back to Hong Kong we visited Samoa and Fiji, crossing the Date Line first one way then the other. I think we had no Tuesdays and two Thursdays that week, or was it the other way round I can't remember. We refuelled once again at Mantis and passed close to the Philippines. Back in Hong Kong we found out we were going to sail Concord home for scrap. I pawned my Burberry for one more good run ashore and soon after, with the paying off pennant trailing in the water behind us sailed for Singapore and home. I had mixed feelings at this time. And would have signed on if I could have stayed in the Far East.

Any way it was adios to Singapore and we set sail for Colombo in what was then Ceylon. Nobody went ashore, except the Postie to collect the mail. We were surrounded by 'Bum Boats' boxes of cigars were very popular until they were opened and found to be riddled with wood worm.

Next stop was Aden, then through the Red Sea to Port Suez where the upward convoy gathered ready to pass through the canal. We were given the honour of leading the convoy and we were the first RN ship to pass through the canal from, south to north after the blockade at Port Said had been cleared. We had to anchor up in the lake, that's near enough half way to let the downward convoy pass through.

We then continued on our way, passing straight through Port Said, and on to Valletta, Malta. We entered Grand Harbour and tied up alongside two D Class Destroyers one of which I remember was the HMS Diamond. They did make us look ancient. No rivets and guided missiles etc. No wonder we were being scrapped.

Gibraltar was next and then the final leg across the Bay of Biscay to our home port Pompey, It was on this leg that we had our worst weather of the whole commission, even the Captain was very ill, I'm told. I was never sea sick, I was very fortunate I had a strong

stomach, I suppose that I was just lucky, in fact the rougher it got the better I ate. They used to call me the mobile dustbin.

Before going alongside we anchored out in the Solent to let customs give us the once over and then, with our paying off pennant flying, entered harbour. This was the 11<sup>th</sup> December 1958. The BBC News cameras were there and we were on the Telly that night. Lots of family and friends were there to greet us including my father and step mother. The next day I was back in Victory barracks and on the 18<sup>th</sup> Dec. Was back in Civvy Street.

How was that for a National Service? Unbelievable and to think I could have stayed at home on the farm. Thank goodness I didn't. HMS Concord was my only ship and you can see why, she was, and is so special, and means so much to me.

**Shipmate Bob (Bungy) Williams**  
**ME1 56-57**



**National Service**

The first National Service Acts were passed during the Second World War. However, following the war, conscription was extended, as peacetime National Service. This was in part due to an unstable international situation, as well as to Britain's responsibilities in the Commonwealth and Empire. The 1948 National Service Act, effective from January 1<sup>st</sup>. 1969, fixed the period of National Service to eighteen months, with four years in the reserves. In 1950, the Korean War led to a further amendment increasing the period of service to two years. With three and a half years in the reserves. Men in Northern Ireland were excluded from the national Service Act.

The "call up" finally came to a halt on 31<sup>st</sup>. Dec. 1960 and the very last servicemen left the Army in 1963.

## Thoughts on 'Time'

Cast your memory back to your navy days, how many times have we ourselves said , or heard it said, 'Roll on my so and so Time'... We were young, and fit, and healthy then, head fast and strong, 'time' if you thought about it was slow. Yet we were governed by 'time' in those days, 'time' for a watch below or up top, 'time' to go ashore, 'time' to go to sea and return, 'time' was on our side and we probably thought we would go on forever.

When the time came to leave the service and return to civilian life, we used our 'time' to raise a family, build a career, buy a house and thought little about "Time Rolling on". We gave little thought to age or aging and we had little time to think about our old shipmates, and when we gave thought at all we would momentarily think, 'I wonder what happened to old so and so' then we would drift back to reality. We still had mental pictures of them and their features, which was as they were back then and not altered by 'time'.

Without realizing it, 'time' had indeed 'rolled on'. As our families grew up and our commitments grew less we found we had 'time' on our hands. We still had those mental pictures of our old shipmates and after something like 45 years or more we decided it was 'time' to do something about it. Matelots being the rare breed they are, can never forget the close bonds of the mess decks or the ties that bind old salts. Five and a half years ago now, we decided to arrange our first reunion, but what did we expect? As we found our old shipmates, we recognized the old features but we were now oldies, wrinklies, baldies or tubbies but the old personalities shone through and after a few moments it was as though we had never been away. 'Time' may have changed the way we look but not our feelings for each other as old oppos. The old mess deck banter emerged and in no 'time' at all the old ties were rekindled anew.

The difference being that we have now reached the Autumn of our lives and 'time' is now rolling on a lot faster than we would like. We still have things to do and things we would like to accomplish before that final curtain falls. We realize we are on a countdown of our life's span and I don't think we like to hear that old saying of our naval days, 'Roll on my `So and so time' anymore because now, as we look back we realize it does not mean a navy service contract any more but is life itself. For many old shipmates of ours 'time has rolled on' and run out.

If we study our 'Roll of Honour' there are seventy old Concordians listed as 'time expired' and we know there must be many more from the five commissions that have not been reported to us. Of Association shipmates we have lost twenty-four since our inauguration and this year has been a very bad year for us as we have lost so many. I could put names to them as they were not just shipmates but real friends. I suppose we have to be thankful that we have had the chance to meet up again after all the in between years to share that joke, share a beer or two together and reminisce about the old days. It does not matter from which commission we came, we are all old shipmates of Concord and when we hear the sad news that a shipmate's 'time' has come it affects us all. May we all reach our goal of the millennium year 2000 and beyond and may `time' continue to 'roll on' for all and not run out... For at this time of life 'time expired' means just that... `You've had your time', a term we do not like to hear... So enjoy your 'time; shipmates, take care, Good health to all.

**Doug Leeson**  
**S.M. 1952-53**

Sadly, Doug crossed the bar about 12 months after writing this article.

## **Canteen Messing**

I am sure that Jack Dusty's mess lived very well under the canteen messing system having been trained as chefs, caterers etc, however the remainder of the ship's company were left to their own devices.

The Electrical mess caterer Squeegee Garbutt was not trained by Michel Roux (I know that he wasn't alive at the time) in fact I don't think that he was trained at all. Some of his concoctions were only just edible. We only had breakfast on special occasions, for example when it was Captain D's inspection, the other days it was a Woodbine and a cup of tea. On one of these rare days he had listed Kippers on Toast, when questioned he said that it was an error and should have been Kidneys on Toast (polite name)

The whole catering system was probably well meant and we managed to survive on two meals a day, but the determination of the Caterer of the mess to supply as little as possible, so as to have a rebate at the end of the month. Having to prepare each meal and get it to the Cooks in the Galley on time wasn't too bad, however when "Cooks to the Galley" was piped there was absolute chaos, with the Cook trying to sort out all the messes meals. It wasn't too bad on a good day, to get all the food back to the mess, however when it was very rough and the Upper Deck was out of bounds, to use the upper gangway to go aft, was at times extremely dangerous to survive the wind and rain and then get down the vertical ladder to get to your mess deck was at times an incredible achievement. (Where were the Health and Safety team when you needed them?) I remember once dropping a tray of roast potatoes, scooping them up and returning them to the tray, remarkably nobody knew. (They did not need the salt that day though).

When we were forewarned of rough weather, The Caterer would decide to have a Pot Mess, everything went in, no two pot messes tasted the same, but it did clear the food locker of any unused tins that had been previously overlooked. There was the time on our way south, when the potatoes all went rotten and we had to call in to Manus who supplied us with Yams (Sweet potatoes). And for the remainder of that trip it was either rice or sweet potatoes to accompany our main meals. Jack Dusty attempted to make amends by giving us all a free pudding in recompense for our troubles. If he had offered anything other than rice pudding, he would not have been chased around the Upper Deck, by Bogey Knight with his portion.

The time when one of my mess mates (dare not name him, as he will still be embarrassed, 52 years later) placed a can of tomato soup in the mess oven without taking the necessary precautions. You've guessed it, when he did puncture the can, there was a very fine red spray and at such a pressure that it covered the deck head and all surfaces. It took months to completely clean it up.

Canteen messing you loved it or hated it, I suppose it depended whether you had a Supply and Secretariat member in your mess.

**Alan Ausden**  
**EM 56-58**

## Jack Dusty's Corner

During the 1956 commission, the following provisions were consumed (excluding refit)

Rum	747	gallons	
Potatoes	145,510	lbs.	
Bread	56,110	loaves	
Meat	31,805	lbs.	Beef, Lamb, Pork. Note no Venison!
Tea	2,772	"	
Sugar	18,990	"	Pussers ration 348,416 cups
Milk	23,444	tins	
Eggs	32,286		

882 cups and 641 plates were replaced.



Depth Charge – Fresh Fish Today! And Free of charge



That's all right – I never eat fried eggs anyway

## **The Kuala Lumpur Caper and the Concord Casanova**

We had on board the Concord an Able Seaman Ken Middleton, I think that was his name, who easily fell in love (didn't we all), often! He fell head over heels in love, in Hong Kong, Singapore and numerous other places with the bar girls, they may be called something else? In Hong Kong he went a.w.o.l. and was living in Kowloon with his beloved bar girl and eventually became engaged to her. I knew where to find him every night and saw him often. I eventually persuaded him to return to the ship after two weeks.

We returned on board and reported to the OOW, who decided to put him in the cable locker for the night. He received his punishment, a few weeks stoppage of leave etc. We then returned to Singapore. He again fell in love with another bar girl. A Eurasian beauty she was too. This time he was a.w.o.l. for over four weeks when he was eventually caught. This time the punishment was DQ's at Kuala Lumpur. Leading Seaman Ian Campbell (who recently passed over the bar), myself, and Harry Hutton were chosen as escort to take him to the Detention Centre. Dressed in No.8's, belt and gaiters, a 303 rifle and five rounds of ammo (Commies were still in operation).

We left HMS Terror on the overnight train for Kuala Lumpur and arrived at the Centre about 10 am and handed him over. He was told to double march on the spot as all offenders were. We were well pleased to be out of there. I thought for a minute or two that they were keeping us in. The train back to Singapore was not until 8:30 pm so we had the rest of the day free. We changed into civvies in the police station and handed in our rifles and went on the beer. By the end of the day we were a little bit under the weather. Not quite legless but not far away. The police saw the state we were in and refused to give us our rifles.

At this we quickly sobered up and Leading Seaman Campbell persuaded them to give us back our rifles. When we boarded the train we had a sleeper going back, so we put our rifles and ammo under our pillows and went to the bar. At the next stop the Red Caps got on and went through the train. They arrived at the bar and said 'There are three matelots on board who have left their rifles on their bunks and if they are not picked up in 1 minute they will be arrested'. As there were only three matelots on the train we knew who they meant. We dashed back to our bunks and retrieved our rifle and returned to the bar.

After a few more drinks, I am not sure how many, we crashed out on our bunks. It only seemed like minutes later we heard the porter shouting 'Johore Bahru'. As the train was pulling out we were jumping off half dressed and grabbed our rifles in the nick of time. We arrived back in HMS Terror without further incidents, a good run ashore!

**Ralph 'Pony' Moore**  
**AB (Diver 3) 56-57**

## Jenny, Side Party

Jenny led a side party of girls who attached themselves to ships when they arrived in Hong Kong, taking over the domestic economy and husbandry of each vessel. They washed and ironed, cleaned ship, chipped rust and painted, attended as buoy jumpers, and, dressed in their best, waited with grace and charm upon guests at cocktail parties.

Captains and First Lieutenants would find fresh flowers in their cabins and newspapers delivered daily, and many a departing officer received a generous gift as a memento from Jenny. For all of this she refused to take payment, instead earning her keep by selling soft drinks to the ships' companies and scavenging every item of gash which could be found on board.

Much of Jenny's life was an enigma, but the authors of her many certificates of service (references) generally agreed that she was born in a sampan in Causeway Bay in 1917. According to a surviving certificate of service-copied in 1946 from an older, much battered and largely illegible document-Jenny's mother, Jenny One, "provided serviceable sampans for the general use of the Royal Navy, obtained sand, and was useful for changing money".

The younger Jenny's "date of volunteering" was recorded as 1928. From then until 1997, when the colony became a Special Administrative Region of China, she and her team of tireless girls, who at one time numbered nearly three dozen, served the Royal and Commonwealth Navies in Hong Kong.



Jenny

Jenny's huge collection of photographs, stored in large envelopes, dated back to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century and showed her in the ships she so faithfully served, often with young commanding officers who later reached flag rank. In two thick albums she proudly kept her letters of reference, all filled with praise and affection for her. One was a commendation by the Duke of Edinburgh for her work in the Royal Yacht during a visit in 1959.

She had a (faux) Long Service and Good Conduct Medal presented to her in 1938 by the Captain of the cruiser H.M.S. Devonshire and a bar engraved "H.M.S. Leander 1975". Most treasured was the "genuine" British Empire Medal with which she was invested in 1980 by the Governor of Hong Kong, Sir Murray MacLehose. The recommendation had formally named her as Mrs. Ng Muk Kah.

Through her perpetual gold toothed grin, Jenny complained happily “I velly chocker. All time work in Sampan. No learn to lead life”.

What she lacked in education, however, she made up for with her experience of ship husbandry, her unfailing thoroughness and apparently inexhaustible energy, as well as her integrity, enthusiasm and cheerfulness.

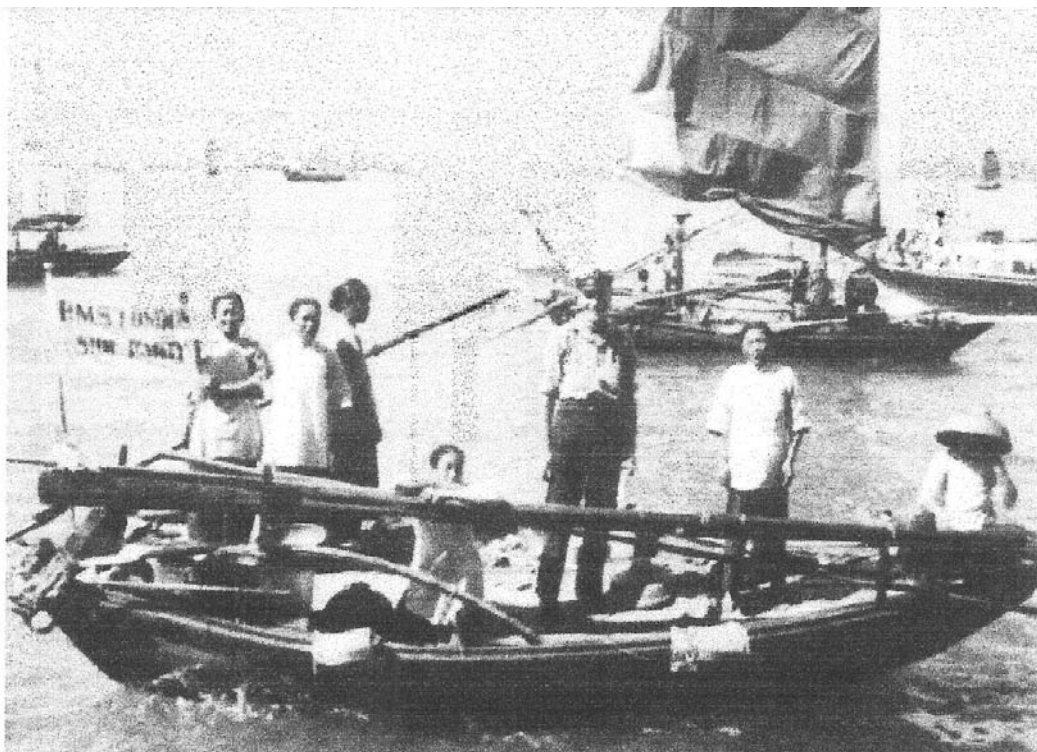
Jenny’s intelligence system was second to none: many a Captain in Plymouth or Portsmouth would turn down her offer to become his side party in Hong Kong on the grounds that his ship was bound for the West Indies or the Mediterranean, only to find that his ship’s programme had been changed.

In later years, when Hong Kong was no longer visited by the fleets of ships which gave Jenny a livelihood, she found it increasingly difficult to make ends meet. Yet she stayed fit and was always willing to undertake any work available; and to the end of the Royal Navy’s presence in Hong Kong there could be seen in the naval base a small round figure in traditional baggy black trousers and high-collared, silk smock, with a long pigtail and an eternal smile.

Jenny died on February 19<sup>th</sup> 2010.

(Acknowledgement Daily Telegraph)

**Alan Ausden**  
**EM 56-58**



Their home



## **H.M.S. Concord Association – Final Reunion**

Our 16<sup>th</sup>. and final reunion was in my opinion a wonderful memorable and nostalgic success.

Despite our Chairman Peter Lee-Hale's application for a lottery grant, which failed to meet their criteria, our fellow shipmates responded magnificently to our appeal, donating a staggering £3446, to ensure that the weekend did not fail through lack of funds.

The Maritime Club was the centre of proceedings, however the crew of a Trinidad and Tobago ship was in residence so only a few of us were able to be accommodated in the club.

The "Noggin and Natter" on the Friday evening was very well attended and our President, Rodney Agar and his wife Cecily attended and circulated to all commissions as a prelude to the main events on the Saturday and Sunday.

The AGM supported the proposal to disband as many members have crossed the bar and many more were too frail or infirm to attend, as it was the seating plan for the banquet was restructured many times as shipmates had pulled out for numerous health reasons. However it was resolved that our Chairman, Treasurer, Newsletter Editor and Shipmate Derek Hodgson, should produce a final newsletter and to close the accounts down.

The Banquet at Portsmouth Guildhall was a memorable event and we were honoured that the Lord Mayor and her Consort attended. Other honoured guests included, Commodore PM on Concord and a former C in C Portsmouth, Rear Admiral Whetstone, President T.S. Hornet and three Vice Presidents. Rodney Agar and the Lord Mayor of Portsmouth both made well researched and presented speeches, which are as follows.

### **Lord Mayor Terry Hall's Address**

It is a great pleasure and honour to welcome you here this evening to the Guildhall. But I am afraid that it is also a very sad occasion for me because this will be my last engagement that I will attend in the Lord Mayor's Banqueting Suite in my role as Lord Mayor. And I am sure that you must also be very downhearted that this weekend is your farewell reunion.

But we must not forget that we have much to celebrate, because we as a City are very proud of our association with the Royal Navy.

My year as Lord Mayor has brought home to me how much the lives of Portsmouth residents are tied to the past and present life of the Royal Navy. 2009 was the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the accession to the throne of Henry VIII who established the Naval Dockyard here. And the last year has also been a very important time for the Mary Rose Trust which finally managed to secure an incredible 21 Million pound award from the Heritage Lottery Fund. This opportunity to reunite the ship and her fantastic artefacts will be a huge boost to the city's heritage offer. I have been a Trustee of the Naval Base Property Trust for 4 years and I know how important Naval history and heritage is to the economy of the city. The unforgettable Trafalgar 200 events in 2005 will forever be remembered by all those who attended. The Royal Navy is an integral part of the city's culture.

Many of you here tonight will remember all too well the emotion running through the city when a certain Sir John Nott announced his plans to scale down the Navy, including the proposed scrapping of the Antarctic patrol ship HMS Endurance. On the eve of the Falklands war thousands of men and women worked day and night in the Dockyard for a week to get the ships ready to sail the 8000 miles to the Falklands, having only just received redundancy notices through the post.

The mood in the city switched from despondency as dockyard workers received their P45's, to elation as the task force was cheered from the city helped by the same men and women whose jobs were about to end.

But the city's economy is not just tied in with the history of the Royal Navy. We are also partners in the future of the Royal Navy. Earlier this year work began on one of the two new Queen Elizabeth class aircraft carriers which will be based here in Portsmouth.

We will be one of six shipyards across the U.K. which will be involved in the manufacture of the ships' hulls, supporting up to 8,000 jobs in the construction and up to another 3,000 throughout the supply chain nationwide.

And the city's industry has kept pace with the MOD's 21<sup>st</sup> century requirements with the recent announcement that Skynet 5, the UK's single biggest space project, is to be extended. The 400 million pound contract which provides secure satellite telecommunications to British armed forces, will be boosted by the addition of a fourth spacecraft Skynet 5D which will be built by Astrium, creating 100 high tech jobs and securing another 800, here in Portsmouth and Stevenage.

As well as contributing to the city's economy, the Royal Navy also plays a significant part in our cultural life. I shall look back with pride when I remember the many occasions this year when I have felt my heart swell at the sight of men and women on parade looking so smart-at the Remembrance Services in November, for D-Day 65 and at The Royal Naval Medical Services Parade at Whale Island in July when 184 medals were presented in the presence of Her Royal Highness, The Duchess of Cornwall, to personnel in recognition of their outstanding and critical contribution made in combat operations in Afghanistan and Iraq.

I was unable to attend the commissioning of HMS Daring as I was double booked, but John did attend and has now become the Countess of Wessex's number one fan. I cannot imagine how many hours of drilling and bulling are involved in preparation for these occasions, but I can assure you it was worth it on every occasion. No one does it better than the Senior Service.

In many ways life is unchanged. The world still faces the same tragedies and disasters as we always have, such as the recent earthquake in Haiti where the Royal Fleet Auxiliary vessel Largs Bay joined the ongoing World Food Programme relief efforts to provide food and supplies to the island.

But the world does change as modern technology becomes increasingly sophisticated and life in the Royal Navy is even more demanding and challenging. The ships, aircraft, submarines, weaponry and equipment are changing faster than ever.

But despite these changes, the qualities required of Officers and men, leadership, courage, integrity, bravery, good humour, professional competence, that inner sense of

humanity, decency, and regard for the dignity of others are as important in today's Navy as they have ever been. To those of you who have played such an important part in our country's history and defence, to those of you who have risked your lives for the peace and safety of our citizens, we are forever in your debt and the Royal Navy will always be in the heart of the city of Portsmouth.

### **Our President Rodney Agar responded**

Lord Mayor, Ladies and Gentlemen. On this great occasion and with this splendid dinner that we are all having together. It is an honour for me tonight to propose the valedictory toast of our Concord association. With all the historical activities of our great ship I must, as they say, "Gang Warily" in such an august company, with your wealth of memories of your time in her. But firstly, I would like to pass on a message of good wishes from our Patron, Commander John Cottesloe, who is very sorry indeed not to be with us tonight due to ill health and who contributed so much to our Association.

We are ending a period of 60 years of history since our destroyer the Concord was first commissioned in 1947. For those younger members and guests here tonight, and it is such a delight to see the families of old Concords here, it is difficult to portray to you the strength and power of the Royal Navy at that period, which Concord was part of. The Navy's strength in 1948-taken from my Midshipman's Journal was, 4 Battleships, 8 Aircraft carriers, 17 cruisers, 52 Destroyers, 40 frigates, sloops, 30 submarines and all the attendant Depot ships, Fleet Air Arm, Coastal Forces, Fleet train etc. Churchill was quoted as saying in Parliament "We are angered by Argentina, chided by Chile and goaded by Guatemala" and the Navy is down to a state of insufficiency never plumbed before" I wonder what he would think now!!

In the 1953 Coronation Review, some 200 ships took part- while at the same time we in the Concord were fighting the war in Korea, being part of a sizeable British Pacific Task Force. Concord's life spanned the period for the years from 1947/57 all in the Far East Fleet and Pacific, before coming home and then scrapped. I don't know the exact figure but she must have steamed around a quarter of million miles, which says something. She was built as one of the Emergency class destroyers, 2,000 tons and successful maids of all work, out of poor steel at the need of World War 11, as some of you will know when chipping right through the deck and finding a hole underneath.

She had 6 commissions and 7 Captains and we are delighted that Captain Tony McCrum, her last but one Captain is with us here tonight and still as sprightly as ever. Two of her other Captains became Admirals, one of whom was Admiral Ian MacLaughlan whose daughter Marianne Barratt is with us tonight, and our Sub Lieutenant in 1952 is now Admiral Sir Jeremy Black also here with us tonight, and a former Commander in Chief, Portsmouth just a few years ago. Another notable promotion was in 1953, when her Buffer, Petty Officer Belchamber was promoted to Chief Petty Officer by special order of the Commander in Chief. Such were the tips of the Naval Icebergs among a host of other successes in Concord's ships's companies.

Concord also distinguished herself in many ways, fighting the Communist Insurgency in Malaya, covering the epic escape of the Amethyst down the Yangtze in 1949, fighting in the Korean War for three years and wearing out her gun barrels, and in 1953 winning the 8<sup>th</sup>. Destroyer Squadron Regatta Cock. Later commissions supported the defence of Hong Kong and in the Pearl River estuary with Formosa straits patrols thrown in, and showed the Flag in our Pacific Dependencies and Dominions. In 1949, under the command of Commander Nigel Rodney, she made the famous signal to the Amethyst, on sighting and

then escorting her under the Communist guns of Woosung Forts just two miles away, "Fancy meeting you again"! part of Naval folklore, and we welcome five members of the Rodney family here tonight.

One often wonders what it is that makes a ship special. And we all, I am sure, feel that Concord was a very special ship. In this Guildhall here in Concord's home port of Portsmouth with its historical relationship with the Navy throughout the centuries, one realizes that it is the men in her, backed up and supported by their wives and families at home, bound together under the leadership of good Captains which we were fortunate to serve under. We also served them for a common cause which we believed in, Freedom, Fair play and a sense of Natural Justice. The British Empire as we knew it was something to be proud of, and the Navy was its long arm of influence throughout the world, ensuring freedom on the high seas for all nations. Concord served notably as part of this tradition.

This occasion is both sad but glad, sad because we are paying off, glad because we are here and still afloat!! Age I am sure has not dimmed our sense of living.

Now this week we have lived through a momentous change in Governance which history may show to have been a pivotal turning point for our country in this era. Some might say that the risks taken in forming a Coalition Government are almost Nelsonian in their audacity, with all the dangers ahead and we hope success for our country.

Now before we come to the toast of the evening, on behalf of us all, there is something that will give us the greatest pleasure. Chairman, Peter Lee-Hale, you have looked after us wonderfully well these past 15 years of our Association. You have given us your unstinting time and organized brilliantly all of our Reunions; and we thank you from the bottom of our hearts. It gives me great pleasure to present you with this decanter from all your Concord Shipmates, and every time you have a sip of the contents it will bring back the happiest of memories. Thank you, Thank you Peter.

Finally, Ladies and Gentlemen, I ask you to rise and drink the health of our good ship Concord and the memory of our Association.

Peter was surprised by this award, and was, would you believe rendered totally speechless, not only because the committee had agreed to the award but because it was probably the only decision in which he was not involved.



St Anne's Church, Portsmouth Dockyard



Capt McCrum telling Rev Poll he was christened there 90 years ago

Sunday mornings church service was very fittingly held at St. Anne's in the Dockyard, as it was this same church where the association was founded in 1995, was a joyous, sad, nostalgic and very moving service for all those who attended. Remembrance of our

shipmates, of all commissions who have crossed over the bar and the shipmates who were unable to attend through being infirm or ill and celebration of those in attendance. The Chaplain, Reverend Martin Poll, conducted the Service, two of our Vice Presidents, Marianne Barratt and John Roe read the lessons, Mike Paske read the Concord Prayer, before the Roll Calls of all Commissions were called for the final time. A retiring collection was made, which was shared by both the Gosport and Chippenham Sea Cadet units. Both these Units deserved the highest praise for their very smart turn-outs and the Chippenham cadet who played the "last post" so magnificently.

The main body then proceeded to Clarence Yard, Gosport by ferry and a hired bus, where T. S. Hornet is based, and after a buffet lunch we assembled for our final march past. Taking the salute was Admiral Sir Jeremy Black. We then lowered our ensign for the final time before transferring it to T.S. Hornet for their safekeeping. The end of the road. It has been a wonderful journey and I was very pleased to be a part of it, however very sad to be saying au revoir to my shipmates.



The Final March Past



Admiral Sir Jeremy Black takes the Final salute



Ensign lowered for the final time

**Alan Ausden**  
**Treasurer**

## China, The Time Was – Christmas 1948

Ships Postie, Leading Seaman Bone plus four of the ship's Welfare Committee went to an orphanage run by Nuns to organize a Christmas Party for the orphaned kids. We met a Sister Dominique who agreed delightedly to arrange a kid's party for \$HK250. What she did with this \$HK250 was akin to her leader with five fishes and five loaves. The day of the party was a Saturday just prior to Christmas and about 15 to 20 of us, all sober, went ashore to help out. One of the young Telegraphists, whose name I cannot remember, dressed up as Father Christmas and others were in comical rig. The party went down a bomb and all of the kids and babies, some as I recall were poor little mites, had a really happy time and all finished with a present from Father Christmas, which must have seemed really strange to these kids. When the kid's had gone to bed and we were preparing to leave the orphanage, the Mother Superior invited us to stay a while, and we found that they had laid on a supper for us, including a bottle of local brew each. The Nuns joined in and as I recall, one was Chinese and played the piano and all sang Christmas carols.



Eventually one of us tinkled the ivories and we ended up 'Down the old Kent road' and other similar ditties but of course all in the best possible taste. Eventually we said our good-byes and it was a great feeling to have made so many kids happy, even for just a short while, and YOU try getting people to believe 15 to 20 matelots had a knees-up in a Nunnery! News of this party was printed at the time in the local press, and I believe the CinC at the time sent our skipper a congrats signal.

## Memory Lane – Thoughts of a Concord Christmas

Concord was swinging round a buoy in Hong Kong harbour, all around us on this dark night were a myriad pin points of light, some moving as on the Star Ferries as they plied between Victoria and Kowloon, some stationary as on other vessels – a big US Navy supply ship here, a smaller British frigate there. As you looked your eyes were taken higher and higher to the lights that clung to the Peak. Every now and again huge shadows would glide gently past as a pair of fishing junks with their huge dark sails came in from the China Sea. It was December 24<sup>th</sup> 1951, Christmas Eve, by now the mess caterers were all back on board after searching out the final goodies for the next days feast. It would be a good feed and a few extra tots from the bottle, then, head down with a long 'make and mend'.

Leaning over the rail on this still night your mind naturally drifted back 12,000 miles to home and the family and friends you had left behind. Suddenly, out of the darkness came the sound of music floating over the water; at first, very faint and then you could make out a familiar sound 'Silent Night! Holy Night!' All is Calm, all is Bright'. It was the Mission to Seaman's launch with a choir in full voice making their way slowly around the fleet to bring us a little of what Christmas really meant – we were far from home but we had not been forgotten. Christmas Day dawned and as is tradition 'Jack' was up for games in the

forenoon, - Christmas tree (of sorts) to the masthead, pirate gear to be worn, -away motorboat and steal the nearest frigate's lifebelt and so on. Mid morning and the motorboat took those who wished to go to attend the Christmas Service at the Missions to Seamen's Chapel, but the trip was not that simple as I remember, as we passed other ships we were fair game to receive a soaking from their fire hoses or anything else that came to hand. This all seems so very long ago.

## **David Miles 1951-53**

### **Exclusive**

Here is an exclusive story about the Amethyst incident that has only been told to our association newsletter and has only been repeated here.

I was 'Gunners Yeoman' and part of my duties was to take the temperature of the Magazines twice a day. We all know that the keys to the magazines have to be kept on the proper key board as per Big Ship routine. Well, Concord wasn't a big ship so the most convenient place was always in my pocket and had been for the past few months.

On the night that Amethyst came down I was woken up (I had, had an early night) and was told to open up all magazines, without making too much fuss. We did not know the reason at the time. Low and behold I COULDN'T FIND THE KEYS. Panic, I retrace my steps over every magazine in case I had left them in the lock. It was not until I got to the Stokers Mess deck when a certain Albert O'Neil (could I ever forget that name) waved them in front of me, enquiring if these are what I was looking for. As I went to get them he tossed them jokingly to another stoker, and this went on and on for some time. Was I relieved when eventually I got them, and was able to report 'All magazines open'.

**Anon** (I don't know whether I can still be charged?)

### **The Tandridge Element**

Since the 50<sup>th</sup>, anniversary of the Yangtze Incident, much effort has been made in an endeavour to have the crucial part HMS Concord played in the escape of HMS Amethyst from her three months incarceration in the upper reaches of the Yangtze by communist forces, recognised by both the Government and the public.

Following attendance at the fiftieth anniversary of the incident at Portishead by Lt. Cdr. John Roe, Concord's First Lieutenant at the time along with Ann Rodney widow of the Captain, Terry Metcalfe who manned one of the guns and Chairman of the Association Peter Lee-Hale, the Association welcomed the survivors of the 1949 crew of Amethyst to the 2000 Concord Reunion in Bridlington.

From then on, the campaign to obtain due recognition began. With the odd exception this campaign was supported by the Amethyst's Chairman, the late Don Redmond and Jack French, the Telegraphist who has since, also crossed over the bar.

By far the greatest support has come from Willie Leitch, of HMS Consort. Although of a later commission on Consort, he has almost daily pressed our case including through the Scottish Parliament. Derek Hodgson of our 1949 commission has also been a prolific writer.

Then in 2009 the Tandridge element emerged. Lt. Cdr. Kerans the Captain of Amethyst had been buried in the grounds of St. Peter's church, Tandridge and the villagers under the organising baton of Alan Essex, the Editor of the village magazine, decided to commemorate the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Amethyst's escape, so the saga began.

From p.m. on Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> July 2009, veterans of the five ships involved in the 1949 Yangtze Incident began to converge on Tandridge for the following days commemoration of Amethyst's famous escape.

The venue of St. Peter's church was most appropriate as the grounds contained Lt. Cdr. Kerans grave.

By noon the following day, villagers and veterans from the five ships, HMS Amethyst. HMS Consort, HMS London, HMS Black Swan and HMS Concord, had gathered at the churchyard. At the entrance to the churchyard, Sea Cadets from T.S. Gallant, the local Unit, had mounted a Guard of Honour for the Admiralty Representative, Commodore Tim Hennessy. Prior to the arrival the Guard was inspected by Stephanie Keran's the widow of Commander Kerans who was accompanied by her two daughters, grandchildren and son in law.

At the entrance to the church the largest contingent of veterans which were from HMS Concord also lined the route for the Commodore.

The service was conducted by St. Peter's Rector the Reverend Alan J. Mayer AKC. During the service old Movietone newsreels were shown of HMS Amethyst.

With the church charged with emotion, veterans from the 1949 crews of each ship present described their feelings of that occasion. Particularly poignant was that of former Able Seaman "Taff Dixon" of HMS Concord who described having to bring the ship to action stations by word of mouth and not by klaxon to keep the sound down in the stillness of the night. Then his vision of HMS Amethyst coming into sight "Because of the bend in the river it looked as if she was coming over land" he said.

At which point our Captain, Nigel Rodney signalled "Fancy meeting you again" to which Kerans replied "Never (repeat) Never has a ship been more welcome" We had to steam past her because the river was too narrow for us to turn round. When we did we had to increase speed to get alongside her starboard side to protect her from the 9 inch guns of the Woosung Forts. Thankfully they did not spot us and, after we had gone past them, Commander Kerans made his signal to the Admiralty that he had rejoined the Fleet south of Woosung. Later when we reached the open sea she came alongside and we refuelled and stored her and fed her ship's company.

At the end of the Service the Congregation gathered at Commander Kerans graveside where the Roll of all those who lost their lives was read out. A wreath was then laid on the grave by the Chairman of HMS Concord Association, escorted by a member of the 1949 Commission LSA Derek Hodgson and a member of the last 1956 Commission EM Alan Ausden.



The veterans then moved to the village hall where they were entertained to lunch by the villagers.

The day was a fitting tribute to all crews both living and dead of the five ships which were involved in this harrowing experience.

For the 1949 veterans the quest to obtain true and full recognition for the part they played is not yet over. Willie Leitch continues with his campaign and it is understood that the Scottish Parliament has not yet let the matter rest. Also it is understood that an independent documentary film maker has obtained funding to make a documentary about the campaign for recognition. Other efforts are also afoot. The fight is not over until the battle is won!



Derek Hodgson, Taff Dixon, Charles Cox. who served on Concord during the Yangtze Incident, with Willie Leitch



Concord Association members, who attended the Tandridge service

## Peter Lee-Hale

### Ships bell found

On the evening of Friday 12<sup>th</sup> September at T.S. Hornet, the headquarters of Gosport Sea Cadets, representatives of the six commissions (1947-1958) of the former Portsmouth based destroyer H.M.S. Concord, which was scrapped in 1962, gathered to watch their President Lord Cottesloe and their Chairman Peter Lee-Hale hand over their ship's bell for safe keeping.

The discovery and recovery of the ship's bell had taken almost seven years. The Chairman said that when the Association was formed in 1995 he had set out to find the ship's bell starting with the breakers yard in Inverkeithing, Scotland, and then over a period of two years the various Admiralty disposal yards, to no avail.

Two years later he discovered that the first Captain, World War 2 hero Commander Bill Donald DSC was still alive and living in the Lake District. At 89 he was too frail to travel the distance to Portsmouth for the Annual Reunion, so the Chairman arranged for a local newspaper to interview him on video which was to be screened at the Reunion. As the camera panned in on him alongside him was the ship's bell which he had converted into a table lamp. The search was over.

When Commander Donald died, his family handed back the bell to the Association and the bell was restored to its former state.

The Chairman told members of the Unit, VIP Guests and their families that since the Association had been formed they had lost forty eight of their members, four in the last three months. And as they wished to perpetuate the memory of their ship there was no better way than to hand over the bell to T.S. Hornet, whom they had formally adopted the previous year, for safe keeping. At the conclusion of the ceremony the cadets piped 'Up Spirits' and in true naval tradition gave all the H.M.S. Concord Association members present a tot of naval rum.

The bell will now be rung at their twice weekly parades and on other special occasions.



**Peter Lee-Hale**

### **The End of the Road**

So, this is it, the end of the road and what a journey it has been. H.M.S. Concord our favourite ship, launched on the 14<sup>th</sup> May 1945 and after an enlightening and exciting life was despatched to the breakers yard at Inverkeithing on the 22<sup>nd</sup> October 1962.

But that was not to be the end of her, she may have been broken up but in September 1994 her memory was resurrected by a handful of former crew members gathered at the 8<sup>th</sup> Destroyer Squadron Association Reunion in Scarborough. Thanks mainly, to the efforts of the late, Leading Stoker Doug Leeson, her memory was revived and in October 1995 an Association to remember her and the good times had by her crew throughout the Far East, was formed and was to last for a further fifteen years - fifteen years has it been so long? until we reached the end of the road. At our final Reunion I said in the words of the song 'The party is over and it's time to call it a day'. Now with thanks to the late Sir Harry Lauder I can borrow the title of his song "We've kept right on to the end of the road" and what a long road it has been.

Our inaugural first week-end Reunion in the Royal Sailors Home Club on the 26<sup>th</sup> October 1995 was a night to remember, and, thankfully, we had it filmed. You only have to view it, to see the looks of incredulity on some faces as members of all Commissions met each

other after, in most cases, over fifty years. That evening, and our Memorial Service the next day set the template for all future Reunions.

I had intended for it to be a memorable week-end but even I could not have imagined how memorable it was and how important that film was to become in later years. I had arranged for the Gosport Sea Cadet Unit, T.S. Hornet to provide the Guard of Honour for our President Lord Cottesloe and also to assist in "Calling the Roll" of those shipmates who had already "Crossed Over The Bar" at our Memorial Service. A duty they continued to provide whenever we held our Reunion in the South.

There were some very memorable and poignant Reunions in those fifteen years, and some more poignant than others but still poignant. The first that I recall was in Bridlington in 1998. The Bridlington Reunions were always held in the Conference Centre and in the main hall. On this occasion, at the commencement of the evening's festivities, I had lined up on the floor members of the first Commission as I had informed them that as the smartest they were to be awarded a special prize and after drilling them for a few moments, I said that not only would they receive a prize but a very special surprise. At that I called them to attention and in came their Captain Bill Donald the first Captain of Concord. He was in uniform and in a wheelchair but still insisted on climbing out to inspect his crew. Sadly Ray Edmondson who helped me spring the surprise is no longer with us. Had his home been modernised he might still be.

The next poignant Reunion has to be 2000 again at Bridlington when we had as our special guests the surviving crew members of the 1949 Commission of H.M.S. Amethyst. At those Bridlington Reunions I had adopted the practice of having each Commission's table sideways to the stage and at the commencement of the evening the President was escorted in by our Standard and Ensign. On this occasion the 1949 Amethyst crew members were also escorted in and lined up facing the tables with their back to the stage. I introduced each Commission table from the last to the first and their table was empty. I said that it wasn't because they did not wish to greet them, but they wished to do so in a very special way and asked them to turnabout which they did. At that point the curtains on the stage opened to reveal our 1949 crew but more importantly above them was a banner which depicted the signal the late Nigel Rodney had signalled to Amethyst, when Concord met her above the Woosung Forts. "Fancy Meeting You Again". The crew then came off the stage to meet the Amethyst lads for the first time after more than fifty years. There wasn't a dry eye in the house and had I had greater foresight to contact the press we would have had a great publicity coup, but perhaps it was just as well - it was a very private moment. Very few of those present were able to maintain their composure.

We held our penultimate Portsmouth Reunion in 2001 when I incurred the wrath of the Precentor who had forbidden filming and the singing of Jerusalem. I had obtained the services of the Portsmouth University Film Crew to film the elements of the Reunion. The young Director of the film crew was incensed when I informed him of the Precentor's directive. He subsequently went over his head and obtained permission. Result, the Precentor threw his rattle out of the pram and apart from the initial announcement and the end Blessing refused to conduct the Service, leaving me to do it (without robes of course). Again it was a poignant moment in time as shortly before the Reunion our mentor Doug Leeson finally lost his battle for life, and Newsletter No 26 was dedicated to his memory.

Back to Bridlington in 2002 and it will remain perhaps as an error of judgement on my part. Earlier in the year I had heard about the exploits of a former crew member of H.M.S.

Glamorgan who had saved her from capsizing after an Exocet attack. No one knew of this until her former Navigating Officer discovered this on researching his book of the incident. The powers that be, refused a retrospective award so an invitation was extended as our Guest of Honour for the Week-End. He arrived pissed and remained so throughout the week-end, managing to 'pull a bird' on the Sunday evening. Sadly, he fell foul of some people in his home town, and after moving in with his mother, her home was torched and she subsequently died. He recovered but I understand that he too, eventually died.

However all was not doom and gloom in 2002. On Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> June a number of us attended T.S. Hornet, Gosport Sea Cadet Unit, where we formally adopted them. A relationship which has continued, not just to the end of the Association but until we draw our last breath.

In 2003 we shifted our 'Flag' to Bournemouth and what a Reunion that turned out to be Thanks in the main to Bruce Macdonald Allan, who funded a greater part of it. The Mayor and Mayoress of Bournemouth were our special guests and we presented them with a framed picture of Concord for the Mayor's Parlour.

We also paid tribute to our President Lord Cottesloe for his support, both morally and financially, since his appointment at our inaugural Reunion. We managed to seek out former crew members of the various ships on which he had served, and produced them to him prior to the dinner. When I now think back to the organisation needed for this I think I must have been 'on something' for I certainly could not cope with that to-day.

Our tenth Reunion in Bridlington did not go too well, our numbers were down, just 105 (we could have done with those numbers towards the end). However what was worse, Jim Evans brother, was due to join us, but fell ill and died a few weeks later. Also Bill Dalton suffered a heart attack, and despite recuperating successfully subsequently succumbed.

What a Reunion 2005 turned out to be thanks to that magic phrase 'Lottery Grant' It was our tenth Anniversary, our eleventh Reunion and the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Launching of H.M.S. Concord. Alan Ausden was confirmed as Treasurer and what a great job he has done for the Association having had him 'up my sleeve' for a few years. As for that Lottery Grant, it put about £100 in every ones back pocket to spend, as the hotel etc. was covered by the grant. As it was our 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, I had managed to find a young pastry cook who made us a birthday cake, in the shape of Concord all three feet of it.

Although the weather was against us (Ceremonial Sunset had to be cancelled) the band of T.S. Tiger (Chippenham Sea Cadets) gave an impromptu display in the ballroom.

Having been unable to get the support needed from Bournemouth Churches (at this time) And with the surreptitious support of Bournemouth police, we staged our Memorial Service in the Bournemouth Upper Gardens, at the Cenotaph followed by a March Past. I'm still waiting to be taken into custody for an appropriate breach of H & S or Public Disorder.

Thanks to the son of the late Ollie Holdstock, the cover of our photographic week-end was an aerial view of the War memorial.

Again, T.S.Hornet provided a Guard of Honour for our President and T.S.Tiger the band for the March Past. Not only a truly memorable morning for us, but the Bournemouth public

afoot in the gardens at the time of the March Past. Thank you, Bournemouth Police who gave us 'the nod' but banned the Gay Pride March later.

When I look back to my notes in respect of the organisation of our 2006 Reunion and the difficulties they presented, these coupled with a few problems with the 8<sup>th</sup> Destroyer Squadron Association that year, maybe there is no wonder that I suffered a major heart attack, just a week after the 8<sup>th</sup> Reunion. I had been due to attend Sir Charles Mills Memorial Service in Aldbergh, Suffolk, but didn't feel up to the journey, now I know why. I know I am lucky to have survived that attack and had I been at home in Calne with the ambulance station some 13 miles away, my Doctor said to me I would not be writing this now. Fortunately I was staying with friends just 8 minutes from the ambulance station at the Oval, and subsequently a mile or so from Kings College Hospital. I guess Doug Leeson hadn't paid his tab yet at that hostelry in the sky.

After our impromptu Reunion Memorial Service in Bournemouth Pleasure Gardens in 2006, We were able to return to St Michael's Church at Poole Hill for our 2007 Memorial Service, and it was then that Lord Cottesloe our President, since the Association's inauguration handed over to Commander Rodney Agar of the 51 -53 Commission. During his acceptance speech, Rodney Agar was corrected by Lord Cottesloe, When he referred to him as the late President. Lord Cottesloe said "not yet! Past President"

It was also at this Reunion that Committee members, Ken and Rose Redrup retired along with Eddie Swales, who in later years had been so ably assisted by his wife Jean. The Association's gratitude must be extended to them along with all the other members who have served the Association through the years.

The names of all those who have served the Association in Committee have been detailed in full in this booklet.

The 2007 AGM regretfully decided that with the falling numbers attending Reunions, and the demise of members, that we should Decommission the Association with effect from the 2010 Reunion, which would be the 15<sup>th</sup> Year of the Association and which would coincide with the 65<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the launching of H.M.S. Concord.

At our 2007 Dinner we welcomed our Honorary Vice President Marianne Barratt, daughter of Rear Admiral Ian McLaughlan and her husband Geoffrey and in addition, Rear Admiral Tony Whetstone, the President of T.S. Hornet our adopted Sea Cadet Unit.

It was at this Reunion that Maureen and Len Dyer agreed to take over as Welfare Representative and Membership Secretary respectively. Since the Decommission of the Association, Maureen has continued to monitor the health of our members and keep us informed. The Association's grateful thanks Maureen.

Whilst I am saying thank you to members on behalf of the Association, a great debt of gratitude is owed to the Fenton family, Alan, Gwen and Lee their daughter who, over all the years have sacrificed part of their week-end to running the raffle, which has, on many occasions seen healthy addition to our funds.

After the Savoy Hotel (formerly Wallace Arnold) now Shearings ,decided they no longer wanted our custom (their excuse that we could not fill the hotel. The real one being they had changed their client profile) I discovered the Bay View Court Hotel on the

Bournemouth East Cliff. What a find, if we were still operating I am sure that would be the regular choice of all.

Although we were unable to fund the Cadets from T.S. Hornet for the weekend, to provide the Guard of Honour, they arose early on the Sunday Morning to 'get to the church on time' and they did, and performed very well before a well earned lunch afterwards they performed Ceremonial Sunset with Cadets from the Poole SCC Unit.

The Summer of 2009 saw members of the Association gathering in the village of Tandridge in Surrey for the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Yangtze Incident. The reason being that Commander Kerans was buried in the local churchyard. All ships involved in the 'Yangtze Incident' were invited. Whilst the 'four ships' only mustered four at most, Concord had over a dozen and formed a separate Guard of Honour for the attending Commodore. Afterwards everyone was entertained to lunch in the village hall. There was no doubt in anyone's mind that Concord 'fielded the day'.

And so we now reach our last Reunion, a sad occasion because so many who started the journey in October 1995 are no longer with us and many of those who are, are still with us just !!.

Our last Reunion was not as I had planned it, the many things that I had wanted to do, I could not, because we simply did not have the funds despite the generous contributions. I just wish I had had more energy to devote to our Lottery Application but it was not to be.

At the end of the day, I hope it passed muster. We had an excellent Friday evening in the Home Club, with an amazing number of members including our President and two Vice Presidents. Rodney Agar, Marianne Barratt and James Roe.

The Saturday evening Banquet was a fitting prelude to our Sunday Memorial Service in St Anne's Dockyard Church where we had held our first service fifteen years ago.

Not only were our President and all our Vice Presidents in attendance but we also had the Lord Mayor and Consort as our special guests, (both the Lord Mayor, and our Presidents speech is printed in the Final Reunion Report) and as the Banquet was being held in the Lord Mayor's Banqueting Suite, it carried additional credence.

Our Sunday Memorial Service in St Ann's Dockyard Church mirrored that of the one we held in 1995. The Organist at the age of 87, was the same one who played at our inaugural Memorial Service in 1995.

After the Service it was over to T.S. Hornet for a farewell lunch. T.S.Tiger, Chippenham Sea Cadets, of which I had been their PRO and Vice Chairman of their P & S Committee for a number of years, gave a Band Recital and then played for our final March Past, the Salute being taken by Admiral Sir Jeremy Black, a Midshipman aboard H.M.S. Concord and a former Commander in Chief Portsmouth.

At the conclusion of the March Past, our Ensign was lowered and the ship's Ensign was handed over to T.S. Hornet for safe keeping.

In due course, our H.M.S. Concord Standard will also be handed over to T.S. Hornet our adopted Sea Cadet Unit who already have in their safe keeping, the Ship's Bell, Lifebuoy, and Ensign.

Over these last fifteen years there have been a number of members who have made major contributions in their own way to our Association. I would like to name them but there are far too many and I would not wish to appear to favour any one above another save in a few exceptions.

The only surviving members of the steering Committee are Roy Butler, Ray Ingram and myself. The original Steering Committee elected in September 1995 were Doug Leeson Secretary/Newsletter Editor, Treasurer Mick Reed, Chairman Bill Daragon. Bill had a heart condition so, when I joined in January 1995 and Doug Leeson learned of my background, I was co-opted as Vice Chairman with the remit to seek out former crew members and organise the inaugural Reunion.

I obtained a copy of BRAD which lists all the papers in the U.K. and wrote several letters each week to them. I also contacted all the local BBC Radio Stations and was fortunate to be interviewed by most. By the time of the inaugural Reunion we had around 200 attending.

At the inaugural AGM, I was elected Chairman and Joe Savvery as Northern Area Representative, which makes us the only surviving Committee Members from 1995. Both Joe and I have faced life threatening illnesses, and we have come through, and I hope I speak for Joe too, that although by the time you receive this booklet our Association will finally have been disbanded, as long as we are able to draw a breath the name of H.M.S. Concord will be kept alive.

When it was decided that the time was arriving when we had to Decommission the Association, I felt that it was paramount that we should produce a book chronicling The Ship and the Association during its momentous years.

At the Decommissioning AGM on May 15<sup>th</sup> 2010 it was agreed that a winding up sub committee be formed consisting of Alan Ausden, Treasurer, Tony Strudwick, Newsletter Editor, Derek Hodgson and myself as Chairman of the Association to make up the winding up Committee. The Committee would produce a Decommissioning Booklet and wind up the Association's finances with any surplus being donated as universally agreed.

Since the Decommissioning of the Association in May 2010, your sub committee met on two occasions but were unable to progress too far forward due to the increasing illness, of the Concord Newsletter Editor Tony Strudwick.

On the 27<sup>th</sup> July Tony Strudwick intimated that due to his illness he could no longer make any contribution to the Decommissioning Book.

I therefore took the decision to hand over the major production of the Decommissioning Book to Alan Ausden and Derek Hodgson who, by this time had, between them and with the help of a family member produced a part completed 'dummy' for the Printer.

With the completion of this Decommissioning Book, it is the story of a Destroyer loved by every sailor to the end of their days. Each commission consisted of 168 Officers and crew from 1945 until 1958.

Many of these men, far too many, are no longer with us, and with each passing year our numbers are depleted but as long as there is just one crew member of H.M.S. Concord still alive, her memory will not diminish.

Some years ago in my naive eagerness I thought we needed a Concord song. I researched long and hard to no avail, then one day I came across some old papers and found a song that had been written some fifty years ago by an old friend. It was called 'These are the Times' that was it. In 2004 I think it was, I did a 'spot' at the 8<sup>th</sup> Sods Opera and finished with this song which was sung by the Concord members and the Sea Cadets.

These are the times we shall dream about, and we'll call them the good old days. When the years have rolled away we shall dream of the times we've had and songs we used to sing. So while we're together let us laugh at the weather and whatever the gods may bring, When all our years are just memories and the years bring the parting of the ways, then believe me fellers these are the times we shall dream about, and we'll call them the good old days.

So, in the words of Sir Harry Lauder, you, me, all of us have finally reached the end of the Concord road.

Well not really because as long as we are able to draw a breath the name of H.M.S. Concord will not diminish or disappear.

And, as you might expect there is always a postscript.

The campaign to recognise the true part played by the 1949 crew of H.M.S. Concord will not go away. I have researched much of the evidence over recent years and I anticipate that the evidence now being unveiled will not go away and it will lay bare the lies and duplicity of former Governments and Ministers, some who if they were still alive would undoubtedly be impeached.

How does one end the story of such a ship that was loved by so many, crews of hardened sailors, who had fought in wars, not necessarily of their countries making, yet could love a ship as if she were a girl friend or a wife, a sister even.

Many have seen the film the Yangtze Incident, the not so true story of H.M.S. Amethyst but, in conclusion, let me repeat again the words of Norman Hartnell in the film. When Concord came in sight he said to the Ordinary Seaman alongside him 'Look at her son isn't she just bloody marvelous.

Yes ! H.M.S. Concord was the most bloody marvellous ship we ever served in.

**Peter Lee-Hale**  
**Chairman October 1995 - May 2010**

### **Love Story – The Hammock**

The issue hammock, the beloved pusser's sack, one of man's most endearing inventions- has vanished, alas, from the navy messdecks and establishments. It has been replaced by the impersonal between deck bunk.

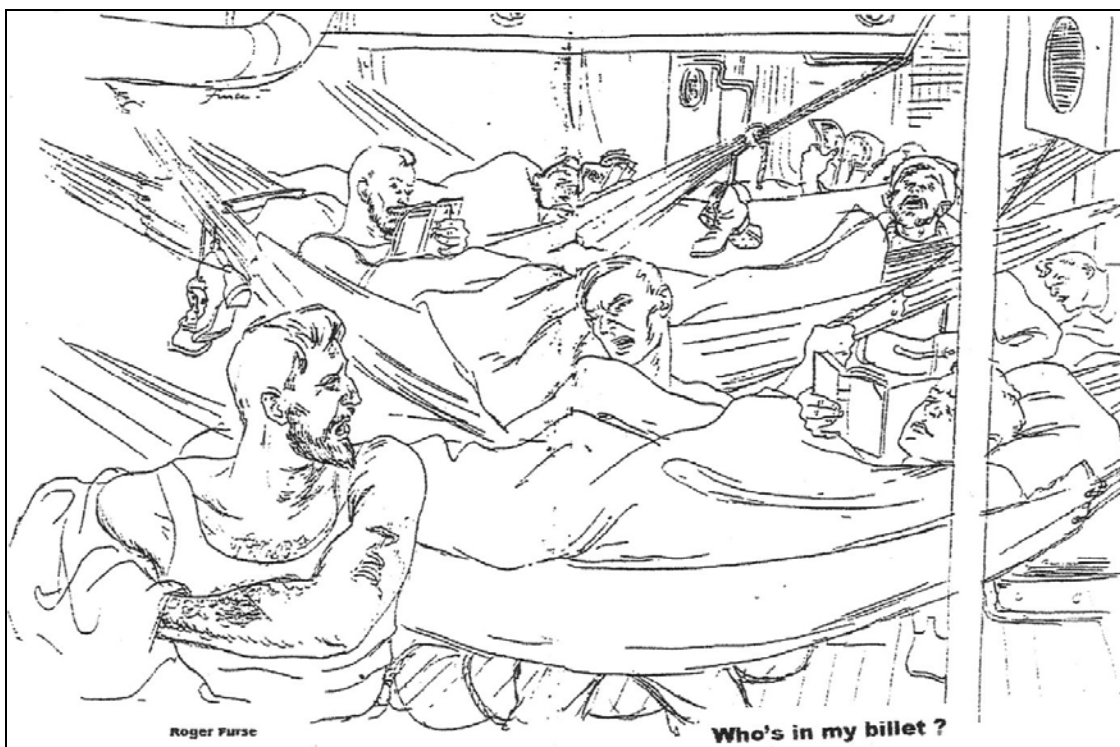
Those of us who have experienced the pleasures of the smug canvas cocoon have many a warm memory to share and treasure. To those who have sailed the stormy seas or who



have served ashore in many bases during the war years, and for some time after, the humble sack was perhaps the sailor's most important possession. It was much more than merely a sleeping contraption-it was extra storage and a great hiding place for a bottle of what you fancy or a stash of nutty. It was a clothes press, a reading room, sometimes a lifesaver to repair a damaged hull. Above all his hammock was jack's refuge in the constant welter of the confining messdeck. It offered an island of privacy in a press of togetherness. Slung high above the confusion, the occupant, secure in it's warm embrace, was magically transported from the madding crowd below.

The sailor's introduction to his hammock was generally an innocuous affair, after it was issued along with jumpers, singlets, bell bottoms, cap, blankets and other paraphernalia it was just one more item for the new sailor to lug to his sleeping quarters. Thereafter the uniforms were donned, extra gear stowed away, and the vast expanse of canvas was folded lengthwise. To this was added the thin bed sheet and two white issue blankets. Under the careful supervision of an old hand, the young sailor would go to work turning it into an inanimate object canvas to his best friend. First came the nettles and then the lanyards for each end. Then the virgin hammock was slung to waist level. The mattress put in place followed by the blankets. It was lashed up neatly and tucked in. All that remained to consummate the affair was a night together. On that first night, the frustration, slinging it at the right height and tension. The awkwardness, of trying to swing into it gracefully. Then once inside, the beast seemed to want to smother you and turn turtle. The blankets threatened to fall out or ball up. After many a furtive check to see if the knots were holding, the new matelot fell asleep until the morning. "Wakey wakey, rise and shine, the mornings bright the mornings fine" echoed around through the mess deck. It was the morning after the night before, the sailor had become committed to his hammock.

Over subsequent months he would fit it with a sturdy clew stretcher, liberate a pillow to his head, customise it, make it his own and give it its own personality. Yes! The sailor and his hammock... a love story deserving to be told.



## Poets Corner

### H.M.S. Amethyst

It is you who we admire.  
Your Officers and crew  
To survive the Communist's fire  
and your little friend, too  
Simon the rat catching moggie.

I must bring to your attention  
How could you ever forget your little doggie?  
It never got a mention.

With our armament at the ready  
In the balance it hung,  
Our course was sure and steady,  
Would there be a barrage at Woosung?

We stood by you with great care  
Until the open sea,  
You were pleased that we were there.

Now that you were free,  
Our ships secured alongside.  
We gave you fuel and you were fed  
Our sadness for you we could not hide  
But as the saying goes "enough said"

How could your Chairman be so vile,  
When men like Don and Joe  
Do their utmost to reconcile.

I give a toast to them that care  
From me, your ex Director Layer,

**Bill "Blackie" Black, L.Sea 49/51**

### So Tired

Oh little ship, a little ship, it is "Concord" on a trip,  
Up the East coast or the west, where e'er she goes she does her best,  
But with no mail to cheer the crew, you'll never know what they will do.  
On the "Commies" vent their spite and fire starshells most every night,  
This keeps the "Commies" wide awake, so sleep in the daytime they must take  
And while they sleep a peaceful day the Concord ups and sail away,  
The nightly shoot is quite a treat, but we must forget the Concord's sleep  
Kept awake nights by a gun and go sleep walking in the sun.

**Taken from "Poetical Moments" HMS book of poems, Korean waters Jan-April 1952.**

## **A Tale of Woe**

When God gave out brains,  
I thought he said trains and I missed one,  
When God gave out looks,  
I thought he said books, and I didn't want any,  
When God gave out cars,  
I thought he said beers, so I ordered two large ones,  
When God gave out noses,  
I thought he said roses, I ordered a red one,  
When God gave out chins,  
I thought that he said Gins, so I ordered a double,  
When God gave out heads,  
I thought that he said beds, so I asked for a soft one!!

**Anon**

## **Absent Friends**

Reunions will keen the mind as we remember absent friends,  
They bring a stark aware to those who've died and bring memories with no ends.  
Our thoughts reach out to shipmates past, their comradeships we treasure  
Drawn together in bond so close and a trust no one can measure.  
We think of shipmates now sick in health, some aged now and frail,  
We reflect upon our days of youth and with those whom we did sail,  
On watch together, messdeck days, duties, runs ashore,  
Comrades all in a ship so small as gales and tempests roar,  
We stood together as like one and covered for each other,  
That bulldog breed of long ago, we were there in times of bother,  
Those voices echo from the past and are anchored in our mind  
Time has ne'er severed the chain nor can break ties that bind,  
We still hear "Jock", "Ted", "Scouse" and picture as they were,  
We hear commands, "Action Stations", "Close Up", "Secure" and Aye Aye ,Sir .  
Ghostly thought from long ago, another time, and far off lands,  
Of shipmates who will still haunt the mind as like a "mustering of hands",  
Yes, reunions do keen the mind and as another ends,  
It daunts us not as our ranks reduce and we remember. "Absent Friends"

**Doug Leeson S.M. 52/53**

## **Requiem**

You smoothed my nerves and warmed my limbs  
And cheered my dismal heart,  
Procured my wants, obliged my whims  
And now it's time to part,  
And so the time has come old friend to take the final sup,  
Our tears are shed this is the end,  
So goodbye tot, and bottoms up.

**L.R.H. 31<sup>st</sup> July 1970**

## **I'm very well thank you**

There is nothing the matter with me,  
I'm as healthy as can be,  
I have arthritis in both my knees  
And when I talk- I talk with a wheeze,  
My pulse is weak and my blood is thin  
But I am awfully well for the shape I'm in  
Arch supports I have for feet,  
Or I wouldn't be out on the street,  
Sleep is denied me night after night,  
But every morning I find I am all right  
My memory is failing, my hearts in a spin  
But I am awfully well for the shape that I'm in.  
The moral is this- as my tale I unfold,  
That for you and me who are getting old  
It's better to say "I'm fine" With a grin,  
Than to let the folks know that the shape we are in.  
How do I know that my youth is all spent?  
Well "my get up and go" has got up and went.  
But I really don't mind when I say with a grin,  
of all the places "my get" up as been.  
Old age is golden, I've heard it said  
But sometimes wonder as I get into bed,  
With my ears in a drawer, my teeth in a cup,  
My specs on a table "till I get up"  
'ere sleep over takes me I say to myself,  
Is there anything else I could lay on the shelf?  
When I was young my slippers were red,  
I could kick my heels right over my head,  
When I was younger my slippers were blue  
And I could still dance the whole night through.  
Now I am older my slippers are black,  
I walk to the shops and puff my way back.  
I get up in the morning and dust off my wits  
And pick up the papers and read the "obits"  
If my name is still missing, I know that I am not dead,  
And so I have breakfast and go back to bed.

**Mike Paske AB 56/58.**

## **Low Power Switchboard Log**

As upon the seas you sway,  
Think of us back in the U.K.,  
And when you get to feeling chocker,  
Think end of watch,  
Back on your locker.

## **Follow Your Dream**

Your dream is like a ship on the ocean  
Sailing on a silvery sea  
Your dream can give you a reason to live  
And hope for eternity  
Your dream gives you a vision through darkness  
Lighting your pathway through life  
Giving you the strength to cope with at length  
The stresses, the pitfalls and strife  
Your dream gives you peace and contentment  
For your hopes at the rainbow's end,  
When you're wind blown and tossed and feel life is lost  
Your dream is still there at the end  
Your dream will be with you forever  
Propelling you onward each mile of the way  
When you've completed your scheme and captured your dream  
You will cease and just fade away.

**Doug Leeson**

## **Away Seaboat**

Peter Lee-Hale took this remarkable photograph, remarkable in the fact that anyone should be taking shots of an operation carried out many hundreds of times and catching it at the very moment it hit the sea.

It was in the dog watches when the whaler crew manned the boat as part of general exercises. The boat was lowered and all is well. "Out pins" was ordered, however only the bow released, and the bow dips into the sea, Panic stations. A modicum of order was quickly restored and some of the crew were ordered to climb the lines and get back inboard. It was 56 years ago so minds are a bit hazy, however it was believed that only the killick of the boat and one other were left. Someone could not climb the rope, Peter and two others were then despatched down into the boat climbing hand over hand down the falls. He was instructed to replace the pin so that the boat could then be re-hoisted, but there was a jam and the partial weight of the boat was preventing the pin being inserted. Eventually the weight was taken off, the pin re-inserted and they were told to exit the boat. One member was unable to climb the rope, and Peter, as a former gymnast climbed with him and supported him as he slowly made his way up the rope.

Peter cannot recall who the shipmate was, but he has been waiting all these years for the offer of a tot, however fears that it may be too late.



Sorry Chief, the pin fell out!

### **Peter Lee-Hale**

As related to Alan Ausden

### **Poor old Paddy Anderson**

It was when the sea boat was lowered to recover torpedoes that a tragic accident occurred. As usual, the lowering took place whilst the ship was slowly underway allowing the coxswain of the boat, after slipping, to steer immediately away from the ship. Unfortunately Paddy failed to notice that one of his feet was in the bight of a life line so that when the boat sailed away from the ship the bight became a noose around his ankle. The strain was tremendous and apart from being dragged overboard his foot was almost torn from his leg just leaving a shred of skin and flesh attaching to his leg. A rating from the sea boat dived in to help him but it took around 25 minutes for the ship to turn round to take him on board. LSBA "Doc" Gamble later stated that this long spell in salt water helped slow up the bleeding. Finally the ship came alongside Paddy and he struggled to climb the ladder which had been lowered, soon the lads on deck reached down and pulled him to safety. His leg was laid out on a large lint pad when he was taken to the sick bay.

All this occurred during "tot" time, and as Paddy's tot was on the table I asked if I could take it to him. "By all means" I was told, so I went aft to the sick bay, knocked at the door, "Doc" Gamble opened the door and I asked if Paddy could have his tot, "No" he said emphatically meantime dropping Paddy's foot onto the floor in front of me. The foot was as white as the gym shoe it was still in. This gruesome sight encouraged me to drink the tot myself. It failed to help the shock however.

Concord returned to Hong Kong at full speed and Paddy was taken straight to hospital. Much later Paddy boarded the hospital ship "Maine" and joined the wounded from HMS Amethyst for the journey home. A few of Paddy's friends went over to Kowloon to see him. Walking along the jetty, the port hole of the ward was on the same level enabling us to say our goodbyes to him. It was later decided by the ship's crew to donate all the prize money received for rescuing a Shell oil tanker from the Chinese Nationalists to Paddy.

I think that we are all inclined to forget the skill and care given by the sick berth attendants in small ships, it is a great responsibility for them to make decisions, as to how to treat many accidents and illnesses, decisions which would normally be made by a Doctor. Some help can be given by radio but that alone must have been difficult.

### **Bryan (Taff) Dixon AB 1948/50**

### **Sea Cadet Corps**

Since the inauguration of our Association we have had cause to call upon a number of Sea Cadet Units for help and assistance.

The following Units including our adopted Unit of T.S. Hornet have given of their help by providing Guards of Honour, Bands and Buglers

- |                |                           |
|----------------|---------------------------|
| T.S. Hornet    | Gosport Sea Cadet Unit    |
| T.S. Tiger     | Chippenham Sea Cadet Unit |
| T.S. Unseen    | Filey Sea Cadet Unit      |
| T.S. Kelly     | Hepburn Sea Cadet Unit    |
| T.S. Cleopatra | Harrogate Sea Cadet Unit  |
| T.S. Drax      | Poole Sea Cadet Unit      |
| T.S. Grimsby   | Grimsby Sea Cadet Unit    |

The Association has been most grateful for their support.

### **Peter Lee-Hale**



Gosport Sea Cadet Unit

## **The Epilogue**

This book has been the story of a ship and not just any ship a very, very special ship that captured the hearts and the minds of all the sailors who served in her from the time of her launching on the 14<sup>th</sup> May 1945 until her demise in the scrap yard of T.Ward at Inverkeithing on the 22<sup>nd</sup> October 1962. What followed is her story and that of Association spawned by the ship herself.

A very great debt of gratitude is owed to Derek Hodgson and Alan Ausden without whom this chronicle of the life of H.M.S. Concord and her subsequent Association would not have been produced.

When a serious illness struck Tony Strudwick it became apparent that he began to lose the concentration that he needed for collating information from his computer. Derek Hodgson, to assist him in order to carry out this task, visited him regularly over very many days to extract various details which we felt we needed for our book. Derek then trawled through all of our newsletters, and then having identified them on Tony's computer downloaded them onto CD's for the three of us to peruse and decide what material we needed. In turn, Alan was looking through our archives, which at present he has custody of, looking for more interesting information.

None of us can claim computer literacy in the true sense though, Alan has the edge on the pair of us by far. However for the finer points, Alan was able to turn to his two daughters, Helen and Claire who not only steered him on the right course but spent many hours themselves helping him unravel the intricacies of computers that had eluded us elderly sailors, thus enabling things to be put in order. For that help we all in the Association are deeply grateful to Helen and Claire.

It is hoped that this book has been an inspiration to our families, not only now, but when we are long gone and with their help, the name and the soul of H.M.S. Concord will live on.

**Peter Lee-Hale, Chartered FCIPD JP.  
Chairman 1995 – 2010**



## H.M.S. Concord Association – Committee Members

### Committee Members 1995 - 2010

#### **CHAIRMAN**

Peter Lee-Hale 1995 - 2010

#### **SECRETARY**

Doug Leeson 1995 - 1999

Joe Saverry 1999 - 2010

#### **VICE CHAIRMAN**

Joe Cooper 1996 - 2003

Mike Paske 2003 - 2005

Bruce Macdonald-Allan 2005 - 2010

#### **SLOPS OFFICER**

Ken Redrup 1996 - 1998

Eddie Swales 1998 - 2007

#### **TREASURER**

Mick Reed 1995 - 1996

Chris Green 1996 - 1999

Roy Bigden 1999 - 2001

Bill Powell 2001 - 2004

Peter Lee- Hale 2004 - 2005

Alan Ausden 2005 - 2010

#### **NORTHERN AREA REPRESENTATIVES**

Joe Saverry 1995 - 1999

Eddie Swales 1999 - 2007

#### **SOUTHERN AREA REPRESENTATIVES**

Roy Bigden 1995 - 1999

Bill Miller 1995 - 2001

#### **NEWSLETTER EDITOR**

Doug Leeson 1995 - 1997

Tomo Thomas 1997 - 1998

Doug Leeson 1998 - 2001

Peter Lee-Hale 2001 - 2003

Tony Strudwick 2003 - 2010

#### **STANDARD BEARER**

Terry Metcalfe 1997 - 2010

#### **ENSIGN BEARER**

Jack Tyreman 1997 - 2002

Ken Gordon 2002 - 2004

Ken Boyington 2004 - 2010

#### **MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY**

Ken Redrup 2001 - 2007

Len Dyer 2007 - 2010

#### **FUND RAISERS**

Gwen Fenton 1996 - 2010

Doreen Saverry 1996 - 1997

Alan Fenton 1997 - 2010

Amelia Samphire 1997-2010

#### **ARCHIVIST**

Chris Green 1995 - 1997

Mike Paske 1997-2010

#### **WELFARE OFFICERS**

Rose Redrup 2001-2007

Maureen Dyer 2007-2010

N.B. Ray Ingram was appointed Newsletter Editor at the inaugural AGM but subsequently was unable to take office due to illness.

At the September Reunion of the 8th Destroyer Squadron Association, members present who had served aboard H.M.S. Concord took onboard the suggestion from Mick Corbett the Secretary, that they should form their own H.M.S Concord Association. As a result, Bill Daragon was elected to Chair the Steering Committee with Doug Leeson as Secretary and Mick Reed as Treasurer.

Separately, Terry Metcalfe and Joe Savvery volunteered to seek out any 'old ships' living in the North.

In January 95, Peter Lee-Hale heard from Mick Corbett that an H.M.S. Concord Association was forming and was put in touch with Doug Leeson and was promptly co-opted as Vice Chairman to organise the Reunion and seek our former Concordians. Later in the year he co-opted Roy Butler and Ray Ingram to help him organise the Reunion. Earlier in the year, Bill Daragon became ill and was unable to attend any meetings.

## **Peter Lee Hale**

**August 2011**

## **Shipmates of the Year**

Shipmate of the year award, was instigated to show recognition to shipmates who have given outstanding service to our Association, albeit, financial, service or many hours of dedicated service on our behalf.

1995	Not awarded	
1996	Not awarded	
1997	George Thomas	51-53
1998	Colin Stewart	55-56
1999	Harry Russell	47-49
2000	Braz. Brazier	48-51
2001	Terry Metcalfe	49-51
2002	Jack Tyreman	47-49
2003	Bruce MacDonald Allan	56-58
2004	Eric Beeby	47-49
2005	George Wallis	51-53
2006	Alan Fenton	56-58
2007	Don Cave	52-54
2008	Pat Miller Mrs.	50-51
2009	Tony Strudwick	55-56
2010	Peter Lee-Hale	55-56

We thank all of the above shipmates, and, Mrs. Pat. Miller for their commitment to our Association over many years.

## HMS Concord to HMS Caledonia then to Inverkeithing

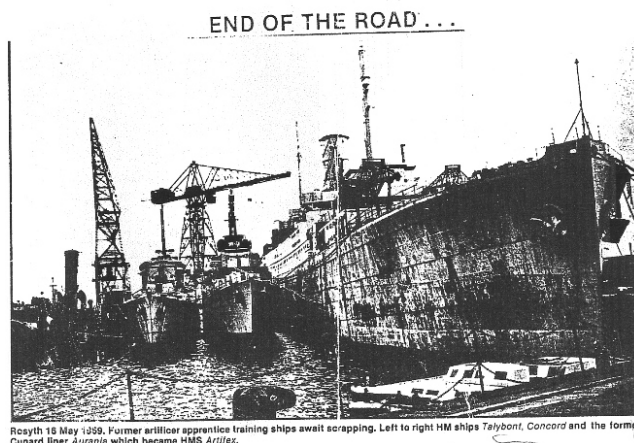
Before finally being sent to Inverkeithing for scrapping, the ship was used as an instructional unit for apprentices. The following are reports from two ratings recalling their memories from the time:

### Shipwright Bill Lowe;-

'Concord' was moved alongside the ship 'Talybont'. Stern to the jetty as a unit for the instruction of all apprentices. I was on loan to 'Caley' (HMS Caledonia) at this time filling in for Jack Warden who had been promoted to SD, and was looking after Shipwright apprentices doing Ship Practice & Systems. We used both ships to provide realistic situations for repairing all types of machinery and systems, as did all the other trades. The OA's decided to resurrect the upper deck torpedo tubes. A great deal of time and effort was expended until the tubes were declared operational and a torpedo was delivered and loaded into the tube. Everything was checked, a clear run was laid out across the basin, lower deck was cleared, the Captain and his retinue duly arrived to watch the last surviving upper deck torpedo to be fired, all safety checks were carried out with a heaving line attached to the torpedo so it could not hit the basin wall. The tubes were wound outboard, a TID stood by, then the firing button was pressed. The torpedo flew out of the tube into the water and submerged, we all held our breath until the torpedo surfaced right by the side of the ship going in a vertical direction cascading water all over the place. It turned out that the safety line had fouled the hydroplanes causing the near torpedoing of Concord by its own torpedo. The process was repeated some days later and a successful firing and run was achieved, but without an audience. Of course the Ordnance tiffys received a lot of ragging, but the success was never mentioned. It was all part of the rich history of the boy's arts as well as Concord.

### Alan Petrie- Secretary- Old Caledonia Artificer Apprentices Association writes:

In her last years HMS Concord was used as a harbour training ship, for Artificer Apprentice training in HMS Caledonia, Rosyth. She took over the role from HMS Talybont, a Hunt Class Frigate in about 1959. She was berthed in the dockyard basin. ERA Apprentices in the latter stages of their training would practice flashing up her boiler and main engines and conduct basin trials. OA Apprentices, would practice dummy operations on her armament, including firing dummy torpedoes across the basin. In one particular basin trial, I believe an ERA Apprentice was over enthusiastic in opening the main engine ahead throttle, to turn main engines, causing Concord to break her mooring ropes and career across the basin. I don't think the damage was too serious, (only to reputations) but I should imagine the resident Chief ERA or Engineering Officer was in real trouble. There we are, our ship was game to the last!!



## Appendix 1 - HMS Concord & The Yangtze Incident

(Since 1949, it has been widely believed that after making her escape HMS Amethyst was met at the mouth of the River Yangtze by HMS Concord. The discovery by Mr. Willie Leitch of West Lothian, Scotland, of a letter by Cdr. Peter Dickens RN, and copies of signals issued by the Commander in Chief, Far East Station, have proved that Concord played a much bigger role than hitherto believed, and was placed in a very dangerous and risky situation.)

In 1950, Lawrence Earl published his book entitled *The Yangtze Incident*. He told how at 0930 on 20<sup>th</sup> April 1949, HMS Amethyst on her way to Nanking on the River Yangtze, carrying supplies for the British Embassy, and to make a routine change over with HMS Consort, was fired on by the Chinese People's Liberation Army who were about to cross the river in their fight for the control of China. Amethyst was hit several times and was driven aground on Rose Island: she sent out a flash signal to all ships in plain English "Under heavy fire. Am aground: large number of casualties".

Consort, at Nanking, read the signal and immediately sailed down river to assist. She fired on the Communist batteries but received heavy fire in return, and suffered serious casualties. She herself was in danger of sinking and so sailed away down river. HM Ships London and Black Swan came up river to see what they could do, but after taking casualties, they were retired.

Amethyst managed to free herself from Rose Island and sailed (as ordered by The C-in-C, Far East Station) 10 miles further up the river towards Nanking in order to get away from a PLA battery San-chiang-ying. On reaching this point, Amethyst was fired on by Nationalist machine guns situated on the South bank. It was realised then that Communists could destroy the Amethyst any time they chose to do so. Eventually at 1300 on 23<sup>rd</sup> April, Amethyst anchored opposite Ma-chia-shaw and there she remained, closely guarded by the guns of the PLA, until the 31<sup>st</sup> July.

In all, and in all ships, 45 were killed and 111 were wounded.

One of those killed was Lt.Cdr. B.M. Skinner, the Commanding Officer, of the Amethyst. He was replaced by Lt. Cdr. J.S. Kerans, the Assistant Naval Attache at Nanking. Whilst the PLA crossed the river both ahead and astern of Amethyst, Kerans quickly set about repairing whatever possible in the ship, and restoring morale. On the 26<sup>th</sup> April negotiations began with Major Kung, the Battery Commander from San-chiang-ying. He declared that this situation should never have happened had Amethyst not fired first. Negotiations for the release of Amethyst continued for some time without success.

Meanwhile, C-in-CFES, Admiral Sir E.J. Patrick Brind, KCB, CBE, was considering what action he should and could take. By the 9<sup>th</sup> July he and his staff officer, Operations, Cdr. Peter Dickens had "become worried that Kerans was nearly at breaking point having been mentally tortured for so long".

They did not think that Kerans was the right sort of character for escaping and he had never shown the slightest sign that he considered his duty to be more than sticking where he was and never giving in. However on that day, Amethyst signalled C-in-CFES "Would be grateful your advice please on my actions if menaced by Typhoon". This seemed to C-in-CFES to be a most elementary question from a sailor and the CinC hoped that there was something to be read between the lines. He replied "Typhoons unlikely to reach you in

serious strength and you are in good holding ground. The golden rule of making an offing and taking plenty of sea room applies particularly". These signals were made in plain language as Amethyst had destroyed her code books. However, the CinC had read Amethyst 's signal as requesting permission to break out if opportunity offered.

Amethyst had read CinC's signal as giving approval. CinC FES's purpose at this stage was not to get the Kerans to move at all costs, as negotiations were to be no means hopeless, and the most important thing was that Kerans must himself be confident. The CinC wanted Kerans to know that he (the CinC) would take responsibility but that must be Kerans alone. This was very difficult to do in plain language with the enemy listening in. Then the Flag Lieutenant thought up the means of setting up a code which offered good short term security. This code was to tell Kerans that "my previous two signals refer to the possibility of breaking out at your discretion". Kerans was left to escape if, and when he thought fit.

On 24<sup>th</sup> July, with a typhoon impending, Amethyst signalled "If cable parts will run for it, and if wrecked and salvage impossible, will blow up ship". CinC FES knew then that escape was imminent.

At 0902 on 27<sup>th</sup> July, HMS Concord left Hong Kong in company with HM Ships Cossack (with the Captain D of the 8<sup>th</sup>.Destroyer Flotilla on board). Comus and Constance. The four ships exercised with each other and with HMS Jamaica. Concord was then detached by D8 to act independently whilst the other ships proceeded to Sasebo in Japan. On the 29<sup>th</sup> she rendezvoused with HMS Hart and transferred stores and a draft of 7 ratings. At 0555 Concord hoisted white ensigns at both yardarms and arrived at the Yangtze entrance at 1115. She anchored at two hours notice for steam. Ostensibly she was on patrol in order to deter the Nationalists from interfering with British shipping, but it is highly likely that she had been designated much earlier by the CinC to be on hand should Amethyst make an attempt to escape.

At 1557 on 30<sup>th</sup> July, Amethyst signalled CinC FES stating that she was going to try and break out at 2200 that night. Admiral Brind and Cdr. Dickens paced Belfast's quarterdeck reviewing the situation. As Kerans had not asked for advice or orders and appeared to have made up his mind quite firmly, it was decided not to do anything to worry him. CinC FES repeated Kerans Signal to Concord and a couple of hours later signalled Concord, D8, F0 2IC and Admiralty " 1, Amethyst may break out tonight. Information incomplete. 2 Concord to remain at short notice to go above Woosung. Concord and Amethyst would then lay up in daylight and come down past Woosung at night. 3. D8 with available destroyers may be required to close Yangtze entrance at short notice. Take no action yet as secrecy is vital. 4. Further signal follows".

With nothing further to be done in the interim, CinC FES and his staff went to the dinner party on board and on completion of the meal, Flags went off to organise his signalmen and SOO laid out his charts. Shortly afterwards, Dickens tells his father, the FO 2IC of the Far East Fleet (Vice Admiral A.C.G. Madden) and some of his staff came aboard Belfast.

Amethyst slipped at 2200, half an hour later she signalled "Am under heavy fire and have been hit". To the Admiral it seemed quite like the reports of the original action in April which had been followed by reports of casualties, grounding, etc. Had the staff been fools in not assessing the risks of escape? Then gradually it appeared that it might have been worse. It was obvious that Amethyst was underway and had made the difficult turn and any guns at night were not likely to be that accurate. A spark of hope crept back.

Meanwhile Admiralty (Personal from the Sea Lord) had signalled CinC FES saying that a break out should not (repeat) not be attempted without further reference to Admiralty and asking if there were any new circumstances which had arisen which encouraged FES to believe such action was likely to succeed now. CinC FES replied that Amethyst should have already slipped by now on his own initiative and that he always thought Keran's chances good, provided he was personally confident.

At 2242 Amethyst was still under heavy fire and had just passed Aspigle Point. Eight minutes later she was off Rose Island. Wonderful news. The staff were pretty sure that there were no more guns until Kiang Yin which Keran's would not reach until 0100 at her present speed, which must have been about full. The problem of whether to send Concord up to meet Amethyst was now discussed by the Staff. The main point was that Woosung Forts might be expected to be fully alert by the time she got there and some efficient gunnery might just make the difference. If Amethyst got stuck up river - what then? The Air Officer Commanding agreed to bring two Sunderlands to immediate notice. CinC FES then signalled Concord and D8 (Repeat ADMIRALTY & FO21C). 1. Concord to close Kiutoan Light Vessel (bringing her to about 20 miles below Woosung) and await orders. 2. D8 with Flotilla close Yangtze. Amethyst slipped at 2200 and came under fire"

Amethyst passed Yung-an-chow at 2316 and passed Bate Point at 0024. Then in reply to CinC FES enquiry as to how she was, Amethyst replied at 0036 "So far O.K." At Kiang Yin the river narrows to about 1500 yards and as expected, Amethyst came under fire and again when she reached the boom at 0109. There were no reports of hits, however. The boom was a line of blockships with a narrow gap in the centre. There were no further reports from Amethyst and the staff began to breathe again. Kerans signalled that she swashalf way. "Splendid", replied the Admiral. "If you cannot get above 10 miles past Woosung before dawn suggest you either lay up during daylight or take the Tsung Ming Crossing and North Channel which should be navigated at slow speed"

At 0145, Concord weighed and proceeded up river at 20 knots. She anchored near Kiutoan Light Vessel at 0253 and reported her position to CinC FES. At 0220 she had spoken to a Chinese Nationalist Warship near Tungshan Bank buoy.

At 0300 the staff finally decided on Concord's role. CinC FES signalled to Concord that she was to close Clump Wreck Buoy and if Amethyst passes Woosung near dawn, to support her by engaging the batteries if they opened fire. Concord was instructed not to go above identified batteries except in emergency. The last sentence was rescinded a few minutes later when FES realised that he had tied Concord down too much. Instead she was told not to go above Quarantine Buoy, except in emergency, and that smoke may be useful, Concord was also told, in a separate signal that there was no recent intelligence of the batteries: they used to extend intermittently from Woosung to Kiutan Beacon. Woosung Forts has heavy guns.

AT 0345, Concord weighed and proceeded up the river. Five minutes later, Amethyst signalled Concord saying that she was at Centaur Lower Buoy and that Concord should come quickly. This sounded alarming to FES, but all it meant was that he was early on his ETA. There were no navigational errors now, but CinC FES was still worried about Woosung Forts. Flags drafted a signal to Major Kang from CinC FES "Wot no Amethyst" but this was suppressed before Admiral Brind saw it.

Concord had been at Action Stations shortly after 2200, but at 0431 the order was given for night action stations: Concord was also in danger now. 0443 and CinC FES signalled to Concord "If you see Anchises, and Caroline Muller, tell them to go down river as quickly as possible" (Anchisis, a blue funnel liner, had been bombed, fired on and forced ashore by Chinese Nationalist Mustang fighter aircraft earlier in the month). However, Concord had already seen them before she had entered the river and so told CinC FES that they had gone.

At 0445 Concord passed SE Knoll Buoy and proceeded at 16 knots. At 0503 Amethyst reported Woosung in sight. Cdr. Dickens had a bottle of champagne put on ice. Everything seemed to be going well but the guns at Woosung had still to be passed. It was expected that the next signal from Amethyst would be that she was under fire again, and maybe the same from Concord too.

Then from Amethyst at 0529 "Concord in sight." "Never (repeat) never has a ship been more welcome". Concord had seen Amethyst on her radar at 0525 when she was three miles away shortly after Concord reached Fort Blockhouse Buoy at 0510. At 0535, Concord with Amethyst on her starboard quarter and 10 cables from each other and likely split for the mouth of the Yangtze.

At 0547, Amethyst sent her famous signal that she had rejoined the Fleet south of Woosung.

CinC FES replied "Welcome back to the Fleet. We are extremely proud of your most gallant escape and that endurance and fortitude displayed has been rewarded with success. Your bearing and your daring passage tonight will be epic in the history of the Navy" Dicken's champagne was poured while dawn was just lighting up the scuttles.

At 0600, CinC FES signalled to the British Ambassador at Nanking and the Ass. Naval Attaché at Shanghai, "At approximately 2200 yesterday, Saturday. HMS Amethyst got under way coming under heavy fire as she did so and proceeded down river. She was again fired on off Kxangoin. At 0520 today Sunday, she was met off Woosung by HMS Concord and reported that she had rejoined the Fleet with no damage or casualties. Further signal follows. Nanking immediately signalled the Foreign Office to say that (a) No (repeat) no publicity should be given to the fact that HMS Concord entered Chinese territorial waters: (b) Amethyst in getting under was forced to reply to fire directed at her by shore batteries. It should stressed that she did so to the minimum necessary for self protection and (c) It might help to lessen the possible repercussions upon British Communities in Communist occupied territory, if public statements could stress that the escape of Amethyst was due to the initiative of the officer in command, in accordance with the best traditions of a sailor responsible for the safety of his ship and the welfare of the ship's company, and that his intention to do so was not revealed to any of us out here. As the Communists have refused to deal with HM Embassy in the matter which they have, in fact, insisted upon treating as a local issue for discussion between the PLA and the RN, such a statement on our part is logical and cannot repeat harm persons concerned.

At a press conference in Singapore on 6<sup>th</sup> August 1949, Admiral Brind seems to have complied with this request. He said that Amethyst joined Concord at the mouth of the river, where she had been waiting there, and would have been detailed to silence shore fort guns at Woosung. He also paraphrased the famous signal and left out the words "south of Woosung". He simply said "rejoined the Fleet, no damage or casualties. God save the

King". (At 1000 on 2<sup>nd</sup> August, the Captain of Concord had lower deck cleared and informed the ship's company that they must not tell of their experience when ashore).

The reticence to speak of Concord's actual role appears to have persisted through the years. In his "The decline of British Seapower" published in 1982, Desmond Wettem omitted the words "south of Woosung" from Keran's signal. Eric J. Groves in Vanguard to Trident".... and the forts at Woosung at the river mouth were safely passed. Just as dawn broke, Amethyst and Concord met after passing the forts. Malcolm H. Murfett in "Hostage on the Yangtze" related that Admiral Brind had said (off the record) that Concord had trained its guns on the Woosung Forts and that a whole flotilla of destroyers were closing in to join her. This statement was later retracted and a statement was made that Concord was only waiting at the mouth of the river. This obviously obfuscation continued and on the 18<sup>th</sup> November 2007, the Rt. Hon. Bob Ainsworth MP, the then Defence Secretary, wrote in a letter to Mr. William Leitch's MP "By the time Amethyst reached Concord's position at the mouth of the River Yangtze on the morning of 31<sup>st</sup> July 1949, she had succeeded in making her escape. "Finally in a recent review of records pertaining to the eligibility of Concord to the Yangtze 1949 clasp to the General Service Medal (1915) made by the Naval Command, it was admitted that Concord had entered the Yangtze to be on hand to assist Amethyst by providing gunfire support if the Chinese fort on the river bank at Woosung attempted to interfere with Amethyst's escape. It did not say, however, that Concord had proceeded as far as the Quarantine Buoy, two miles directly north of the centre of the main Woosung Fort, having passed smaller forts and Communist Batteries believed to be situated between Kiutoan and Woosung and that both ships risked being fired on by the same batteries on their way down river. A half hour after passing Kiutoan Light Vessel at 0640, both ships reduced speed to 10 knots. Action stations were secured at 0715. The great danger of both ships on being fired on by the forts at Woosung and suffering many casualties, perhaps even being sunk or driven aground in Yangtze's treacherous water, was over. The risk for both ships being real. It might never be known why Woosung Forts did not fire on the British ships. I believe that they were as relieved to see them depart the Yangtze as we were.

At 0815, after passing the Yangtze Light Vessel, two attempts were made to secure both ships alongside each other were unsuccessful owing to the tide. So they headed for the Saddle Islands, anchoring alongside each other at Midday on Sunday. 1<sup>st</sup> August. Main engines were rung off and notice was given for two hours notice for a steam. Canteen stores and 147 tons of fuel oil were transferred from Concord to Amethyst. The order was issued to Make and Mend clothes, and at about 2030 both ships sailed from Saddle Islands. Amethyst was later met by Cossack and escorted to Hong Kong: Concord sailed for Sasebo to rejoin the flotilla.

The ship's companies of HM Ships Amethyst, London, Consort and Black Swan were awarded the Naval General Service Medal with the Yangtze clasp. The ship's company of HMS Concord were not, perhaps because she had not been fired on and therefore had suffered no casualties. However, the danger and risk had been real.

**Anthony Lonsdale**



## **Appendix 2 – Shipmate’s Individual Memories of the Yangtze Incident**

### John Shephard

I was a boy seaman and closed up on X gun during the Yangtze incident, and I vividly recall that I was very worried that the action would take place, We all knew about the 6” guns at Woosung Fort and the damage they could inflict on us. As we moved up river, for what seemed hours we sighted Amethyst and her signal. As she got closer the damage to her superstructure became clear and also attempts to disguise her outline, we turned and made our retreat downriver. I remember our wake being very high so our speed through the shallow water must have been very high. Once outside the river she came alongside and we fuelled her and gave her what fresh stores we had. I remember that we ate a lot of dried cabbage after she went to Hong Kong, escorted by Cossack which did not please us.

### Walter Sells Stoker 1948/50

We were at anchor, our role was to advise merchant shipping and help them to run the blockade created by the presence of both nationalist Destroyers, much of the time creating a Cold War in the far East not to be recognised by Britain until 11<sup>th</sup> February 1950.

At 2200 hours I went on watch in the Gear Room. At 2359 hours I was due to come off watch but at the hatch I was met by the Chief Stoker who informed me that Concord was being sent up the river to assist Amethyst in its escape, and would I remain on watch in the Gear Room, as my relief was a young inexperienced lad. As it required only one person to carry out this watch it must be an experienced hand and that meant me. I remained on watch until 0800 hours when I was finally relieved. I then had a much needed shower and shave before going up on deck at 0900 hours. It was then that I noticed all the towing wires stretched out. I knew nothing of the happenings through the night until then.

I then returned to my mess to find stokers from Amethyst being fed and made welcome. We put a stoker steaming party on board the Amethyst. I was delighted to find one of their stokers, like me, came from Nottingham. We were then sent up to Machuria by Cossack, who , much to our disgust escorted Amethyst back to Hong Kong, a task we would have liked to do ourselves.

During the forenoon we heard on an Australian radio broadcast stating that Concord had gone upstream to escort Amethyst down the Yangtze river without incident. As I said before, it took until the 11<sup>th</sup> February 1950 before it was decided who to recognise.

### Terry Metcalfe 1949/1951

My recollections of the assistance of HMS Amethyst by our ship are still a remembrance after so many years have passed, and being at a younger age. We knew of “Amethyst’s” situation but what happened came out of the blue, our job was to see her out of the Yangtze River.

During the month of July we were on patrol in that area and on the 30<sup>th</sup> of the month the crew were busy getting the necessary gear for to tow. One or two diversions but then we proceeded up the river.

I was mostly at my Action Station on "A" gun as Ammunition Tray Loader. It was a very long night till daybreak but by then we had Amethyst covered from possible gun fire from shore.

Later at anchorage we supplied stores, fuel and food etc. We were not with her to Hong Kong, despatched to other duties and told that we were never there and to keep quiet. Who knows things could have gone very wrong.

#### Bryan (Taff) Dixon 1948/50

At dusk, we were anchored at the mouth of the Yangtze. I was duty Quartermaster and was ordered to go round the ship and say by word of mouth (and not to Tannoy as the sound would carry over the water) that we would be upping anchor in the first watch and would proceed up river at action stations, the normal action station alarm would not be sounded for the same reason as not piping.

We upped anchor about 2200 and made our way up river. Some time after midnight we were challenged by another ship but the skipper, Lt. Comm. Rodney talked us out of trouble with one or two "porky's" so we steamed up river.

After what seemed a long tense time dawn started to break and it began getting lighter then, suddenly, it was reported that Amethyst was in sight, she seemed to be coming overland owing to the bend in the river. At last she was in full sight. Later when we were alongside each other at the mouth of the Yangtze the crew told us that they nearly opened fire on us. Owing to the shallow water in the river, Amethyst being a shallow draft boat was at full speed. But Concord, being a destroyer could not show enough water and could not catch up with her for a while but eventually we did and got between her and the Woosung Forts. I have photographs before we reached the forts taken with a brownie camera in daylight so how the forts could have shone searchlights on her, I cannot fathom. It was said they shone twice. Joe Cooper said "someone was shining down on us during the morning watch!" Our ships log was taken out of service and put in a safe and we were issued with a new one.

He finished his account by saying that when they returned to Hong Kong, they were ordered not to talk about the incident.

#### W.H.Gray A.B. 1948/50

My memories of this well publicised incident are still very clear in my mind, we were in a war zone heading for one of our ships that had suffered terrible damage and loss of life. Naturally we were heading into the unknown, could the same thing happen to us? I was closed up on the after 4.5" gun, my duty was communication rating. I can repeat my duty, like a parrot. "T.S. Y GUN, Y GUN CLOSED UP AND BORE CLEAR". Only this time there was no talking for communication, and no smoking, as we were on silent running. Yes it was scary and when your gun has been hit with shrapnel in the past, another story, you do say a silent prayer. We had a shell up the breech, all ready, but thank goodness we did not need to defend ourselves. We had a good Captain and Navigating officer, who under the cover of darkness took us to meet the damaged Amethyst way up the Yangtze.

We could see the terrible damage to the vessel, hammocks stuck into the damaged ships side. Our cameramen had a field day taking photographs for the history books.

When cleared we anchored together, gave them fuel and stores. As I was the Concord's butcher I took my opposite number down to the freezer and gave them supplies to last for the sail to Hong Kong.

After that we were not allowed to escort Amethyst to Hong Kong, as Captain "D" Cossack took over. We heard afterwards that the Admiralty did not want the crew of Concord going ashore in Hong Kong and saying what had happened.

#### Roy Butler A.B. 1948/50

HMS Concord was one of several Far East destroyers and frigates used to guard and patrol the mouth of the River Yangtze after HMS Amethyst was fired on by the Chinese Nationalists, and consequently held in captivity about 168 miles up the Yangtze River.

The Yangtze is a very fast flowing river, even at the width of the mouth. Concord was anchored in the middle of this mouth, and the crew was warned especially of falling overboard in this 6/7 knot current. There was no shore leave. And time passed very slowly for the ship's company while on this very boring duty. To help pass the time, we organised games of deck uckers, cribbage and tombola, all these were played on the upper deck during the dog watches, but the time still dragged.

Then, during the late afternoon of the 30<sup>th</sup> July, a merchant vessel flying the Red Ensign called for assistance, having been challenged by a Chinese Nationalist naval ship. Our motorboat was lowered and took one of our officers across to the merchant ship to mediate with the Chinese. As I remember, this took some time, and it was late evening before the officer returned and we were called out to hoist the motorboat inboard. After this piece of rare excitement it was time to "pipe down", and as the weather was mild, I turned in on a camp bed on the upper deck.

Shortly before midnight we received a rude awakening from the ship's tannoy system calling hands. The buzz soon went around that Amethyst was to make her break for freedom. This buzz was confirmed while we were still lashing up our hammocks and stowing beds, a general pipe was made to all upper deck personnel and all gun crews to draw anti-flash gear. This pipe caused some consternation to the Gunners Yeoman as he could not find the keys to either of the shell room or the Gunners Store. However these keys were eventually found in the stoker's mess, much to the delight of the stokers and the relief of the Gunners Yeoman.

The locating of these keys had taken some time, during which the ship had weighed anchor and proceeded towards the narrow part of the river. We were informed that the main cause of concern for us would be the guns of the shore batteries at Woosung. These guns were on the southern bank of the river, and I still don't know whether they were Nationalist or Communist. We then dropped anchor again at 0255 in a position best suited to cover any eventuality. Meanwhile the crew sat waiting in the mess deck for the call to action stations. I was still an ordinary seaman at that time, and not yet 18. I can still remember the thoughts going through my mind. As a member of B guns crew, I was of course well practiced in the operation of the gun, but this was beginning to look like my first taste of real action, where people would be shooting back at us.

At 0345 we again weighed anchor and headed toward the narrows. Then at 0435 the pipe was made "Hands to night action stations" Having closed up, and completed the preparatory work to bring the guns to the action state, the gun crew, with the exception of

the Layer, Trainer and Communication number, stood on the gun deck outside the turret looking out to see if we could catch a sight of Amethyst. She was detected on radar at 0512, was in visual sight at approximately three miles. The Captain of Concord, Lt. Cdr. Rodney signalled by light "Fancy Meeting you again" To which Amethyst replied "Never, Never has a ship been more welcome". The tension now relieved, a small cheer was raised.

Concord took station on Amethyst's starboard beam to shield her from the guns at Woosung, however not a single shot was fired. We then escorted Amethyst to the Saddle Islands where at about 1200 on Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> July we both dropped alongside each other. Oil fuel, general provisions and canteen stores were then supplied to Amethyst. One thing that sticks in my mind on that afternoon was seeing two young members of Amethyst's crew coming across and requesting directions to our canteen where they wanted to buy chocolates and goffers.

At 2000 that evening we slipped from Amethyst, and weighed anchor, as did she. We then proceeded on a southerly course in company. On the next day we were met by Captain D8 in Cossack who relieved us and escorted Amethyst into Hong Kong thus depriving Concord of any glory. Apparently there was a political reason for this, but that's another story.

The fuel oil used by Amethyst in her escape was obtained by negotiation with the Communist authorities from a supply landed at Nanking in 40 gallon drums by Concord in January 1949. The drums were filled by the stokers and swung ashore by Jack-stay before being rolled into a building adjacent to the jetty. About 100 tons of oil was transferred in this way, and as newly joined boys we were doing the rolling back and forth. It was a very long and tiring Day.

#### Gordon Wright O.S. HMS Amethyst

It was still dark, it did not start getting light till half past five in the morning. I then heard Kerans say that if we got to Woosung Fort it would be the most critical point of the breakout because they had 9" guns which could blow us out of the water if they caught us in their searchlights. Then we heard him say "Woosung in sight" I had my fingers crossed. We got past them, they must have been asleep or something or the communications were bad. Their big guns did not fire. Kerans then announced over the intercom; I want every man to give everything for the last leg.

While we were passing Woosung, Concord was there. They had been told that if Woosung ever started firing at us they were to blast at its guns. There was cheering of course when it came by. I don't know how we did it, I never thought for one minute we were going to make it, it was beyond my wildest dream.

*(The Royal Navy 1939 to the Present Day' by Max Arthur)*

### Appendix 3 – Memories of D-Day 6<sup>th</sup> June 1944

When I sailed out in command of the destroyer “Ulster” in force G officially on exercise-we all knew pretty well that it was the real thing. I personally had received a ciphered signal indicating that D-Day would be June 5<sup>th</sup>. As we steamed down the Firth in a depressing drizzle, I suddenly remembered it was my daughter’s sixth birthday. I wondered if I should ever see her again.

As we steamed up Channel, on the afternoon of 5<sup>th</sup>. June from every port and inlet on the south coast, there poured out convoy after convoy of craft of every shape and size, sailing in accordance with the minute to minute programme of the vast operation. There were ships visible in all directions for miles and miles, and it seemed impossible that the enemy could not find out that the invasion forces were on their way at last.

About 6pm we in “Ulster” were passing close inshore along the Dorset coast. The English countryside was clearly visible in its perfect summer setting; among the checkerboard panorama of grass land and crops, the farms and cottages showed up white in the evening sunshine. Little wisps of blue smoke rose vertically from their chimneys in the still, warm air. It was England at her best bidding us all a farewell on this great adventure. And just before dusk there happened something else that was typically English- the Admiral made a signal to his ships in Force G, the ships were to carry out the bombardment next morning. He knew well enough what we were feeling like; he knew that if we could batter down the defences before our troops landed, their casualties would be reduced enormously, he knew also that we had no easy task and that hundreds, if not thousands, of British lives depended on the accuracy of our gunfire. It was a great responsibility for us. He might have made a long and platitudinous signal, but it so happened that he was a keen cricketer, and his message was short and simple. It read “Best of luck to you all. Keep a good length and your eye on the middle stump, and we will soon have the enemy all out” That was the sort of signal that made every man say to himself, “My God we will”. It made us on board “Ulster” more than ever before determined to put up a good show. Personally, I thought it ranked with Nelson’s famous signal before Trafalgar.

The excitement on board was intense; men spoke in whispers as though the enemy might hear them ninety miles away; the words of Henry V ran through my mind all night-“Once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more... as the minutes ticked by so appallingly slowly. It seemed an age before we reached the little green flashing clan buoys halfway across, where the swept channels through the minefields started. We glided past the first one, with all M.L. sitting patiently there like a policeman on point duty, and altered course five degrees to starboard. Apart from the navigational problem, the thought of our task on the morrow weighed heavily on my mind. For the hundredth time I studied the orders under the shaded light on the chart table. We had to anchor literally within yards of our appointed spot and then knock the hell out of those forts; the fort whose photo I had gazed at so often during the last few days. Unless our shells dropped on those two pinpoints on the chart, we would fail in our duty. If only we weren’t mined first! For I remembered some words at the final conference. “The destroyers will lead the way, of course. If the minefield hasn’t been properly swept, it will be cheaper to lose a destroyer than a cruiser. “Ulster was leading one section of Force G. Slowly the night dragged on. Suddenly the Sub lowered his binoculars and turned to me. “Land in sight, sir” he said quietly. The tension on board was terrific, and as if to encourage us even more, a continual roar of aircraft passed overhead southwards- our own bombers going to play their part.

The daylight seemed to come up much quicker now; on either side of us, the faint outlines of hundreds of ships could be made out, steaming placidly along in an orderly array according to plan. It was a magnificent sight, almost unbelievable in its imperturbability, it was Sea Power personified. As we approached the coast we overtook several convoys of smaller craft, and had a hectic few minutes weaving our way through them; we could not stop as the other ships were close astern of us. Some of these tiny craft were all over the shop, and we whizzed past with only a few feet to spare. I saw a brass-hatted officer stand up and shake his fist at me! And then quite suddenly it was broad daylight; houses and forts on the coast ahead of us were plainly visible. A lighthouse, yellow in the light of dawn, stood there like a friendly tiger to beckon us in. It was a perfect June morning, quiet and still. On either beam the other destroyers were forming up in a long line. And astern of us the cruisers were easing down preparatory to dropping anchor; they were going to fire over our heads. My watch showed five minutes past five, not long to go now. The immediate problem was to get plumb into the right spot before anchoring. "Nearly there, sir". Steer two degrees to starboard for three minutes". From the chart table the sub's voice was muffled, but he could not conceal his excitement. Other reports followed in quick succession "Main armament ready, sir!" "Starboard anchor ready, sir!" Once again I gazed at the typed orders beside me. The whole thing was working out fine to date. "Turn to anchor now, sir!"

I gazed at the other destroyers. Yes, they were turning also, we were hunky-dory. I turned Ulster beam on the beach, now less than three miles away, and we let go the anchor underfoot, it was to keep the ship steady under bombardment. "Well boys, we've arrived!. The director and the guns trained round. Ten past five. Only a few minutes now. The silence was uncanny, almost disappointing. We had expected to be met with a hail of gunfire, and a rain of bombs, but nothing happened. It was like a peacetime exercise, but all the same, I found myself shivering violently. It seemed very cold at anchor. Half a minute to go. My heart was thumping like the proverbial sledgehammer. "STAND BY!" As I gave the order with my eyes glued to the stopwatch. My thoughts flashed for just that brief interval to my little country house, four hundred miles away. Five fifteen; all would be quiet there, too. My wife and little girl still fast asleep upstairs in their bedroom, and David the Sealyham downstairs curled up in the kitchen chair. Outside in the garden with the Lake District Hills all round, it would be fresh and cool. The birds cheeping way daintily across the dewy lawn-the same perfect June morning. I could see it all. OPEN FIRE!

For one hour and ten minutes we fired without ceasing, in one long magnificent and exhilarating roar. At intervals throughout, the signalman touched my sleeve and held up a signal for me to read. Halfway through, he showed me one that has been made many times in British Naval History..."Engage the enemy more closely".

At that signal all the destroyers weighed anchor, and moved closer inshore, each one led by their own individual minesweeper in a single combined line. We were firing as fast as we could now. Almost point blank at the shore defences. The assault craft full of soldiers were passing us. On their way into the assault we could see the men in them, crouched down, ready to spring ashore. In one boat a man was standing up playing the bagpipes. For five minutes, just ahead of them and just before they landed, there was a tremendous shower of rockets onto the nearby beach defences from craft specially designed to fire them, and then on "Gold" beach, at half past six on that June morning, in the centre sectors of that great assault, the British Armies returned to France. One of the greatest moments in history- one the whole free world was waiting for had arrived at last. From the Bridge of the Ulster, we had a grandstand view of the whole proceedings, and it was a magnificent and impressive sight. We ceased firing just then, and moved out to seaward to

wait the air attack that never came. We anchored, and a small craft came back alongside with some men that had been picked up from the sea. Doc Johnston dealt with them quietly and quickly. Up on the bridge we looked at each other, not knowing what to say. The bombardment was over, we had done our best. I picked up the telephone to the director tower. "Bertie?" Yes sir", "Pass to all positions from the Captain- well done everybody!". "Aye Aye sir, Thank you sir". I could hear the message being relayed to all the guns, and a muffled cheer came up from "B" gun's crew.

After a short interval we relaxed somewhat, and some of the crew went to have breakfast. Up on the bridge there was a great silence among us still up there. It was only then that the strain and excitement of the last twelve hours began to tell. The Sub. crouched over the chart, grey with fatigue, and the signalman leant against the side of the bridge, struggling to keep his eyes open. Perched on a couple of chairs beside the compass, and blinking stupidly like owls disturbed by the daylight, the Officer of the Watch listened as best we could to the progress of the battle ashore; the crackling messages in the R/T set were like a running commentary of some great event. I was so utterly weary that I just could not think about anything. It was five past eight when Number One came up to take over the forenoon watch. "Well it's on the news, sir- the folks at home will have got the thrill alright this morning". The folks at home! I could see them in my home. I could see them in a million homes, I could picture the excitement and the jubilation everywhere, the calling out of windows to passing friends, the chatter between complete strangers in trains and buses... "We've landed!" Even more vividly I could picture the receipt of the news on secret sets in a million homes and places under the heel of the hated Nazi... Then Number One's voice broke in on my thoughts once more. "It looks as though we've managed it alright, sir he added quietly.

I will never forget the intensity of that moment on the bridge of the Ulster just then. I was overwhelmed by a surge of emotion that swept into oblivion any trace of weariness. It was a moment when the memories of every past triumph, every thrill of accomplishment, and every glow of happiness combined in one great brilliant flash. It was the most wonderful moment of my whole life. But outstanding in that surge of emotion was heartfelt thankfulness and pride. Thankfulness to the almighty for granting us victory, and pride in our Service, and our native land. But although the initial landing had obviously gone more or less to plan, there was no time to sit back and congratulate ourselves, The "build-up" ships were streaming in, and they had to be protected, both by sea and from the air, the enemy soon started to hit back hard.

Ulster was one of the many destroyers that endeavoured to form a steel ring to seaward of the beaches to protect the ships from E-boats and U-boat attacks. These patrols, particularly at night were no picnic, as they were on a line parallel to the beach, and hence at right angles to the stream of incoming, and outgoing traffic. By day, we moved up and down, awaiting calls for bombardment of targets ashore through the cooperation of Army spotting officers. This was another typical instance of the value of sea power; for while the German positions were still within our range, bombardments from seaward were carried out continuously. For several days after D-day, the cruisers and battleships were able to send salvos of heavy shells far inland on to such targets as concentrations of enemy troops or tanks.

I personally shall always consider that the 6<sup>th</sup>. June 1944, was one of the greatest days in the history of the Royal Navy, the British Nation, and even of the whole free world and I shall always remember with a glow of humble pride one paragraph in the orders for operation "Overlord", it read as follows:

"It is the primary duty of the Royal Navy to ensure that the Army is landed safely on the shores of France. Regardless of any difficulties encountered, or losses sustained, this will be done". "IT WAS".

### **William Donald DSC**

#### **End with a Smile...**

"From quiet homes and first beginnings,  
Out to the undiscovered ends,  
There is nothing worth the wear of winning,  
But laughter and the love of friends"

**Hilaire Bellock**

On a summer's afternoon the girls on the farm decided to go down to the pond and have a swim, in the buff!! So the old farmer said to himself, I'll have a bit of fun here and go down and have a look see. As he approached the pond, the girls all start to scream and shriek and go to the deep end. As he gets nearer they shout "Go away, go away, you can't look" "Don't worry girls" the farmer says "I have just come down to feed the crocodile."

Three young boys were fishing in a canal by the side of the road when a large car skidded off the road into the water. They ran to the sinking car and helped the occupants to escape. They find to their amazement that one of those that they had rescued turned out to be the Prime Minister. "Thank you so much" said the P.M. "You must allow me to reward you for such bravery. There must be something I could give you all, what would you like?" "I would very much like a BMX bike" said the first boy. "You shall have one tomorrow" said the P.M. "Do you think I could have a computer?" asked the second boy, "Certainly" said the P.M. Then he turns to the third boy, who is looking rather glum at this stage, and says, "What would you like?" The boy says "Well sir, I would like a state funeral." The P.M. is clearly nonplussed and says "What on earth for?" So the boy says, "Well, when my dad finds out who I've saved, he'll kill me!"

#### **Both jokes/stories, extracted from the Presidents final speech**

A new retiree greeter at Asda just couldn't seem to get to work on time. Every day he was always a few minutes late. But he was a good worker, real sharp, so the boss was in a quandary about how to deal with it. Finally, one day he called him into the office for a chat. "Charley, I have to tell you, I like your work ethic, you do a bang up job, but your timekeeping is bothersome!" "Yes I know Boss, and I'm working on it". "Well good, you're a team player. That's what I like to hear, it's odd though, you coming in late. I know you're retired from the Navy. What did they say to you there when you turned in late?" They said "Good morning, Admiral".

After 20 years of marriage a couple were lying in bed one evening, when the wife felt her husband begin to fondle her in ways he hadn't in quite some time. It almost tickled as his fingers started at her neck and then began moving down past the small of her back. He then caressed her shoulders and neck, slowly worked his hands down over her breasts, stopping just over lower stomach. He then proceeded to place his hand on her left inner arm, caressed passed the side of her breast again, working down her side passed gently



over her buttock and down her leg to her calf. Then he proceeded up her inner thigh, stopping at the uppermost portion of her leg. He continued in the same manner on her right side, then suddenly he stopped, rolled over and started to watch the television. As she had become quite aroused by this caressing, she asked in a loving voice, "That was wonderful! Why did you stop?" He said "I found the remote!"

**Len Stanton, AB 56/58**

### **Thank god for Old Salts- Especially those who worked down below**

One dark and stormy night a fire broke out in a local Medical Experimental Plant, and it soon became a major conflagration. The alarm went out and all the fire departments from miles around converged on the scene.

The Company President rushed to the scene and went over to the Fire Chief controlling the fire fight and said "All our secret formulas are in the vault in the centre of the Plant. They must be saved at all costs. I will give £100,000 to the fire crew which brings them out. The roaring flames held all the fire fighters at bay. Soon more crews were called to the scene and the President raised the reward for the secret files to £250,000 but to no avail no one could get near the flames.

Then another siren was heard and another fire engine hove into sight. This was manned by volunteers from a little community of retired Royal Naval Stokers and Engine Room Staff. All of whom were over seventy.

To everyone's amazement the clapped out fire engine passed all the sleek new fire engines right in to the heart of the blaze.

The other fire crews watched in amazement as the old timers leaped from the engine and fought the fire with an energy that had never been seen before. Soon the fire was extinguished and the secret formulas saved. The grateful medical company President raised the award to £500,000 and went to congratulate the fire crews lined up. Their names emblazoned on their chests, names such as Oly Holdstock, Wally Wallace, Nobby Garret, Darby Allen, Bruce Macdonald-Allan, Bob Williams and Doug Leeson.



The T.V. crews rushed in to interview them after capturing everything on film and asked "What are going to do with all that money?" As one they all shouted "Get those bloody brakes fixed".

Now if you believe that you will believe anything especially the engine room branch.

**Peter Lee-Hale**

## Acknowledgement

This book has been a challenge to produce, as our computer skills are not great, however all previous newsletters have been perused for likely interesting articles, as well as Mike Paske's excellently documented archives.

Peter Lee-Hale, Derek Hodgson and myself, have attempted to produce an interesting and varied selection of articles, from when Concord was in commission until the present day. Some stories overlap, as do some opinions, however we have attempted to keep this to a minimum.

The photo quality in some cases is not as good as we would have liked, however the old "Brownies" were not a match for the present day digital cameras, and do remember some of these go back over sixty years.

We would like to acknowledge all shipmates, over the many years, who have written articles, and supplied photographs, without whom this venture would not have been possible.

Finally, I would personally like to put on record, my thanks to my daughters Claire and Helen, who have kept their patience with me, and helped me out tremendously in this project, despite having very young children and a very demanding old Dad. Over the years, we have all dreaded our children saying, "Dad" and wondering what they wanted, however my children dreaded the words, "Claire/Helen can you help me out"?

Peter, Derek and I, hope that you enjoy this book and that it will bring back memories for you all.

Yours Aye  
**Alan Ausden**



Derek Hodgson



Peter Lee-Hale



Alan Ausden



Helen Harris



Claire Aplin

## The Concord Prayer

### *The Concord Prayer*

*O Almighty God whose arms envelop the mighty seas and who dost control  
The destiny of us thy servants, Lord God,  
Father of all mercies who has blessed us with the fond memories of those  
Seafaring days of our youth and our good ship Concord when as Christian sailors  
We served in her.*

*We beseech thee O Lord to grant us Association,  
Comradeship, Fellowship and Unity.  
As all mortal men we are subject to weaknesses and failings to the many  
Sicknesses and perils both on land and sea and also to the uncertainty of when we  
Must depart this earth to be judged before thee.*

*Forgive us our failings and weaknesses Lord and grant us strength that  
We may do thy will and ever give us thought and help to our shipmates who are sick,  
Suffering and ailing through the years.*

*To these thy servants Lord comfort them and be ever merciful.  
May we forget not those who have gone before unto thee and  
Into thy safe keeping for life with thee in thy everlasting and eternal light.*

*Through Jesus Christ Our Lord, AMEN*

*(Doug Leeson 51-53)*

*Your prayers are asked for all shipmates sick and suffering, and for their families.  
Lord God, give hope and be ever merciful,  
For our Concord widows, comfort them and give them strength and  
fortitude now and in the future.  
Amen*

*Sunset and evening star,  
And one clear call from me!  
And may there be no moaning of the bar,  
When I put out to sea.*

*But such a tide as moving seems asleep,  
Too full for sound and foam,  
When that which drew from out the boundless deep,  
Turns again home.*

*Twilight and evening bell,  
And after that the dark!  
And may there be no sadness or farewell,  
When I embark;*

*For though from out our bourne of Time and Place,  
The flood may bear me far,  
I hope to see my Pilot face to face  
When I have crossed the bar.*

*(Alfred, Lord Tennyson . 1889)*

*Chinese farewell. Ye Sheng, Yi Shi. Long Life, and long love.*



*Peace With Honour*

