

**NAVAL COMMUNICATIONS
1947 to 1988**

**RECOLLECTIONS OF AN
HMS GANGES
TRAINED BOY TELEGRAPHIST**

by John Eilbeck (1949)

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Grateful acknowledgement to:

The Communicator Magazine (no longer published) and the subscribers to it for access to and quotes from published articles.

References:

Signal by Captain Barrie Kent

The True Glory by Warren Tute

The Oxford Reference English Dictionary

CHAPTER 1 – 1947

On January 1, 1947 the British coal industry was nationalised and on March 15, 1947 the worst ever floods in England were recorded. It was also the year of the marriage of Princess Elizabeth, the abdication of Prince Michael of Rumania and Rumania becoming a People's Republic. In Bootle I was starting my first year at the Tech College in the electrical and mechanical course and the first academic steps towards a life of maritime communications.

Whilst a career in RN Comms was in the offing I was not aware of it. I fancied myself as a bit of a soccer player and felt that a place in the Everton team and an apprenticeship with one of the local ship building firms was the way I ought to go. Meanwhile the first edition of The Communicator magazine was issued. The magazine was to be produced every quarter, with articles of interest not only to communicators at the Signal School but to all members of the Communications Branch wherever they may be, for whom the Signal School stands as their alma mater. The magazine continued to reflect Naval communications until 1977, when it ceased publication. That was a sad day, as The Communicator was the Hansard of RN Communications and many authors have used the magazine for historical reference in matters of Royal Naval Communications.

What was happening in the RN comms world in 1947? Viscount Mountbatten of Burma, the senior communicator and one of the leading lights of the branch was made Viceroy of India. Captain C L Firth was Captain of HM Signal School, Leydene House, PO Tel Rogers was the Hon. Dance Sec. And was looking for volunteers to serve on the dance committee. The *pin-up* was Audrey Young, and for the WRENS—Glenn Ford I wasn't available at the time!

Automatic Telegraphy (A/T) was being introduced. There was no technical jargon attached to it, the general idea of A/T *'is to connect teleprinters by radio and signal by this means rather than by using the Morse code'*. How simple it seems. I just cannot understand why two years later I found Radio Theory baffling. An IT (Instructional Technique) centre was in full operation at the School. New signal books were being written in the light of war experience by and Admiralty committee. Touch Typing was included in the communications New Entry training courses at HMS *Ganges*. Do you remember the Teddy Bears Picnic? The penny size disc on the back of each hand? And the baton or some other prod waiting to descend if a disc fell off? Posture was all important. It worked, we could Morse type Guam Fox Broadcast, read a book and drink kye at the same time. Naturally there was the W/T1 who could also *roll a tickler* as well!

A new Electrical Branch was formed. This event apparently sounded like the death knell to the old Telegraphist Branch. Not so according to the following Communicator statement:

'Let no one make this mistake, for the modern operator has much to learn to achieve the high standard now required of him by their Lords Commissioners. To operate modern high efficiency radio equipment a sound standard of technical knowledge is necessary to get the best performance out of it. Although the operator may not be required to tear a piece of equipment to pieces to locate a faulty component, he must have a good working knowledge of the equipment to be able to use each gadget to its best advantage'.

(My PO Tel, Killick and everybody else gave the B28 a bang on the top to stop if drifting and a hefty kick would get one from 4 top 6 MHz in a flash).

'The modern operator must also be an expert touch typist. The old laborious scribing out of broadcast by stubs of dirty black lead pencil has gone forever, to be replaced by the efficient typewriter, providing a neat ready-to-use copy that can be read with ease'.

The advent of the typewriter was the reason for the following General Message from their Lordships:

'For typists are to be screwed on the bench, read typewriters'.

The article continues:

'The efficient operator must be quite at home on the teleprinter and learn the 'start-stop' code in addition to the Morse code. He must be able to operate perforators, reperfor-ators, page printers, read tapes—both Morse and stop-start—operate coding machines and codes correctly. Then he is to be an expert DF operator, able to give accurate bearings and home aircraft without hesitation by both aural and visual presentation methods. He must be an expert Radio Telephone operator and to this end must become trained in voice culture. This is essential for

successful R/T that is now being used almost exclusively in manoeuvring and aircraft direction. Let us not forget that, in spite of all the modern radio equipment provided, it will still be necessary for the operator to transmit by hand on occasion. Practise in this must not be neglected. So, post-war telegraphists, do not imagine you have lost your place in the scheme of things, for there is a lot to be learned yet before we have attained our standards of efficiency. In fact we have scarcely started’.

‘I had almost forgotten Procedure. Good procedure is essential in operating almost all radio circuits and particularly necessary in R/T, DF, manoeuvring and in commercial operating where words cost money’.

Two years later (1949), the modern equipment referred to was the B28 and B35 receiver, 60EQR, 89Q, 57DMR, TCS, TBS, 612ET, etc. HMS *Vanguard* did have a DC10 transmitter and a KCT control board—I know that for sure as the DC Tx Room and Control Room were my clean ship tasks.

Morse transmission, Morse reception and touch typing exercised at high speeds and accuracy were still mandatory requirements when I left in 1975. The fears that the sparker was on the way out did not really happen until the late 1980s and early 1990s with the arrival of PCs and data transmission links via satellite.

You can see why I wanted to become a Sparker, once trained I would be a genius!

In 1947 the future of Home Signal Schools was decided. Glenholt was in the process of closing down and the last Glenholt Leading Tels course was sent to Leydene. It was hoped to establish a Devonport Signal Section in the Barracks. It was actually at Vicarage Road camp when I arrived at my Home Port of Guzz. The Naval Air Signal School moved from Arbroath to Lee, Scotia moved from Ayr to Warrington and a new boys’ training establishment was opened on the site of the old Naval Air Station at Crail—HMS *Bruce* was now in operation.

An article in the Summer 1947 edition stated:

‘The world-wide naval organisation and control achieved in recent years (1905-1947) and particularly during World War II was made possible only by the communication ‘network’ which has perfected as a result of the rapid progress in the development of wireless and other signalling systems’.

ET1, ET2 and HET were introduced as the academic way ahead for promotion.

GZO came to life again. The familiar Far East callsign was transmitting from Stonecutters island Hong Kong and the Naval W/T Station was again very active after the Japanese occupation.

What about HMS Ganges in 1947?

In the Christmas edition, Vol.1 No.4 the first HMS *Ganges* article appeared written by R.B. The article read as follows:

HMS Ganges

As this is our first appearance in *The Communicator* it may be of interest to ‘Old Gangesians’ to read what has been going on here during the past few years.

All the Boys were transferred to St George, in the Isle of Man, in June 1940, and Ganges was used for training HO New Entries. One of the better-known pupils here during this period, Godfrey Winn, has since written a book about his experiences. (*See Winter 1989 Gazette—Vol.2 Ed.3 ... Ed*). Ganges returned to Boys’ training in January 1946, when all the classes from the Isle of Man were transferred to us. There had been no Communication training during the HO occupation, and the Signal School was used as a part of the Gunnery School. All traces of this have now been removed, except for our lawn, which was used as a parade ground, has never quite recovered from the shock. Ghostly footsteps, said to have been heard in the upper corridor at the dead of night, are thought to be those of a Gunner’s Mate who lost his whistle there in 1943.

There are now 298 W/T and 230 V/S Boys under training (three W/T Boys to two V/S is the theoretical proportion) in 26 classes. The V/S and W/T classes are paired off so that there is a twin class in each mess. A new class is formed every five weeks, and the length of the course is 45 instruction weeks. This means that Communication Boys are here for about 15 months altogether, allowing for leave, messengers’ duties and New Entry time. Except for two touch typists, all our instructors come from Chatham.

The main event in the Communication world this term has been the V/S and W/T Efficiency Competition. A new type of competition was tried for the first time instead of the old separate Flag Hoisting and W/T Competitions. The new competition is a sort of relay race. A message is handed to the first representative of each team at the starting point. He passes it by W/T to point B. Point B relays it by voice to point C. Point C transmits it by flashing to point D, and D passes it by semaphore to E where it is hoisted by flags. The competition was won by Drake 219 W/T/220 V/S Classes, their best run being 31 seconds.

The Ganges Amateur Radio Club is starting this term, and we should shortly to be in touch with some of the other amateurs in the Communication Branch. We have not got a call-sign yet, but hope to be able to announce it in the next number.

Plans are in hand to convert part of the Gunnery School into an extension of the Signal School. The extra space is needed to house teleprinters and other new gear, and to provide some more classrooms and a mock-up BRR and SDO. Unfortunately the economy axe has fallen and we don't look like getting any more than we can do ourselves.

Now that the Signal Section in Portsmouth Barracks has gone, it seems as though we shall have to rest content with being the only signal school with glazed-tile walls.

CHAPTER 2 – 1948

In 1948 my recollections of the Royal Navy and Naval Communications are thin on the ground as I was still at college. The idea that education and an RN career was the way ahead could not be allowed to disrupt my sport and social life! Happenings during that year were going to play a big part in my life, how much a part I found out 27 years later. For recollections of 1948 I have taken snippets and notes from the 1948 Communicator magazines.

It was during January 1948 that Britain's railways were nationalised and Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated in New Delhi. During the rest of the year other historic events came about. Events that played a part in the progress of Naval Communications. The British electricity industry and the provision of the wiggly amps was to be different; the theory was the same the process wasn't! Earl Mountbatten was relieved as Governor General of India, the Malayan federal constitution came into force, and the Malayan Communist Party outlawed. Ceylon gained independence, the Republic of Korea was proclaimed, Chinese Communist forces captured Mukden and Mr Truman was elected President of the United States of America. On the home-front bread rationing ended and Princess Elizabeth gave birth to a son in the November. All of these events were going to impact on the Royal Navy in some way or another.

I was starting my second year at Bootle Tech and whilst my sporting attributes improved no end my academic life was a continual battle—there was never enough time for it! Fortunately Ronnie Moran (presently the Liverpool FC chief coach) was excellent at algebra and the mysteries of science and we travelled to school on the same train—homework no problem. The weekly results were fine it was the end of term exams when I took a dip in marks. I did get sufficient marks to pass the end of year exams, but only just!

Royal Naval Communications

What was happening in the world of RN communications in 1948? The future of naval communications was going to be shaken not stirred because one of the first events was that Viscount Mountbatten of Burma, KG, GCVO, KCB, DSO, was returning to the UK from India and was expected to take up a naval appointment. Captain JHF Crombie (ex HMS *Vengeance*) relieved Captain Firth as Captain of HM Signal School. CPO Tel Baister was President of HMS *Mercury* Chiefs' Mess, bar service was provided by CYS Dartnell and CYS Mattingly. The *pin-up* was not presented in the 1948 editions of the Communicator, they obviously distracted the working communicator. The *Wrens* pin-up appears to be a pen caricature of Signal Lieut. H Coward who retired in February 1948.

HMS *Vanguard* was back in home waters and the modern communications equipment that had been fitted for the Royal visit to South Africa was the talk of every communicator as many articles and press releases stated. The following is an extract of a Communicator article from 1948.

Communication Equipment in HMS Vanguard

Much has been printed in technical periodicals, both service and civilian, concerning Vanguard's special communication arrangements, but a further outline may still be of interest to readers of The Communicator who have seen the great ship hung with such things as horizontal wire dipoles and bristling with whip aerials in the most unprecedented places.

Extremely bold and imaginative planning and staff decisions, which by normal naval criteria were a gamble, were progressed to meet the requirements of the royal party, press reporters, photographers and radio commentators who were to travel with them—it was decided to superimpose on the ship's normal equipment a high quality radio telephone, radio teleprinters, and facilities for facsimile transmission of photographs—all with a range of five thousand miles!

The boldness of the conception can only be appreciated when it is remembered that radio teleprinters had no naval precedent afloat, though they were being rapidly introduced for shore point-to-point services; that transmission of photographs had no naval precedent at all; and that long range naval radio telephony, though already fairly well established between ships, and from ships to Admiralty, had never previously been extended to shore telephone networks. Moreover, six months before *Vanguard* was due to sail, no transmitter of the required power and size was known to be available. In fact, so ambitious was the whole project, that it was not thought politic, owing to the likelihood of failure, to reveal to the press and public the extent of the facilities which it was hoped to provide—at least until after the ship's shakedown cruise in December, when fairly successful preliminary trials were achieved. It was therefore against a background of general

uncertainty, ceaseless but necessary alterations to specifications, and frequent improvisations on the spot, that a new communications staff struggled, with the Dockyard and Admiralty Signal Establishment, to get all ready in time. They had, in addition, to master the ship's very considerable normal installation, ninety-five percent of which was entirely new to them.

It will be appreciated from all the above that on the passages to and from South Africa the communication world was about its duties day and night. The special equipment was run to schedules with the UK and South Africa which varied from 14 to nearly 20 hours per day. The A/T services were worked with naval stations at each end, but the RT circuits were with Post Office Terminals in London and Cape Town and facsimile, through the Post Office Terminals, with Cables & Wireless in both places. Co-operation throughout was admirable, and whilst in South Africa a most friendly liaison with our civilian opposite numbers ashore led to an exchange of visits which included an official luncheon on board by Admiral Agnew to the Minister of Posts & Telegraphs, large numbers of Union Post Office and Cables & Wireless personnel being shown round the ship's communication installation, a day's golf match between the Wardroom and the Cables & Wireless Sports Club, and drives to see the country and visit radio stations for all communications ratings who wished to do so.

Whilst at sea, the radio telephone became a great feature of life, and was available to officers and ship's company for ringing up sweethearts and wives whenever it was not in use by the royal party. The communication staff collected several hundred pounds for the GPO in this way, at ten shillings a minute—and cheap at the price!

Only one breakdown of note occurred when the DS10 transmitter suddenly went off the air during a *live* broadcast into the BBC Light Programme. In general all repairs and maintenance were carried out by the ship's staff, most of the team of radio mechanics having had short courses in the various equipment before sailing. A scientist from the Admiralty Signal Establishment and an engineer from Standard Telephones & Cables were, however, also carried and did yeoman service in keeping everything going. The technical operators, control room petty officers and A/T operators also underwent special training at Faraday House, Muirheads and Whitehall W/T before sailing, but it is of interest to note that a change round was effected while in South Africa, and more than half of those who operated the *special equipment* on the way home were trained to do so entirely onboard. Altogether a most memorable and enjoyable cruise and a fully justified and successful communication project.

Buckingham Palace 14th May 1948

'I am commanded by the King to ask if you would kindly convey to all those concerned with the preparation and execution of the arrangements for communication during His Majesty's tour of South Africa his sincere thanks for their work. It was successful in every particular, and the King greatly appreciated the speed and clearness with which the necessary information was conveyed to him, no matter where he might be. I do not recall a single instance of the system devised before we left England failing to operate smoothly and efficiently. To this result, of course, our cypher officer and his team made a very important contribution. (Signed) Alan Lascelles.'

Award of Royal Victoria Medal

Chief Yeoman of Signals W C H Bugge

Chief Petty Officer Telegraphist H T Brown

Radio Electrician D Gardiner

Naval Communications – General Message Handling

Most of us will have found the question of handling messages on a large scale to be one of the biggest problems in our branch. At the moment there is a committee sitting to try to improve the methods and facilities for handling messages. Bright ideas on how to solve this problem was very welcome. Some things never changed. We still had message handling problems when I left in 1975!

Courses in Shore Station maintenance generally, with the emphasis on A/T, were being run from Leydene for both officers and ratings of the Electrical Branch. The status of the (L) Branch vis-à-vis the Telegraphist Branch in A/T was becoming clearer. The senior communication officer or rating will have overall control and be responsible for the traffic; the (L) Branch will do the maintenance.

The first course for both V/S and W/T Instructors since the war started at the beginning of this year. Owing to the large overbearing in these rates the courses have been relatively small. It is hoped however to be able to improve on the numbers next year.

Questions received from various sources showed that many ratings were more ignorant than they should be about the rules which govern their advancement in the Communication Branch. These rules published in BR1066 and amended from time to time by Admiralty Fleet Orders. The rules were unavoidably complicated because they had to cover every circumstance, and it was not particularly easy to find the particular paragraphs which affect you personally at any moment in your career. During 1948 it was hoped that an up-to-date edition of a pre-war book called the *Signal Training Instructions* will be published. This book will give, in a fairly simple form all the information you need about advancement, courses, examinations and standards of knowledge of the Communication Branch

What about HMS Ganges in 1948?

The HMS *Ganges* articles of 1948 were creating problems. It would appear that volunteer Instructors to write the article went into hiding. Somebody got caught and wrote the following:

This issue of The Communicator has caught us a bit unprepared, as we have only just reached half-term and there doesn't seem to be much to write about. We haven't even had the V/S and W/T Efficiency Competition, which is usually a good standby on these occasions.

We received a very welcome consignment of stores from Scotia at the end of last term. We heard with delight that a lorry-load had been dispatched to us, but were not entirely prepared for what actually arrived—a vast furniture pantechnichon with an equally vast trailer. The latter proved to be almost entirely full of signal pads. No one in the audience gathered to watch the unpacking had ever seen quite so many signal pads in one place at one time before, and the revelation of this mountain of paper was greeted by a respectful hush. However, we now face with confidence a fair number of years of paper shortage.

Apart from one or two cases of flat feet, the King's Birthday review is now a thing of the past and we are working down again for eight weeks of comparative peace. KBR was, by all accounts, a great success and we even got our photograph into *The Times* in our capacity as a sort of understudy to the Trooping of the Colour. Admiral of the Fleet Lord Cunningham took the Salute.

Fleet News

- The battleship King George V is to relieve HMS *Howe* in the Training Battle Squadron at Portland in the near future. She is at present refitting at Devonport.
- Asdics have been fitted in two whale-catchers, but the assistance given in detecting whales is not sufficient to justify the outlay and maintenance. It is possible that a special set may be designed.
- The four-masted Brazilian Naval Training Ship *Almirante Saldmana* recently visited Plymouth. It was the first visit of a unit of the Brazilian Navy since 1936, and closely followed the visit of the Chilean Naval Transport *Presidente Errazuriz* to Portsmouth.
- The news that Britain is to dispose of five capital ships — the battleships *Queen Elizabeth*, *Valiant*, *Nelson* and *Rodney* and the battle-cruiser *Renown*—has been received with feelings of regret in naval circles in all parts of the world.
- The First Lord of the Admiralty announced that the new system of entry into Dartmouth has been designed to ensure that no boy is prevented from competing by reason of his social status, school, or financial standing. The decision to change the system of entry is no reflection upon the success of the present system. Officers of the Royal Navy have stood the supreme tests required of them and have served their country with great distinction.
- Admiral Sir E Neville Syfret, KCB, KBE, struck his flag in HMS *Duke of York* at Portsmouth on 7th January in handing over the command of the Home Fleet to Vice-Admiral Sir Rhoderic McGregor, KCB, DSO
- HMS *Sheffield*, in company with the sloop Sparrow, visited Nassau and Havana during January.

- A scheme has been inaugurated under which Admiralty scientists are given sea experience. Six scientists were present recently at manoeuvres from Portland.
- The first craft to be powered by a gas turbine has been taken to sea by the Royal Navy. It is HM Motor Gun Boat 2009, a 110-foot, triple-screw craft. The gas turbine represents a big saving of weight and space, and may introduce much improvement in small-ship performance.
- The light aircraft carrier HMS *Magnificent*, which has been completed at Belfast, has been undergoing trials. She is to be commissioned for service with the Royal Canadian Navy.
- Admiral Woodhouse succeeded Admiral Sir Arthur Palliser, CB, DSC, who stuck his flag at sunset that day in HMS *Norfolk*. Admiral Woodhouse has since transferred his flag to the Norfolk and proceeded in the cruiser to Colombo.
- The cruiser HMS *Nigeria* (Captain BL Moore, CBE, RN) returned to Plymouth from the South Atlantic Station on 24th May.
- The colours of the famous old battleship HMS *Queen Elizabeth* were hauled down for the last time at Portsmouth on 15th May.
- Indian naval officers and ratings, who are to take over the cruiser HMS *Achilles* for the RIN, arrived in England during January.

There was considerable naval activity in home waters during May. HM ships paid ceremonial visits to ports and resorts, Navy Days were held in HM Dockyards during the Whitsuntide weekend, and 'Exercise Dawn'—the biggest naval and air manoeuvres since 1939—took place in the North Sea. Nineteen HM ships and eight submarines took part in the exercise. A summer cruise of the 2nd Submarine Flotilla began when the depot ship, HMS *Maidstone* (Captain H C Brownie, CBE, DSO, RN), accompanied by the destroyer HMS *Onslaught* (Lieut. Cmdr. J D Green, DSC, RN) and four submarines, sailed from Portland for Scandinavian waters. Towards the end of June, units of the 2nd, 3rd and 5th Submarine Flotillas took part in the Flag Officer Submarines Summer War Exercises in the north-western approaches. The submarines carried out patrols under war conditions, and made use of the latest developments in undersea warfare.

In the South Atlantic 1948

Like everywhere else we are feeling the acute shortage of 'Bods'. The cruiser *Nigeria* the Flagship will shortly be going home to recommission. The *Actaeon* and *Nereide* complete our active fleet. We have four destroyers refitting at the moment. The nerve of the station is, of course, the three W/T stations, Cape East, Cape South, and Slangkop. Cape East and Cape South are transmitting stations and are kept pretty busy with service and commercial traffic. Service 12 is our A/T link with home.

To the uninitiated in the geography of the Cape, as I was on arrival, the three stations are widely separated. Cape East is twenty-nine miles from Simon's Town, out on the Flats, towards Kuilsrivier, approximately twenty minutes from Mowbray, on the main line to Capetown. Cape South is a landmark on the hill above Simon's Town and not a nice easy walk except for those with a leaning towards mountaineering. Slangkop is the other side of the hill, or mountain, near Kommetje, most accessible via Fish Hoek, a distance of twelve miles, but there is a nice drive round the Cape Road, via Redhill, which adds five miles to the journey. Slangkop is our receiving station and is maintained by the Post Office. Communications Lieutenant G Knight, RN is the O/C. W/T Stations, and Mr Marsh, CEO (R), RN is the Shore Stations Maintenance Engineer. The Port Radio Base in East Yard is kept busy these days and feels the manning shortage acutely.

CHAPTER 3 — 1949-1950

In 1949 my recollections of the Royal Navy and Naval Communications remained thin on the ground but with the mist beginning to clear. This was due to an application to take the 1949 Tiffs apprenticeship entrance exam, then passing the academics (major shock to my teachers and parents), then failing the aptitude test at HMS Blackcap, Warrington. I could not wait the three months for Granny to use her influence and get me into TS Conway as a cadet, so it was down to St. John's Lane recruiting office, Liverpool. Sailed through the academic tests! You remember the type of question? Which is the correct spelling - cat or Kat? Who wrote Ravels Bolero? Where did the Allies land during the invasion of Normandy in 1944? This was a tricky one as several hopefuls answered on the beach or on D-Day! Sign here – Good, you're in the Navy son, We will be in touch. They did get in touch and I joined HMS Ganges along with a train load of other Scousers and Mancunians. Albert RN was now joined by Scouse RN, but Scouse did not escape for 27 years (including boys time!).

It was during March/April 1949 that clothes rationing ended, Newfoundland became part of Canada and Atom bomb tests were conducted at Bikini Atoll. During April, HMS Amethyst, HMS Consort, HMS London and HMS Black Swan had problems with the Chinese communists. Many boys from HMS Ganges took part and along with the other men of the Royal Navy gave China something to think about. The great escape, remember the signals? From HMS Consort to HMS Amethyst - "*Fancy meeting you again*". Reply from HMS Amethyst, "*Never, never has a ship been more welcome.*" To CinC Far East - "*Have rejoined the fleet. South of Woo Sung. No damage or casualties. God save the King*" and as part of the message from the King "*SPLICE THE MAINBRACE*". Memories for me as Tel. Jack French was to become a friend of mine in the not too distant future and I was to be drafted to HMS Amethyst for my first foreign commission, but that was later and coincidental.

During 1950 a lot more happened, Scouse passing out from HMS Ganges as a Boy Telegraphist, ex 271 Class Grenville Division. I had started my career as a Boy Seaman, 48 Mess (Hotspur), Hawke Division. Meanwhile, in the greater world Britain recognised the Communist Government of China (obviously good politics). North Korean troops advanced into South Korea, General MacArthur designated C-in-C. U. N. Forces in Korea, British Forces Navy (Task Group 968), Army and Air Force in action during September, coincidentally soap rationing ended in UK Princess Elizabeth gave birth to a daughter, King Gustav V and George Bernard Shaw died. Pyongyang was captured by UN forces in October and recaptured by Chinese Communist forces (ex- Manchuria) in December.

I was now at HMS Ganges and in great demand by General Mac Arthur and Vice Admiral Andrews to help sort out the Korean War! I shall not dwell on the daily events, sufficient to say that I, like every other Boy endured the rigours, trials, tribulations and discipline that all Boy Seamen were subjected to. There were plenty of happy times as well as the hardships and I like so many others benefited from the training. It certainly did me no harm and I made many new friends and acquaintances which have lasted for over 47 years.

Royal Naval Communications

What was happening in the world of RN communications in 1949-1950? Captain G.R. Waymouth, CBE, Royal Navy was the Director of Signal Division. Mr. Thomas Roland Price, MBE died, age 56. His death severed one more link which had helped to connect the Communication Branch of 1949 with the almost legendary age when the '*Bunting*' ruled the world of signals and the '*Sparker*' was scarcely known. I do believe this is status quo in 1997. Mr. Price joined as a Signal boy, served at the Battle of Jutland and went to pension in 1934 and was recalled to service in 1939. ASRE was about to move from Haselmere and Witley to Portsmouth Hill. The B40 was in use on some ships, no more coil changes! There was a waiting list for what were called lower standard PO Telegraphists and Yeoman to take the higher standard course in order to become eligible for advancement to Chief Petty Officer. There were two methods available and recognised by the Admiralty for blacking out the keys on typewriters for touch typing training and the recording of the "*Teddy Bears Picnic*" was top of the pops and remained so during my training.

There was a new method of teaching theory and technical instruction to Leading Telegraphists. One Instructor handled both subjects and it was renamed '*Wireless*', the words '*Theory*' and '*Technical*' being dropped. The Instructor was an Instructor Officer assisted by a Chief and Petty Officer Telegraphist. Electrical Branch training was being phased out at HMS Mercury and being transferred to HMS Collingwood. I note that in 1997 Communication training has been phased out from HMS Mercury and transferred to HMS Collingwood! Funny Old World isn't it? A Signal School's Conference was held attended by Australian, New Zealand and Canadian Signal Officers, plus Cdr. N. Wagstaff and Lt. S Berthon

(Cookham) Lt. Cdr J.R. Phillimore (Vicarage Road) Lt. J.N. Kennard (NASS), Lt. Cdr. W.D. Bray (Ganges) and more. The proposed reduction in the standard speed of semaphore was flatly rejected. It was considered that 20 wpm was quite reasonable for what was considered to be the simplest method of short-range signalling. “Red Ensign Mike” which had recently been recalled to service, was on its way out again, being replaced by a two letter group from the International Code with the same meaning. ‘Red Ensign Mike’, it didn’t mean much to me in 1949 and it doesn’t now!

Naval Communications in General

The introduction to Naval Communications in General is by way of a request for help from Ron Glade (1938), reference the type of communications equipment available at Shotley in 1938. I am sorry but I do not have the info, maybe Allan Bell (1936) can help, he has written and offers assistance in the background of Naval Communications. The B11 sounds about right for that era. My 1938 edition of “Wireless Telegraphy” doesn’t list equipment types. In 1949 the B28 was predominant with the Creed tape reader and of course Imperial Typewriters! Three letter callings for each ship plus the four letter international and Fleet Code.

There was a hotchpotch of equipment about at the time, including the 600 series MF, HF transmitters, Mullards GNE 510, 57 DMR, 59, 60 EQR, 86, 87, 89Q, TBS, 5G, 610, 617, SWAB 8. Receivers included B28, B29, B40, HRO, TX/RX T1115/R1116, CR100 and CR150. For D/F there as the FH4, FM12, FV4, FV5, The FM12 or was it FM16 was my introduction to the Italian language! Will I ever forget the Bellini Tozi loop aerial system? I polished hundreds of them starting with those at HMS Ganges. I used the phrase a lot during my first leave from Shotley (foreign from Liverpool), resplendent with my HMS cap tally, light blue collar and Ganges improved tiddy suit. – “Allo Gina, a Bellini Tozi mia Roma Belle Donna to youse la” .Went down well with the Judies this!

There appeared to be problems in the Fleet with continuation training for Morse and Morse training. Ships and establishments were being advised to ensure communication ratings practised this skill on a daily basis! Single Sideband was being discussed by Senior Sparkers, the answer to point to point communication problems. New terms and abbreviations were used whenever telegraphists got together – RTT, SSB, FSK, TDM, etc. For the kinky there was frequency changing by the heterodyne method and balanced modulators for suppression of fundamental frequencies. Were you at Malta during the big gale? It was similar to the one that shipwrecked St. Paul there. Rinella Transmitting Station suffered severe damage during the blow.

Feedback on the “General Signalling Instructions” indicated that an update was needed and that the character of the book should be all encompassing. It was muted that perhaps a “Signal and Wireless Operating Manual”, similar but smaller than the Seamanship Manual be produced. It was to be used “to describe in simple and informal terms” all the everyday techniques and procedures which bewilder the junior rating. It could perhaps be used to blow clear some of the magic which some still believe to be contained within a wireless set” – Bellini Tozi, Hartley Colpits Circuit and what is this doing here - Flemmings Right Hand rule. We did get the BR222 and S Orders, ACPs and a myriad more and yet the magic still remained, especially when writing one’s Radio Theory exams!

What about HMS Ganges in 1949-1950?

For HMS Ganges 1949 – 1950 was a time similar to the coming of the Messiah, the birth of a new Navy. The men of the future Navy were undergoing ritual training; Mac Brodie, John Douglas (he went on draft in 49), Dave Forsey and Flindell (Instructor Boys Hawke Division), Willie and Charlie Burling, Taff Collins (next bed in the Annexe), Taff R. Evans, Boy Pole. Lofty Henley (tallest boy), Rollo Fields (largest boy) Rollo’s cousin (smallest boy). These three had a full page photo in one of the Shotley Magazines. Tom Bowler, Tony Beasley and other ex-Arethusa lads. John Lund (the boxer), Bertie or was it Ernie Bigland (both), Mike Baker, Colin Netherton, Bob Bucknell, Jack Worth, Pete Dodsworth, Harry Tate (Duncan) and Nick Theato to name but a few. I almost forgot! Jasper Gledhill (Brum), he wore my jam tart one Wednesday tea time. I can still see it, he antagonised me so much that I fitted it into his face centred around his nose and he ate it! Talk about dipped out on cake day. The Instructors: Yeo Coverdale, PO Tel. Sanderson, PO Tel Raven and Wasp, Chief Cubbit, Chief Lawrence, Chief Fry or Fryer the Gunners, Lt. Cdr. Hamlyn or Hamilton (I think Grenville DO) Mr. Quick, Lt. Cdr. Pattison (highland dancing) Lt. Cdr. O’Sullivan, Nobby Clark (laundry), Jenny Wren with the top weight and legs from the Long Covered Way galley, etc. There were many other Instructors and staff not mentioned, I only remember them now by their first name – SIR!

The two Hawke Instructor Boys advised me, successfully, on how to branch change to Comms. I had obviously fallen victim to yet another RN aptitude test - the INT test – and had been classed up as a Seaman.

I just couldn't handle parade instructions at the hands of CPO Hank Fry or Fryer. He had me in tears of anger and frustration on a daily basis. The .303 drill was just too big to handle when combined with sessions missed for dental treatment. John Lund was my opponent in the Annexe championships. He could box I couldn't - Sick Bay again, prior to being matched against him in the finals at the Main Establishment. Three, one minute rounds this time. My plea for mercy fell on the deaf ears of the PTI who thought I would do better this time. He was wrong, back to the Sick Bay with a runners up certificate and great pain!

It was stated that "*Apart from one or two cases of flat feet, the King's Birthday review is now a thing of the past and we are working down again for eight weeks of comparative peace*". KBR during the first five weeks of the summer term Instructions start half an hour early and finishes in time for a long evening session on the parade ground. Dress rehearsals take precedence in the forenoons of the last week - a continuous stream of orders and information from the Gunnery School. "*The KBR Pack*", some forty odd pages of closely written, yes written foolscap. As the day draws nearer, crowds of boys swarm over the establishment like locusts, trimming grass edges, touching up posts and chains and squaring up in general. To complicate matters Sports day takes place the day before the Review. As always all went well on both days, the weather was perfect, a light breeze enough to bring a "*no weak at the knees*" feeling to the members of the Royal Guard and the parade. Anson win the Divisional Cup in the sports by half a point from Drake, PO Tel Wilkinson coached his Tug-a-War team to victory. Boy Tel. Punnett won the St. George's Prize which is awarded for general excellence in all subjects. Mr. Habgood SCCO and Mr. Brookes were welcomed and Mr. Childs CCO left. We were very sorry to say good-bye to Lt. Cdr. Bray on his relief by Lt. Paterson, and we wish him the best of luck on the Staff Course. Classes V/S 252 and 254, W/T 251 and 253 were drafted, most to the Second Training Flotilla.

Life at Ganges, especially in the Signal School provides its humorous moments. We have met the individual who, endeavouring to improve his somewhat limited knowledge of W/T organisation, was mystified to find that we utilised a port wave, but where the dickens was the *starboard wave*? Also the Boy who thought "WMP" was the abbreviation for Women's Military Police," and another who identified it as "*Will Mail Parcel*".

To old Ganges Boys the School layout is very much the same. The "Buntings" still read flashing in the Long Covered Way, but the Signal Tower veterans still say: "*It was never like this in my time*". I used this quote when I returned as an Instructor in 1965.

In 1949 HMS Bruce decommissioned leaving HMS Ganges as the only Royal Navy Boys' Training Ship. The following were given special mention: Boy Tels R. Armstrong, C. Hutchinson, A. Carter and V. Cannings, all prize winners for Communication honours. CPO Tel Noyes (Field Gun Competition and CPO Tel Crossman for a successful bee keeping enterprise.

Fleet News

Fluorescent lighting was being fitted in new ships – 24" tubes, HMS Warrior was fitted with a flexi-flight deck. Three cruisers of the Royal Navy, the Swiftsure, Ceylon and Gambia had been refitted and a number of comforts and amenities fitted. All electric bakeries and galleys, refrigerated stowage for fresh fruit and veg, drinking water coolers and ice cream soda bars (the Goffa machine). Bathrooms updated, stainless steel wash-basins, each with a hot and cold water supply, and with shaving light and mirror over each basin. The Laundry extended (more space for ex-patriot Mainland China dhobymen), cinema and SRE provided.

Home Fleet

In the Home Fleet, Boy First Class Alfred Raymond Lowe, aged 17 was awarded the Albert Medal for his attempt to save the Midshipman when the liberty boat of HMS Illustrious sank in Portland Harbour with the loss of twenty-nine lives. HMS Loch Fada took on the rescued crew of 3 from a RN Barracuda torpedo bomber which crashed off the West Coast of Scotland. The Autumn cruise took in the east coast of America and the Spring cruise took the Fleet to Gibraltar and the Med. Ships involved – HMS Vanguard, HMS Duke of York (2nd Cruiser Squadron), HMS Theseus, HMS Vengeance, HMS Implacable, 4th DF, 6th DF, HMS Gabbard, HMS St. Kitts, HMS Liverpool and HMS Superb and more.

Far East

Out in the Far East it was action time , the Yangtse Incident, Malayan Anti-Communist campaign and the Korean War. A very busy time for all and a lot to learn as we were required to do Korea the American Way!

The run ashore battles that this statement created is beyond belief. The sign on the US jetty at Sasebo read “Through these portals passed the worlds greatest fighting men”, every night Jack tried and succeeded in proving that Britain’s finest ambassador – Jolly Jack Tar – was actually the worlds greatest. Ships involved – HMS Belfast, Amethyst, Triumph, Theseus, Black Swan, St. Brides Bay, Consort Cossack, Comus, Jamaica, Kenya, and Charity, Ladybird (ex- SS Wuseuh). Rear Admiral W.G. Andrews, C.B., CBE, DSO was in charge. Korea, it was said, “*was a varied and interesting war*”. I don’t know who was credited with the statement but I wonder if in hindsight, he thinks so now.

South Atlantic

Vice-Admiral Sir Herbert Packer, KCB, CBE, (husband of Joy Packer, authoress of “Grey Mistress”, “Pack and Follow” and many other good novels with a naval backdrop) succeeded Vice-Admiral Sir Desmond McCarthy as CinC South Atlantic. The Flagship HMS Nigeria sailed for UK and paying off and was relieved by HMS Bermuda. HMS Acteon and HMS Nereide exercised with the SA Navy, (HMSAS Good Hope and Transvaal) and visited several ports in South Africa and other African countries.

East Indies and Persian Gulf

As always there were incidents that required the attention of the Royal Navy. In 1950 the Sheikh of Bakha attacked the village of Shaam (in the Straits of Hormuz) which belonged to Ras al Khaima. His majesty’s Government was bound by treaty to protect Ras al Khaima’s property so off went the Gulf Squadron. Ships in the East Indies and Gulf 1949-1950: HMS Norfolk, HMS Birmingham, HMS Mauritius, HMS Loch Quoich HMS Flamingo, HMS Wild Goose, HMS Wren.

Mediterranean

The Battle of the Straits continued during the annual Combined Home Fleet and Med Fleet exercises. Rear-Admiral Mountbatten (CS) employed a ruse de guerre by planting a spy (a CCO nee Warrant Tel.) on the Rock. Naturally he won! Ruse de guerre is French for Bellini Tosi according to the Liverpool encyclopaedia. Units dispersed for a visit to various Mediterranean ports Valleron Bay, Athens, Trieste, Venice, Genoa, etc. and then the Fleet regatta which was held at Navarin. Ships that were in the Med. included: HMS Triumph, HMS Ocean, HMS Forth, HMS Newcastle, HMS Gambia, HMS Phoebe, HMS Charity, HMS Chevron, HMS Chieftain, HMS Gravelines, 3rd D.F (new boats, new equipment in place of the Old and Faithful Ts and Vs), HMS Pelican, HMS Surprise and more. Indeed let me mention the 2nd MSF, HM Ships Fierce, Chameleon, Plucky and Rifleman. They reckoned Izmir was a good run, Salonika, Marmarice and Corfu very good.

America and West Indies

Ships carried out a full and varied programme which covered much of the water lying between Trinidad and Bermuda, combined RN/RCN exercises were conducted. RFA Gold Ranger and a submarine were specially sent from the Home Fleet to partake. Visits were made to Antigua, Guantanamo, Cuba, Bermuda and other delightful places. Some ships that were there: HMS Glasgow, HMS Sparrow and HMS Snipe. Plenty of ships, lots of work and good runs ashore.

Humour of the day in 1948

To close this chapter an Uncle Joe Eilbeck yarn. Quote. After five years (or was it seven), “We (HMS Donegal) arrived home in Guzz having just taken part in the Battle of Jutland en-route. After a good run ashore and coal ship it was back to the North Sea patrols and Scapa Flow for entertainment. I told him about movies on the quarterdeck, he said “*The big event was when the Magic Lantern barge came alongside to give a show*”! The mind boggles. Back to his yarn. He showed me some of the letters he had written to his Mother towards the end of his China days and on the way to home and the Battle of Jutland. Censorship as to the ships programme was mandatory so to let Mum know where he was he wrote as follows:

“*Dear Mother,*

I am happy to say that I am fit and well and full of life, but unfortunately as you know, I am unable to tell you where I am but you will be interested to know that I went hunting and shot, a Tiger yesterday.

Several weeks later he sent this letter:

“*Dear Mother,*

I am happy to say that I am fit and well and thoroughly enjoying myself, I am still unable to tell you where I am but you may be interested to know that I danced with a belly dancer.

Yet another letter, just two weeks later:

“Dear Mother,

“This time I can tell you that I am in hospital in Devonport and the Doctor told me that it would have been better for me to have danced with the tiger and shot the belly dancer”.

CHAPTER 4 – 1951-1952

During the period 1951-1952 my recollections of the Royal Navy and Naval Communications are of ships, lots of ships and visits to foreign ports. The excitement and anticipation of adventure meant I just had to have a drink in a pub on my first ever run ashore. Naturally I was under age but I was in my No.1s resplendent with my gold wire HMS *Vanguard* cap tally to the fore. I was a Jack Tar on a run ashore. I recall the pub, it was in Commercial Road Portsmouth, Whale Island end. The sign swinging aloft stated something about 'This sign hangs high etc.' The sign and pub were still there a couple of years ago. The drink, I never got one. I requested a gin and orange for my run ashore oppo and a pint for myself. 'A pint of what?' asked the landlord. 'Of that' said I, pointing at a large full glass held by an elder customer. 'Show us your paybook' said the landlord., I did and was promptly told 'To get myself back onboard, Boys leave is almost over and you are not going to break the law by drinking in my pub at your age!' That was my first run shore! Things did improve over the years.

Recollections of 1951-1952 I have again taken snippets and notes from the Communicator magazines of the time.

During 1951–1952 Korea was the number one topic at the United Nations; General MacArthur was relieved of his command and replaced by General Ridgeway; the Colombo plan came into force and on July 1, 1951 war between Britain and Germany officially ended. Princess Elizabeth and the Duke of Edinburgh carried out a tour of Canada; King George V died in February 1952; SS United States won the Atlantic Blue Ribbon; passive resistance to racial laws in South Africa were gaining momentum, and there was a military coup in Cairo; severe floods in Somerset and North Devon. In October 1952 Britain exploded its first atomic bomb in the Monte Bello Islands, and not to be out done the United States exploded a hydrogen bomb in November 1952. The world of marine biology added a species of the prehistoric Coelacanth to their list when one was caught of Madagascar.

After the extra six weeks school and draft class I was drafted to HMS *Vanguard* and joined her at Portsmouth. She was a Guzz manned ship and I was a Guzz rating D/JX. The smell, was of tar and fresh baked bread. The battleship was painted, polished and majestic and my first sea going home. The welcoming party of side boys, QM's gangway sentry, buglers, OOW, OOD and duty midshipman, were reinforced by the two or three Boys mess instructors and a couple of RPOs. All this to see us onboard safely, allocate messes and hammock billets, and issue of tea and biscuits as we had had bag meals on the train for lunch. On completion of changing into No.1s those who wanted to go ashore could proceed and return by 1830. We all went! Acting Yeoman of Signals Norman Cox was our mentor with a PO Quarters Armourer whose name eludes me. He was a weather beaten, tanned seaman gunner who made life a lot easier for us boys especially with hammock and kit stowage, dress of the day and our many seamanship duties. Part of ship for the early morning session was scrubbing the wooden deck between the two forward breakwaters. Barefoot trousers rolled up, freezing cold water, a scrubber and a white wooden deck on completion! Yeo Cox kept us on our toes in the world of communications with daily biffers and Morse typing exercises. On watch I was the five-ton operator listening for SOS calls. It was also on speaker at the PO Tel's position in case I panicked, which I am sure I would have done. Eventually I was double-banking the Broadcast operator and had a go at Plymouth port wave. Gibraltar, first foreign run ashore, the Trocadero dancers, the singing shouting sailors, Main Street jam packed with Home and Med Fleet sailors, soccer matches against the Med Fleet, the Fleet regatta and a padre's trip to tour St. Michael's Cave. Genoa was the next port of call and it was there that I sold the watch I'd bought at Gibraltar. I also went ashore instead of attending '*How to wash a towel properly*' lessons by Yeo Cox. Not a good move as he kept me onboard for the rest of the visit. It was a case of his punishment or 'Off Caps'.

Back to Guzz and I was drafted to HMS *Amethyst* and sailed on the troopship '*Empire Halladale*' from Liverpool. That was an experience that could fill a book with the escapades of the Naval draft. Eventually we arrived at Singapore and I joined HMS *Amethyst* and sailed on anti-communist patrol, then on to Hong Kong and Korea. My broadcast receiver was a shiny B28 which had a new control—a 'red knob' marked RIS. The Tel of the watch (Scouse Maddran) advised me that it was the Reduce in Speed control! Mine never worked and it was a couple of watches before Pots Rutheford explained that it was the Radar Interference Suppressor control. I had the same trouble with the prosign GRNC, Scouse said it was a British ship callsign—feasible, to a Boy Tel! I spent hours checking in every callsign book before somebody told me it meant Groups Not Counted, in American signal language. I did learn from my mistakes as I was rated Ordinary Tel. That's power and glory for you!

Royal Naval Communications

What was happening in the world of RN communications during the period? There was a special item—‘Jobs for the Boys’ in the Communicator. Vacancies for CYSS and CPO Tels., as instructors in the RNVR. Vacancies were for pensioner ratings only. There was also vacancies for ex-communicators at Garrison Point Signal Station. There was still much apathy among all ratings concerning opportunities to prepare for and to sit Educational Test One. The article went on to say that ex HMS *Ganges* sailors seldom need much instruction to enable him to pass this simple test in Arithmetic and English, but as the years drift by, school work is soon forgotten. The moral ‘*Do it now*’. Exemptions from this test may be granted to holders of Matriculation or School Certificate, or the equivalent. I always reckoned that my ET1 was as good as a degree!

Single Sideband communications was still a major topic and Simplified Block Schematics of SSB Receivers appeared on many pages. A partial revolution was expected in Naval Air Communications. AFO 2681/50 (issued in 1951) announced the introduction of three new multi-channel transmitters/receivers in the existing VHF band for Naval aircraft. These sets are 10 channel affairs, the ARI 5491 contains a pair of them. Automatic relay equipment was introduced at sea and took a certain amount of pain out of passing of communications around the fleet.

HMS *Vanguard* was guard ship at Cowes and provided the communications and gunnery expertise. Type 66 was used at the various shore stations on sailing wave, the 612ET and the 682 radio telephone link were manned by boy telegraphists who undertook their jobs with a great sense of responsibility and with almost no supervision. Particularly worthy of mention were Boy Tels J B Smith and Johns who manned their sets at the Royal Yacht Squadron and other clubs. Mr Capper, the Master Gunner of HMS *Vanguard* was controlling and managing gun salutes and starts and finishes at the Royal Yacht Squadron—undoubtedly this must have been an innovation for the venerable club.

Home Fleet News

The Portsmouth Squadron was given full coverage in the 1952 Communicator. HMS *Boxer*, ex–Tank Landing Ship, now Radar Training Ship and Squadron Leader, had sufficient W/T equipment for a Combined Headquarters ship, and her remote control equipment (apparently devised by Heath Robinson in conjunction with Emmett) is complex enough to give headaches to most people. HM Ships *Redpole* and *Starling* were the navigational training ships for HMS *Dryad*. HMS *Fleetwood* conducted trials for ASRE, HMS *Finisterre* was gunnery trials ships, HMS *Contest* the submarine target ship, and HMS *Launceston Castle* acted as Air Target Training Ship from Milford Haven. HM *LCT4063* was an irregular visitor and HMS *Reggio* was soon to relieve HMS *Suvla*. Quite a squadron. The 4th Destroyer Squadron, HM Ships *Aisne*, *Jutland*, *Corunna* and *Agincourt* joined the Med Fleet in order to supplement the Canal Zone ships. Captain D became a Commander Task Group with a group consisting of 1 carrier, 1 cruiser and 5 destroyers. The 4th Minesweeping Squadron was sweeping around a break in a telephone cable of Holland, whilst the 104th Minesweeping Squadron was just off the Baltic, and the 232nd was just beginning to appear out of various yards around the coast. Captain (M/S) was in *Bramble*. The 104th MS used to be the 5th MS (the old Fishery Protection Flotilla, and the 1st FTB Squadron joined up with the Inshore Flotilla bringing the squadron strength up to 32 vessels.

In October 1951 *Vanguard* arrived at Devonport for a four month refit and once again became a Portsmouth manning commitment. The cheerful West Country faces departed and HMS *Mercury* had to scrape the bottom of the barrel to provide the barest minima for a Battleship’s complement. ASRE arrived to up date and put right items of special equipment used since the last royal tour. SS *Gothic* became the interim Royal Yacht. HMS *Illustrious* was carrying out troopings to Cyprus, and HMS *Implacable* was the senior Fleet Training Unit. The 2nd Training Squadron consisting of 3 destroyers, 6 frigates, and 5 A/S trawlers were employed by HMS *Osprey* for A/S exercising at Portland.

Mediterranean Fleet News

HMS *Euryalus* made a rapid departure from her Malta workup to spend time keeping an eye on some unruly Egyptians who got out of station and generated the Cairo riots. On completion she became part of Task Force 56 as a task unit under the care and guidance of *Agincourt* and off to Cyprus they went. Chief Tel ‘Charlie’ Tinkler, Yeoman Watson and Trotter were part of the Communications crew, Abadan the rest & recreation port!

HMS *Manxman* (the fastest three legged sea going cat in the world) moved around in the Canal area attending to merchant ships, then to Port Sudan to embark the new British Ambassador to Saudi Arabia and deliver him to Jeddah. On then to the Adriatic and a run ashore at Trieste. On to Tripoli and back to Malta to tie up alongside HMS *Tyne*. HMS *Cleopatra* was also involved at the Canal and other areas. The 2nd Frigate Squadron (HM Ships *Mermaid*, *Loch Lomond*, *Magpie* and *Loch Dunvegan* were busy in all areas of the Med along with HMS *Surprise* (22,000 miles in a year).

East Indies Station

HMS *Mauritius* was the Flagship and later in 1952 was relieved by HMS *Kenya*. HMS *Mauritius* also spent time at Abadan until relieved by HMS *Euraylus*. The temperature 123 degrees and no air conditioning yet. Ceylon to Singapore, Calcutta, Zanzibar, Mombassa and Colombo were some of the places visited. HMS *Gambia* (4th Cruiser Squadron) was also part of the East Indies Fleet during 1952 and HMS *Wildgoose*. At Ceylon West W/T a four foot Polonga snake struck and killed REM Hawke.

America & West Indies Station

The West Indies squadron included HMS *Sheffield*, HMS *Sparrow*, HMS *Burghead Bay*, HMS *Snipe* and HMS *Veryan Bay*. Between them they visited Antigua, Grenada, St Lucia, Barbados, Trinidad, La Guira (Venezuela), Curacoa, Pigeon Island and Guantanamo Bay. Not a bad run ashore! HMS *Sheffield* was really with it communications wise she had been completely modernised with a full kit of seven 600 series transmitters, a 'Christmas tree' broadband unipole on the top of Y turret, a bow-tie (broadband dipole) on the mainmast, and used the mast itself as the grounded element of a folded monopole. During one exercise every set on the ship was in use that's 12 V/UHF and nine HF transmitters.

South Atlantic Station

The Cruiser HMS *Bermuda* was the Fleet Flagship, HMS *Acteon* and HMS *Neride* made up the rest of the squadron. Operations, exercises with the SA Navy and East and West Coast cruises. Ports visited included Libreville, Lagos, Duala, Port Gentile, Lobito, Sapele, Calabar, Luanda, and Dakar. All this on top of harbour periods at Cape Town and Simon's Town. No complaints from SASA? Snakes seem to be the theme in 1952 as CPO Tel Raven (ex-Ganges instructor) killed a 7ft cobra by the C&POs Mess at Slangkop. The routine of the office was enlivened by the appearance of a Skaapsteeker snake. The service message to Whitehall explaining the delay stated '*delay due to poisonous snake in the office*' this was sent after the snake was despatched dead.

Far East Station

The Far East was all operational due to the Korean war and the Chinese communist terrorist campaign in Malaya plus Hertha Bertog riots in Singapore. Fleet units were numerous from the Royal Navy and Commonwealth navies plus French, Dutch, South Korean, South American and of course the Americans. Some of the ships there: HMS *Glory*, HMS *Belfast*, HMS *Ceylon*, HMS *Unicorn*, HMS *Theseus*, 8th DS *Comus*, *Consort*, *Concord* and more as the 8th DS had 114 Communicators! The 3rd Frigate Squadron, HM Ships *Crane* (F3), *Black Swan*, *St Brides Bay*, *Amethyst*, HMAS *Sydney*, *Anzac*, *Warramunga*, HMCS *Athabaskan*, *Huron*, HMNZS *Rotoiti*, Netherlands ships *Van Galen* and *Piet Hein* and French Ships *Arromanches*. Some names I cannot recall, including the RFA Wave ships and others who kept the fleet supplied.

Communications wise the Far East was the place to be. 9 lines on a destroyer Broadcast, Task Group Common, ROK Guerrilla's Net, Tactical Primary, Combat Information, Primary, Combat Information Secondary, Airspot, Aero Distress and a Portable SCR 61 to some Koreans ashore. One report stated:

'In the midst of 1,700 groups per day out traffic, the babble of Korean and United Nations voices over loudspeakers, dits and dahs and the grating of fruit machines, the office door frequently opens to allow the hot air to blow forth. The carrying of portables is just another burden of the Sparker. Like hot house flowers wrapped up in arctic clobber they man boat patrol, minesweeping junks and spotting waves and go away in light craft and boats.'

This then was my life at the time and I shared and enjoyed it with Pots Rutherford, Yeo Bennet, L/Tels R C Hill and Richardson (HO)—both Scousers, Hoppy Hopkins, Bungy Williams Scouse Maddren, Jack Worth, Jack O'Hara, Doc Onslow, L/Sig Giles, Sigs, McWilliam, Eaglestone, White etc. In between operations there were runs ashore in Sasebo and Kure, Hong Kong, Singapore and Borneo. The commission so far was great. A signal to remember was sent by Vice Admiral Scott-Moncrieff as CTG 95.1 to CTE 95.2 on the Accession Day of Queen Elizabeth II: '*On this historic occasion I trust you will arrange to salute by firing live shells at Her Majesty's enemies*'. Amongst others, we did.

CHAPTER 5 – 1953-1959

I must explain the major time warp 1953-1959! I have gone from a yearly recollection to a 10 year time span. This entails cutting the story of my adventures—which took every minute of my life and would take almost as long to recount—in order that every member may read of my communication recollections during their lifetime. I (with guidance and encouragement from Dick Lloyd, *the* first-class Gazette Editor) have opted for a 10 year précis.

Events 1953–1959

In 1953 General Eisenhower was inaugurated as the 34th President of the United States and Marshal Stalin died. Sir Winston Churchill was created a Knight of the Garter; the Coronation of HM Queen Elizabeth II in Westminster Abbey; flood disaster on the east coast of England and an agreement signed for laying the first transatlantic telephone cable. Violent earthquakes devastate Argostoli in the Ionian Islands—many RN ships to the area to aid rescue and relief operations.

In 1954 the Americans exploded a hydrogen bomb at Bikini Atoll; the Queen and Duke of Edinburgh visited Australia during their Commonwealth tour; Roger Bannister ran the mile in under 4 minutes, and the television licence fee raised from £2 to £3.

In 1955 the bank rate was increased to 3.5% from 3%; the City of London became a smokeless zone; the Independent Television Service began; Hugh Gaitskell was elected as leader of the Labour party; Sir Winston Churchill resigned as Prime Minister, and Sir Anthony Eden succeeded him. A General election saw the Conservatives in with a 59 seat majority.

1956 saw Britain's coldest day since 1895; the Queen and Duke visited Nigeria; April saw a cease fire between Israel and Egypt, and in June the last British troops left Suez. Colonel Nasser became President of Egypt. October saw the Israel v Egypt conflict start again and an Anglo French offensive was launched on the 31st October, by December Suez was history. I was receiving marriage allowance, and the transatlantic telephone service was inaugurated.

1957 It was announced that National Service call-up to cease in 1960; petrol rationing ended; the Suez Canal was cleared and reopened to all shipping. The first premium bond prize was drawn and the Treaty of Rome was signed by the 'Six' and the common market established. There was tragedy in the form of the Lewisham railway accident in the fog where ninety people died.

During 1958 several satellites were launched—one with a dog onboard, and Sputnik, the first ever, was in its burn-out orbit; the Atlas series of satellites went into space to investigate the feasibility of radio relay; Sir Vivian Fuchs and his Commonwealth Trans-Antarctic expedition completed the first crossing of Antarctica; General de Gaulle became President of France; USS *Nautilus* surfaced having passed under the North Pole; *Quemoy* in the Formosa Straits was bombarded by the Chinese; Empire Day was renamed Commonwealth Day, and the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) was launched under the presidency of Lord Russell of Liverpool.

1959 The last year of the fifties, Fidel Castro took over the reins in Cuba, and Archbishop Makarios returned to Cyprus after 8 years in exile. The St Lawrence seaway was formally opened; Jodrell Bank radio relayed a message to America via the moon, and the US post Office made the first successful delivery of mail by guided missile—hot stuff. The Vickers Vanguard turbo prop aircraft set a new transatlantic speed record; the Bank of England introduced a new series of bank notes (10s, £1 £5, £10); the Naval Dockyard in Hong Kong closed after 80 years and riots occurred in Malta Dockyard.

During the fifties the Royal Navy was employed in six trouble spots around the world and I'm sure most of us from that era served in several of them:

1948/49/50	China
1950 to 53	Korea, Malaya
1951	Gulf of Aqaba
1955/59	Cyprus
1956	Suez
1958/59	Iceland (Cod War No.1)

Life in a blue suit for the HMS Ganges trained Boy Telegraphist

My adventures/recollections during the fifties took place in many and various class of ship to many ports home and abroad. I started in HMS *Vanguard*, then my first foreign in the Far East, back to UK, L/Tels course, a couple of Algerine class minesweepers—what a run we had paying off in Liverpool! A rum queue outside the Liver Buildings before the stores set off for Risley. That cost the Buffer, Killick Jack Dusty, the Skipper, Jimmy and several others a Court of Enquiry and consequential penalties. They actually lost the stores lorry minus the bubbly—that went outside the Liver Buildings. We should have got a medal as we had to fight off a crowd of pierhead Scousers who thought it was a recruiting give away!

An MSML next: Who was the AB cook-of-the-day who *boiled* the leg of lamb that the Skipper had proudly brought back from a shopping trip? I was also wardroom steward in between Single Operator Periods (SOPS) and I refused to take the resultant mess down. Wise decision as the Skipper threw a right wobbler and the AB was made permanent ship's cook under the control of the Cox'n.

After the MSML a Ham class inshore sweeper: Who borrowed the car that belonged to the Base Captain for a run to the Smoke, and never got there thanks to the diligent and observant Dorset police? Why Dorset? Well we had to drop off the Sparker off another sweeper in Poole and it was on the way from Poole that our fortunes changed! As a result of the hearings, court proceedings and Pusser's pound of flesh, this time it was *anchor away* ... 10 days cells and three months two and two. I hadn't received my first GCB so I didn't have one to lose! Different sentence from previous discipline courses at overseas DQs.

So it was back to the Far East as a Tel again and crew on the R&R MFV from HMS *Terror*, Cox'n's winger at Kranji, until I was discovered by a Chief Tel who knew I was a Sparker. What a life it had been as Station postie, tankey and cinema operator, I had more sway than the Cox'n.

I recall my two oppos, fans of the God Pan. They kept calling on him (home made alter, hand drawn circle and tickler for incense) to help us out for our runs ashore as Sew Sew wouldn't lend us any more. The pay night barbecues down by the old shelters, you remember? The dug out shelters the Japanese stored all the looted gold and stuff—or so it was said! The CO knew where his hens went, he just couldn't catch us, even though there was a trail of feathers from the en-route hennapping (no goats available), plucking and making ready for the fire.

Back to Guzz as a L/Tel again, PO Tel's Qualifying Course (HMS *Mercury*), an Amphibious Observation Bombardment Royal Artillery (AOBRA) refresher course with the 95th Amphibious Observation Regiment Artillery (AORRA). Married and off to Suez then the Med on a Daring (HMS *Defender*), promoted to PO Tel complete with draft chit from *Defender* to *Victorious*. She'd almost finished the long refit which included new catapults, arrester gear, angle deck and the 984 CDS radar system.

The fifties had become the sixties by the time I was drafted from *Victorious*. I'd met and made many good run ashore oppos and friends. Friendships which have lasted until the present. Many characters such as the sparkers, who under the guidance of an Engineer Officer, were going to row the Atlantic in a Montague whaler. One of them practised for months at acquiring a nocturnal body clock. Their Lordships did not agree to this adventure with the consequent great disappointment for the exped team. The nocturnal sparker took it very badly and dived over the side in Portsmouth and started to swim the Atlantic from South Railway Jetty. It would have been a great record but the duty guardboat picked him up before he actually made Gosport. He was drafted shortly afterwards. Runs ashore were plenty, my problem was I couldn't get back on time consequently my runs were often curtailed.

The padre's trips in the Far East were the best. I don't think the padre did a recce before organising the R&R short leave trips, as I, along with the rest of the watch ashore couldn't get over the sites and splendours of our four days at Miyajima (I think that's the name!). The Island where dying and being born there was not allowed. One had to be fit to survive the delights and pace of the run ashore, hot springs, sushi and saki, etc. The stories are for another book as are the canteen messing yarns and defaulters tales. I experienced and participated in many!

Royal Naval Communications

What was happening in the world of Royal Naval Communications during the period.

Early in the fifties we still had the wartime communications equipment in many ships but the first of the up-to-date and state-of-the-art equipment was being fitted. The B40 and B41 receivers and the 600 series transmitters. The stand in Royal Yacht had a 20 kW SWB (SWAB) 11 fitted, plus she carried a naval

complement of communicators. One name that comes to mind was Chief Tel. 'Jackie' Fisher. New Air Sea Rescue equipment known as: Search and Rescue and Homing 'SARAH' to replace 'WALTER'! Sorry I have no ideas on WALTER.

An improved voice communication capability was in the offing and also Frequency Shift Keying (FSK) transmissions were about to enter the wireless office. A RATT (Radio Automatic TeleType) system was being developed for the fleet, this would make life easier for the sparker. All he would have to do was tear of the signals as they rolled up out of the teleprinter! Wrong! Initially it was a nightmare what with ZBZ nil. Reruns and bits of mechanical printer strewn all over the bench. This RATT did not desert the sinking ship though, the brains at ASWE and I suppose HMS *Mercury* persevered and all was magic as they promised. Even so there were still times when I reported to flags that we had only missed 1754 numbers overnight. Mind you, it was a US Navy Broadcast we were copying and they churned out a continuous stream of non essential reports and PX Club ice cream and entertainment sitreps!

An explanation of RATT appeared in the Summer 1954 edition of the Communicator and enlightened us on seven and a half unit Stop-Start code, Interrupted Carrier Keying, Frequency Shift Keying, Single Side Band, Diversity Reception and Error Detecting. This was followed up In the Summer 1955 edition with an article on the standard RATT Bay which consisted of two teletypewriters Model TT69/UG or TT70A/UG which worked with standard B41 and slightly modified B40 receivers, and the ships standard UHF set type 691, in conjunction with the other RATT units, the 'Converter/Comparator' and 'Two Tone Modulator' and associated switches, plugs and power supply units.

The TT20 was still a few years away along with the on-line equipment. Meanwhile the Buntings received a Heather Mark II lantern, a new type HSL and a new Daylight Signal Lantern. At the same time long distance VHF Propagation by Ionospheric Scatter was being taken seriously, HMS *Fleetwood* having conducted observations, whilst on passage to Corunna, with the GPO in 1953.

We did of course get yet another phonetic alphabet. Once it was Ack Ack, Beer Beer, then Able, Baker, Charlie, Dog I am like a chocolate frog! We moved into Alpha, Bravo Charlie Delta etc. This was for NATO, now every communicator would be able to understand the American language which they call English.

VHF was becoming UHF in the world of tactical circuits. Communication procedures were slowly being standardised in NATO and new comms books appeared on the office bookshelf or safe: Allied Communication Publications. ACP124—WT Procedures, ACP125—Voice Procedures, ACP130—DF Procedures and many more, ACP 121, 122, 148, 176, etc. These publications were supplemented in most cases by Admiralty Fleet Order ('S' SERIES). Remember S1, S2, S3 and S7 which came complete with Optimum Frequencies Charts and intriguing place names and remembered callsigns such as Harman W/T, Coonawara, Vishakhapatnam, Chittagong, Welisara, Iriramgo, VTG, ZLO, GZO. GYL, VTF, etc.

It was during the fifties that the Warfare branch was really hatched and, Telegraphists and Signalmen became Radio and Tactical Operators. All of a sudden I ceased to be POTS and became RS, and my oppo who opted for Tel(S) became a Golly or RS(W)—he failed the language aptitude test on Arabic, Russian and/or Chinese.

The future of Royal Naval communications was under the microscope during the late 1950s and it really was going to be a small step for the Communicator and a giant one for all. The FSK and FST transmission and reception was to improve in leaps and bounds and the Integrated Communication System (with valves) was being progressed. Communication in Short Term (COMIST) equipment was being fitted and more efficient aerials, broadband and directional, multi-coupling, AJE and APH were appearing on yardarms.

I was quite fortunate as I was a PO Tel and RS on HMS *Victorious* 1957–1960 and we had some very bright sparkers onboard. Amongst them there was PO Tel Gordon Lucas and L/Tel Mike Challinor who with the SCO 2, Lt. Arthur Howell and Chief Tel Clarke (Guzz Nobby Clarke), who joined ex instructional staff HMS *Ganges*, modified our 600 series transmitters to allow us to make HF FSK transmissions, the Hamalund (sic) receiver for SSB voice reception and an automatic Jamming Safety Signal Keyer. The Keyer or 'K' maker, was an ex SRE gramophone player fitted with a Dah Dit Dah cam plugged into the 618H and transmitted a stream of Ks for the whole exercise period. Yes, I was involved! I did the holding-of-bits routine and kept quiet when requested! The bright sparks were rewarded with donations from Herbert Lott! Remember him?

It was in 1957 that the computer made its entry to the world of naval communications, Signal Transmitting Receiving and Distributing (STRAD) was installed at Whitehall W/T and later (1960) Mauritius W/T was also fitted with STRAD. Around the corner in the time warp the A/T magic in the form of TARE was under development. I would suggest that the fifties was the launch pad for the Royal Navy's journey in the electronics age. An age that came upon us in an adrenaline rush of hands-off, hands-on hi-tech advancement.

As the Chinese curse states: *'I wish you a life of interesting times'*. That would have meant the life of the Royal Naval sailor, Communicator, Gunner, TAS or RP during the late fifties, sixties and early seventies because from what I read of the eighties and nineties that was 'a life of extremely interesting times' for every Royal Navy sailor.

Fleet News

In the fifties the first anti-submarine frigate to be launched for the Royal Navy since the end of World War II, HMS *Dundas*, was launched at Cowes. HMS *Salisbury*, an air direction frigate was launched at Devonport, along with HMS *Girdle Ness* the Royal Navy's first missile ship—remember Sea Slug? And a new A/S aircraft to be known as the 'Seamew' was taken off the secret list. This aircraft was specifically designed for operation from light escort carriers. HM Yacht *Britannia* completed her initial work-up period. The Home Station boasted the 4th Destroyer Squadron, 3rd Submarine Squadron, HMS *Vanguard*, *Eagle*, *Ark Royal*, *Albion*, *Bulwark* and *Tyne*. The 2nd Training Squadron complete with new two-funnel Seaward Patrol Craft *Shalford*, *Greatford* and *Camberford*. HMS *Grenville* was the Leader. The new coastal and inshore minesweepers were being commissioned and new type sweep gear fitted. PO Tel K E Taylor was with the British North Greenland Expedition erecting wireless masts on the shore of Lake Britannia whilst CRE H R Dean built igloos! HMS *Sheffield* was flying the flag of CinC America and West Indies Station. The Far East Fleet was still running down from the Korean War, which, I note from BBC World, is still in a condition of stalemate as far as peace is concerned. In the South Atlantic HMS *Euryalus* was enjoying west coast and east coast cruises accompanied by HMS *Sparrow*. Comms Lieutenant Webber took over as Officer-in-Charge Cape Wireless Stations. HMS *Superb* had a very good Communication's racing whaler's crew—CYS F Mitchell in charge. In the photograph I recognise and remember Tel Phil Worthington and O/Sig G Salmon. I also see faces from the past in the photograph of 'Communicators of HMS *Forth* in camp at Astakos, Greece (Christmas 1954 edition).

In the Med Fleet, Admiral, The Earl Mountbatten, flying his Flag in HMS *Glasgow*, went off to visit King Idris in Benghazi, then back to Malta for the ceremonial reception to greet the Emperor of Ethiopia. HMS *Bermuda* completed Canal Zone duties in time to be back in Malta for Christmas. HMS *Duchess*, *Diamond*, *Diana* and *Decoy* were well stuck into their general service time as the Med Fleet Daring Class. HMS *Sursay*, an Isle Class Danlayer, was engaged on Operation 'Elbe Isle' under the control of Captain M/S Med in HMS *Wakeful*. HMS *Gambia* was the winner of the Fleet Regatta. There was of course Janex, Fofex, Febex, Witex and X marks the spot for all ships in the Med. The flag of CinC East Indies was resident in HMS *Newfoundland* who after seventeen months of her commission, received a loan but crash draft to the Far East as flagship of FO2 FES. HMS *Gambia* also carried the flag of CinC East Indies Flag. Far East ships were HMS *Newcastle*, *Comus*, *Concord*, *Consort* and *Cossack* of the 8th DS and HMS *Crane*, *Opossum*, *Modeste*, *St Brides Bay* and *Cardigan Bay* of the 3rd Frigate Squadron. HMS *Protector* went South to the Antarctic—again with Scousers Pete Flynn and Brian Simpson (sorted out at HMS *Ganges*) and HMS *Pelican* appeared at Simon's Town. In 1955 HMS *Ganges* held golden anniversary celebrations, Admiral Sir Philip Knight, KBE CB was the principal guest of honour and the 'Button Boy' summed up a very successful day. His comment to the local newspaper '*It was smashing*'.

There was an interchange of British and Russian Naval visits. HMS *Triumph*, *Apollo*, *Diana*, *Decoy*, *Chevron* and *Chieftain* visited Leningrad, whilst a Russian cruiser squadron—*Sverdlov* (Flagship) and minelaying destroyers visited Portsmouth. In Leningrad the run ashore was cultural—very, and included the Naval Museum, the Art Gallery, the Circus, Cinema and Ballet (They needed Chief Yeoman Hawkes). In Portsmouth the Russian sailors did get ashore on their own and bus trips all over Hampshire and round London including visits to a tea garden and several village pubs.

I cannot list every ship of the fleet for each year there were far too many. If I missed your ship remember the Royal Navy was still a very big navy in the fifties.

Admiral, The Earl Mountbatten, top of the Long Course 1925, First Sea Lord 1955, Chief of the Defence Staff in 1959. He obviously received many 'H' recommends during his time. Ex Instructor Boy W J Flindell (Hawke Division 1949) was now a S/Lt and successfully completed the Supplementary List Observer Course. Jnr Tel Avery won the Portsmouth Command Cross Country Championship (1957) and Jnr Sig Brady was a quarter finalists of the ABA Jnr Champs. CPO Tel T Wharam received the Royal Humane Certificate for restoring the life of a man by resuscitation.

In 1958 PO Tel Reuben Rodgers was awarded the BEM and retired after 41 years. CYS Wood, CPO Tel(S) Clifford, CCY D Spindler and CRS W Taylor were also awarded the BEM. Chief Communication Yeoman Clarke, SSM, BEM (1934 to 1958) retired. His last commission was at HMS *Ganges* as a Communications Instructor.

LRO H R Hitch BEM April 1915 to August 1955 retired. He first used a Model 'C' Crystal receiver and a Spark transmitter and his last commission was at Nore W/T. He actually took pension in 1939! LRO Green was Mentioned in Despatches and RS E Clapp was watchkeeping in the Antarctic using a 612 and a Type 622.

The next chapter will take us into the sixties. That was a good period for me as I had matured and actually settled down or as Val says 'Grown Up'!

CHAPTER 6 – 1960-1969

The Sixties, to me the 1960-1970 period, was the most interesting time for naval communications in all areas. Scientific advance in ships and equipment meant the Royal Navy was operating at the leading edge of technology with the world's finest sailors at the controls. The Royal Navy was still the third strongest in the world, pole position being held by America and Russia. I would suggest that was only in the number of ships, I still reckon Britain's sailors were and still are Number One! During the sixties HMS *Ganges* kept the Fleet manned with highly trained sailors to operate all the advanced equipment, communications, radar, sonar and armament. I like to think I matured (Val's words) during the Sixties I enjoyed my run ashore without being a defaulter on my return onboard! I was a young PO Tel, married with a one year old son and had decided I would complete pension time engagement. What was in store for me will be revealed later!

World events made the Sixties a turbulent time in politics, war and peace. In the world of technology great advances in medicine, electronic and mechanical engineering were the order of every day. In the world of culture and art the advances were a shock to the system and senses of Mr & Mrs Citizen—the Beatles, Mary Quant, the Rolling Stones and other artistic wonders gave us the benefit of their genius. I like to think if I hadn't joined the Navy I could have had Ringo's job as the Beatles drummer! Why not, my Morse transmission was the finest—such rhythm and speed, a joy to listen to!

A look at some of the major events:

Events 1960-1969

1960. The Belgium Congo, Nigeria and Cyprus became independent, the Malayan Emergency came to an end and there was the sickening Sharpville massacre in South Africa. Alfred Hitchcock directed 'Psycho'. Lasers were built in America and oral contraceptive was marketed in the UK.

1961. The Berlin Wall was built, John F Kennedy elected US President—his first event was the Bay of Pigs invasion. South Africa became a Republic and left the Commonwealth—another good run ashore about to be lost. In the world of science Yuri Gargarin piloted the first manned space flight.

1962. Was the year of the Cuban Missile crisis. Independence was gained by Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, and Uganda (Idi was lurking in the background). The Beatles had a major hit with 'Love Me Do' and Andy Warhol gave us the Marilyn Monroe prints for our locker door!

1963. Alec Douglas-Home became Prime Minister, De Gaulle vetoed Britain's bid to enter the EEC—this was revenge for the hiding they got at Trafalgar. A test ban treaty was signed which never really worked thanks to France, China, India and not to be outdone Pakistan in 1998! President Kennedy went to Dallas and was assassinated leaving Lyndon Johnson as President of the United States and Texas. The OAU was formed and is still trying to sort itself out and we didn't get a real rave of a hit by any artist.

1964. Harold Wilson (complete with Burberry) became Prime Minister, Breshnev ousted Khrushchev to take over the Russian Presidency. America declared or rather entered the Vietnam war. In South Africa Nelson Mandela was sentenced to life imprisonment, the end of his sentence would see him declared President of South Africa. To ensure that the Middle East would fester on for years ahead the PLO was formed. The most helpful contribution to mankind in 1964 was the introduction of the Word Processor!

1965. Once again the French people were subjected to De Gaulle as President, UDI was declared in Rhodesia, India and Pakistan were in conflict over Kashmir, and there was a military take-over in Indonesia. The latter events have occurred on a regular basis since! The big film was 'Loot' and the major hits were the Rolling Stones 'Satisfaction' and Bob Dylan's 'Highway 61 Revisited'.

1966. A great year for English soccer—we won the World Cup. I listened to it on a native's radio in Kilindini Road Mombassa. There was a cultural revolution in China and in India Indira Gandhi was elected Prime Minister. There were no major hits other than 'England' 'England' 'England' and 'God Save the Queen' both performed live at Wembley and many pubs throughout the world.

1967. De Gaulle was still off the British and vetoed our second bid to join the EEC. Abortion was legalised in Britain, unfortunately not in France at the time of M. De Gaulle's conception. The Biafran War started and carried on until 1970 and in Israel there was a shorter six day war versus the Arabs. Professor Barnard performed the first heart transplant operation, and the first Pulsar was discovered (no not the Nissan, it's a star!). As for hit records, we had the famous Liverpool Lads, the Beatles with 'Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band'.

1968. The Soviets invaded Czechoslovakia. The Tet offensive kicked off in Vietnam. Violent protests erupted in Northern Ireland with student protest protests erupting throughout Europe.— Paris in particular. Martin Luther King was assassinated in America. Not a particularly good year for peace and goodwill! As for the movies the film to watch was ‘2001 Space Odyssey’.

1969. There was a Sino–Soviet frontier war happening. The British army deployed to Northern Ireland and the Biafran people continued to suffer. Politically it was a better year for UK as De Gaulle resigned as President. Willie Brandt became Chancellor in Germany (and employed the wrong secretary as was revealed many years later). There were a couple of shaky political advancements—Richard Nixon elected US President and Colonel Gaddafi took over power in Libya. During the year technology advances put Neil Armstrong on the moon for walk about and Concorde took to the air. Meanwhile the pop groups and fans had a pop festival at Woodstock which created a major topic for discussion!

That then was the ‘Sixties’ in a nutshell. The Chinese curse, ‘*I wish you to live in interesting times*’ was certainly in place for many people.

What operational areas were the Royal Navy involved in during the ‘Sixties’?

1960	Gibraltar
1961	Kuwait
1962	British Guiana
1962/66	Indonesia
1959/73	Bahamas Patrol
1964	Tanzania
1965/75	Beira Patrol
1967/68	Aden
1968	Mauritius
	Northern Ireland

Fleet News

New ships were launched. In 1960 it was HMS *Devonshire* and HMS *Dreadnought* and in 1961 the Holy Loch Polaris base became operational. In 1962 HMS *Cook* recorded an ocean depth of 37,782 ft in the Mindanao Trench. During 1963 The Tactical Title was lost to the Communicators and they became RO ‘G’, ‘T’ or ‘W’ but still Sparkers, Buntings and Gollies. New entries were JRO (U) and the Crossed Semaphore Flag badge of the Signaller changed to the symbolic Sparkers badge (affectionately know by other branches as ‘Flying Bull S*** Struck by Lightning’. In that same year HMS *Dreadnought* was commissioned and HMS *Valiant* launched. In 1965 the Skynet satellite communications system was underway. The oil rig ‘Sea Glen’ sank in the North Sea and in Borneo things were hotting up. 1966 and it was announced that the Fleet Air Arm was to be run down and a more powerful Guided Missile ship was ordered. The tankers ‘*Joanna V*’ and ‘*Manuela*’ hit the world news as the Royal Navy carried out its Beira Patrols and Beira Bucket competitions. HMS *Resolution* was launched and the Rhodesian talks between Mr Smith and our Prime Minister were held in HMS *Tiger*. In 1967 the Fleet Air Arm sank the ‘*Torry Canyon*’ which had run aground off the coast of Cornwall and produced a massive oil spill. The bombing was very successful it released the trapped oil and set it on fire averting a major pollution disaster. Meanwhile HMS *Wakeful* was trial ship for the first shipborne satellite antenna system and HMS *Renown* was launched. In 1969 the Skynet A1 satellite was launched and the broadcast became a 100% message received system, no more INT ZDK OR ZFG, we received them first time every time—any errors were typing errors—and the word TYPO entered the Communications Word and Phrase book. As did Wooded and Wobulation, COMIST and ICS. BID 580 or BID 660 indicated we had moved into the world of on-line Crypto.

Some of the ships that served the Fleet during the Sixties:

HMS *Carysfort*, *Troubridge*, *Ark Royal*, *Rothsay*, *Salisbury*, *Lion*, *Tiger*, *Trafalgar*, *Jutland*, *Dunkirk*, *Gambia*, *Aurora*, *Albion*, *Hermes*, *Victorious*, *Undaunted*, *Walkerton*, *Shavington* and Tons galore. HMS *Crossbow*, *Battleaxe*, *Solebay*, *Saintes*, *Camperdown* and *Finisterre*. HMS *Leopard*, *Loch Insh*, *Meon*, *Vidal*, *Ausonia*, *Dunkirk*, *Anzio*, *Loch Fyne*, *Brighton*, *Berwick*, *Blackpool*, *Llandaff*, *Londonderry*, *Ashanti*, *Dundas*, *Triumph*, *Hampshire*, *Mohawk*, *Decoy*, *Dainty*, *Ajax*, *Phoebe*, *Naiad*, *Lincoln*, *Berwick*, *Arethusa*, *Cleopatra*, *Kent*, *Eurylus*, *Sirius*, *Devonshire*, *London*, *Bristol*, *Intrepid* and *Fearless*, HMS *Fife*, *Kedleston*, *Sirius*, *Galatea* and *Glamorgan* and more. Just a few names from the Commissioning Forecasts during the Sixties.

Life in a Blue Suit for the HMS Ganges trained Boy Telegraphist (Scouse in the Sixties).

I was a Radio Communication Supervisor (RCS) on HMS *Victorious* in 1960, I had been a PO Tel. In March 1960 I had a month at HMS *Mercury* and as a result of an AFO became a Radio Supervisor (RS) instead of an RCS! A draft to Pompey W/T (MTN) followed, my first meeting with Reuben Rogers and Willie Weekes. Whilst at MTN we moved from the Dockyard to Fort Southwick and I found myself as RS of the Watch with three WRNS as my operators! Strange behaviour. I recall asking for my soup to be heated up (it was at midnight). My operator duly left to prepare the midnight meal for the other WRNS and my soup. An hour later and desperately in need of my soup I went to the galley to see what the problem was. There was my WREN Radio Operator (WRO) with her back to the table and the L/Sig of the MSO watch looking at me over her shoulder! My first real opportunity to practise tact and diplomacy, I said *'This is not getting my soup cooked, would you please hurry along a bit'*. My operator never came back to the wireless room that watch and my soup was delivered by the Bunting of the watch!

From Fort Southwick I was drafted to RNLO Mombassa, married accompanied. Now that was a draft and a half. My family had increased and 13 months after my son was born his twin sisters arrived (1960) so the Eilbecks' were already a complete tribe!

Part of the job at Mombassa was to act as an Instructor for the East African Navy so my commission there is to be presented in a book entitled *'The Navy that was Up the Creek, Further Up the Creek and Round the Bend'*. It really was amazing the way the Officers (colonial gentlemen from the White tribe of Africa) and Local Senior Rates performed. For instance the Captain's House was also the Cooks and Stewards training School, the Captain had the biggest household staff in the whole of East Africa and the ships fund provided the training equipment! The MAA (relative of IDI I think) as postman would charge an extra one penny to take mail (complete with stamps) to the main post office. The Sick Bay Chief (a local lad) used to charge all ratings a shilling when they collected their prescription! The East African Navy duties really added a zest to our extremely busy communication duties at RNO Mombassa. There were four RN personnel, a Chief Writer (Bas Bustin then Mac Fieldson), Dave Sarson (CommsYeoman), Jim Pickering LRO and myself.

After Mombassa it was back to reality, home to a really cold winter (Dec 63) and a draft chit to HMS *Scarborough*. A good run with the Dartmouth trainee Midshipmen to West Africa and a rapid deployment to the Med to relieve the frigate squadron which had been rapidly deployed to the Far East for Borneo. Communications-wise we acted as a trial ship for the Comint fit with 640 transmitters and CJK receivers. HF radiation patterns were also tested for the Red Line Do Not Enter Area! This could have brought about sterilisation of myself and LRO Jim Hardy as we held the measuring instrument around the aerials whilst the two ASWE Scientific Officers (one to read and one to write) noted the reading in the safety of the office! Names a plenty: George Jackson (CY), Tim Venter (CY) Jan Brewer (GI), Yapper Yates (TASI), Paul 'Jolly' Rogers (PO Officers Cook), Mick Donovan (PO TM) and Bill Harvey (Chief Buffer). Lots of good runs there including Malta's Independence Day and the opening of the Black Star Hotel in Ghana, and I did apologise to Paul for eating half the wardroom Sunday joint on my return from a late night start run in Naples. Before leaving I just made the run to Scarborough (name town). Comedian Arthur Haynes complete with cast of dancers and singers from the summer show were mess guests. Didn't that upset the Wardroom's social programme. I was promoted Chief in March 65 and headed off to do my SD medical which resulted in the holding back of my B13 and a visit to the Medical Survey Board who pronounced me blind and set about getting rid of me. Thanks to the Medical Captain and Optometrist Surgeon Commander and Lt (SD) (C) Jubb (my DO at Mercury whilst I was waiting discharge). After many months of medical discussion the rules were changed and I was welcomed back as a CRS, backdated to March 65 and a draft to HMS *Ganges* for Collingwood Division. Blind Sparkers were OK, blind SD officers a No No.

On to HMS *Ganges*, *'not for me'*, I said to myself, because I knew that the Instructor's life was more disciplined and harder than the life of the trainee. Under duress I purchased my brown leather gloves, posed for the class photo in front of the POs Block and 277 Class (CRS Eilbeck), 74 Class (PO Erskine) and 75 Class (PO Clarke) then took up residence in Collingwood 44 Mess. My one regret was the crash draft to HMS *Eagle* after only 6 months with the class. CRS Bill Bernard took over. It was for me after all as I thoroughly enjoyed the challenge that confronted every Instructor on his arrival. Yes, I even enjoyed the X-country runs, going up the mast again and winter expeds at outlandish and uncivilised places. Spitfire boats, laundry, early morning showers and who will ever forget being Duty Instructor at the CMG. *'Get back you hoard of hungry boys'*, he cried, as he disappeared under the first wave for the bread and marmalade. The competition with the other divisions—the enemy—Drake Division, CRS Tony Cokes, Exmouth 277 and 278, CCY Reg Charles and 279 CRS Pete Shotbolt. The formidable Collingwood team was very hard to beat, CCY Ron Jupp, CRS (W) (You won't stress me) Barclay, CY Jiggs Morris, Noel Whitlock and many more in the other Divisions. The mess life was very good, always something

happening. Of course I went RA and took up residence in Great Harlings, our neighbours Patrick & Jean Hughes. Another good run ashore (pre RA) was the Ipswich Town FC Supporters Club!

It was June 20, 1965 when I was airlifted from RFA *Retainer* to HMS *Eagle* somewhere in the China Sea, bound for Hong Kong and then to Singapore and the Indian ocean. I had spent a week grounded at RAF Gan because the RAF Movement Control Officer wouldn't listen as I explained that I should be on the departing trooping flight as the Indian Ocean is not the China Sea! Not to worry, I enjoyed a very interesting and relaxing week watching the RAF types go slowly round the bend with Maldivian Madness. Singapore, Beira Patrol, Mombassa and back to Guzz for a dicky refit and return trip to the Far East via Capetown. Many months spent participating in Operations off Aden and Point Patience somewhere in the Arabian Sea in company with (at various times) HMS *Bulwark*, HMS *Dido*, HMS *Devonshire*, HMS *Fearless*, HMS *Valiant*, HMS *Minerva*, HMS *Euryalus*, HMS *Zest*, *Cavalier*, *Troubridge* and *Cambrian*, and about eight different RFAs to oil, feed and ammunition us. On to Singapore, Hong Kong and Fremantle then it should have been New Zealand, Okinawa and Japan but a gentlemen from the new South Yemen started shouting about what he was going to do with the British people still working there, so it was back to Point Patience practising for a Royal Marine assault to get our people out. We had Booties all over the flight deck every night. The deck represented the assault area ashore! After Aden it was Capetown again then home and an East Atlantic deployment and in September 68 a draft to Mercury for the RCIs course which saw me through to the end of the Sixties.

Names a plenty starting with, Captain J C Y Roxburgh CBE, DSO, DSC and Captain J E Pope, Lt Cdr. W L R E Gilchrist (SCO), Lt Norman Hagger (pause for applause), CYS O'Brian, CRS(W) Taff Bowan, RS (W) Colin Rapley, CY Ray Codling, RO (T) Wilkinson, RS Tug Wison, Buster Brown, Freddie Fox, Jim Rogers, LROs Moorhouse and Robison, RO Mike Ellis, Hall, MacCarter and Butcher. LRO Jim Goldsmith, JROs Jock Grant, Lewis, Thorne, Stanton, Shanks, Scott and Saunders to name but a few. In 1966 the Royal Navy had a total of 337,170 men at sea, and lots more ashore supporting them.

Royal Naval Communications

Communications in the Sixties was all about the new equipment being delivered to the Fleet. The equipment of the Sixties was of course the Integrated Communications System (ICS), incorporating the Skynet Satellite and On-line cryptography. A summary of the capabilities and general functions of this giant step (or leap) forward in communications, the Easter 1964 edition of the 'Communicator' advised:

'there is nothing difficult or complex about ICS. It is felt that after the initial change in emphasis in instruction from conventional methods of frequency determination and RF amplification to the methods employed in ICS and type B40 it will be easier for Radio Operators to learn how to use this new equipment rather than the older types.'

That turned out to be true and life was a lot easier except for Alvis Vendor a MOD on-line kit that HMS *Eagle* borrowed for several months. The ICS display at the *Eagle* commissioning ceremony had the theme '*Eagle Spans the World*'. It was or seemed to be a maze of switches, green lights, amber lights, red lights, rejection filters TDAs, WBAs and strange words like synthesizer, tone keying and intermodulation products. ICS was designed and developed around the following points:

- The use of SSB technique.
- Broad Band transmitting aerials using suitable parts of the ship's superstructure as aerials.
- A transmitter common aerial working (CAW) system.
- The use of some form of diversity for transmission using the sky wave mode of propagation.
- The provision on each ship of an accurate and stable frequency standard from which the radio frequencies for the transmitters and receivers can be derived.
- The provision of a central control and monitoring position.

The specifications were mind boggling:

- Frequency Range MF Tx. 240kHz to 600kHz.
- Rx. 10 kHz to 600kHz.
- HF Tx. 1.5 MHz to 24 MHz.

- Rx. 2 mHz to 30mHz.
- Power Output 1kW on HF and 500W on MF with reduction control.
- Emissions.
- Voice (DSB, ISB sc & SSB pc.
- FST – (using tones on SSB sc).
- CW and MCW.
- Multi channelling, ISB and Links.

Then there was the new nomenclature:

- Outfit TDA - MF & HF Drive unit with frequency synth.
- Outfit WBA - HF Wide band Amplifier.
- Outfit WBB - MF, MF Wide band Amplifier.
- Outfit EY - Transmitter aerial exchange.
- Outfit EAW - Transmitter Common Aerial Working (Tiger Class & Carriers 1, Assault ships 2, DLG and Leanders 3).
- Filter Units.
- Busbars.
- MF HF Base Tuners and a dummy load.
- Outfit EZ.
- Receiver Output Exchange.
- Outfit CJA, CLC, CJD 1 and CJD 2. Receivers.
- FSA Frequency Standard and Frequency Divider unit.
- KMM Control Outfit with C&M Desk. (1 for Carriers, 2 for Assault ships & DLGs, 3 for Frigates).
- One HF line consisted of a TDA and a TBA which were permanently wired together.

That was it. or was it? I forgot to mention the niggling inherent problem of 10% frequency separation or 'Freqsep' as it was called! Ship's staff eventually solved the problem by feeding the onboard computer with the basic Complian knowledge and let it sort it out. It did and life in the CRR was so much more pleasant!

In this chapter there are no list of honours, no awards, sports awards or distinctions because I have no room left. To all those who were honoured and praised well done.

Next chapter will take us through the 'Seventies', a further ten years of change. Big changes for the Royal Navy starting with the abolishment of the Tot, the paying off and closing down of HMS *Ganges*, and pension time for Scouse.

A couple of items from the Komms Khronic Kul (KKK) the *Eagle* Comms Branch version of 'Private Eye'. I was the QA and censor. The opposition was the Stoker's paper called 'Shafted', hence the statement on Daily Orders '*Come to the Chief Stoker's Office and get 'Shafted!'*'

CHAPTER 7 – 1970-1979

The Seventies. For the Royal Navy a period of consolidation and for naval communications improvements and fine tuning to the new generation systems and equipment which gave rise to a rethink on the sailors career in the Royal Navy. Boys training was to go with the change of school leaving age. Electronic theory was advancing to the digital age, learning processes were updated, and systematic training became the by-word for a sound curriculum and advanced instructional methods. Mind you the stonochie had worked wonders on me at Shotley, and what a simple and effective training-aid a penny on the back of each hand and a single play record of the *Teddy Bears Picnic* made for touch typing practise! The thought of an hour with 'Faith Hope and Charity' was also a big incentive. Operators titles and their skills went through many changes during the Seventies, the Telegraphist had become a Radio Operator and as a New Entry he became an *Unspecialised Communicator*, then back to being an RO(G) (T) or (W). Telegraphist Special became tiffies as Communications Technicians, RO(W) departed from the Communications stream and became a specialist in his own right, or as we used to say 'Golly' haven't you changed! Operators equipment seemed to advance at a daily rate giving improved performance, superior detection ranges and greater kill capacity. Whatever the change, the '*Ganges*' trained sailor was up with it and ensured that the system performed as stated by the Boffins. It was during the Seventies that the Alma Mater, HMS *Ganges*, decommissioned and Boys' training was no more. The *Ganges*-way was not lost to the Fleet as the professionalism was passed on at the new training bases by Instructors who knew and understood that 'Wisdom is Strength' and 'Cleanliness is next to Godliness'. They continued to keep the Fleet manned with highly trained sailors to operate all the advanced equipment, communications, radar, sonar, armament, engine rooms and flight decks.

The Seventies did not have the turbulent times of the previous decade but there were events of tragedy, happiness, success and disaster in politics, war and peace. The world of technology advanced at an even greater pace in all science fields. Culture and art advances continued to shock and amuse, especially some of the dressed and undressed behaviour at the various pop concerts, displays, award ceremonies festivals and sports events. Mind you I did admire the first 'streaker' at Twickenham. What a healthy young lady she was, the best to date, and of course born and trained in the HMS *Mercury* part of the world! The Beatles (1970 only), the Rolling Stones, Scouse and other artistic wonders continued to give us the benefit of their genius. I had met with Diamond Jim and Buck Taylor and other talented show stoppers so the Scouse version of the Song and Dance Streaker (TOHOM or DOTFA) had been tuned to perfection and shows were by special request and suitable reward only. As we used to say '*I've been banned from better pubs, clubs, streets and town halls than this!*' And, yes I had matured and I really was enjoying life all round and to the full.

Let's look at some of the major events:

Events 1970-1979

1970. Shoulder shaking Edward Heath became Prime Minister, the Tories having won the election. Allende became President of Chile and the Biafran War ended. Germaine Greer, Australian feminist gave use the '*The Female Eunuch*' and the Beatles split up.

1971. Internment without trial became law in Northern Ireland and decimal currency officially used in UK. Idi Amin seized power in Uganda and Bangladesh became a state—later on a right mess and disaster area. The 'Open University' launched in UK.

1972. The year of Bloody Sunday in Northern Ireland and direct rule from Westminster being imposed. Ugandan Asian refugees fleeing Idi flooded into London, and President Nixon went foreign and visited China. '*Last Tango in Paris*' was the film to see, the World Trade Centre was completed and Video Cassette Recorders (VCRs) were first marketed.

1973. There was widespread industrial unrest in UK. Denmark, Ireland and UK entered the EEC, whilst OPEC raised oil prices. President Allende of Chile assassinated during a coup, the United States withdrew from the Vietnam War and the Israelis had their Yom Kippur War. US Skylab missions commenced and Pink Floyd had a smash hit with 'Dark Side of the Moon'.

1974. Harold Wilson (complete with Gannex (ie Burberry) was back as Prime Minister, the IRA started bombing mainland England, dictatorship ended in Portugal and the Northern Ireland Assembly failed. In the USA President Nixon resigned because of the Watergate scandal, Gerald Ford took over as President. Cyprus was invaded by Turkey and Haile Selassie was deposed in Ethiopia. The only contribution of note the world of the arts was a poem '*High Windows*' composed by the English poet Philip Larkin.

1975. Spain was in mourning for Franco and then rejoicing for Juan Carlos who became the King of Spain. This King of Spain did not have an armada. Angola and Mozambique became independent, the war in Vietnam ended, the Khmer Rouge started their nonsense in Cambodia and Lebanon was subjected to a civil war. In outer space the Apollo (US Space Ship not HMS) docked in space with the Soviet Space Station Soyuz.

1976. A good year for James Callaghan as he became Prime Minister and Leader of the Labour Party. Not so for Mao Zedong of China, he died and down went his Gang of Four. In South Africa there was the Soweto riots that happened all over the country. The good things of the year were left to the English biologist Richard Dawkins whose book 'The Selfish Gene' did much to popularise the theory of socio-biology. I never read it myself as I was involved in the riots in South Africa.

1977. Democratic elections were held in Spain and terrorist activities flared up in Germany and Italy. Deng Xiaoping gained power in China and Jimmy Carter became the US President. In South Africa, Steve Biko died in police custody. This case became a highlight case during the Truth and Reconciliation hearings 20 years later. In France the Pompidou (not De Gaulle) Centre was opened and Woody Allen gave us the film of the year 'Annie Hall'.

1978. White smoke from the Vatican chimney announced that Pope John Paul II had been elected as head of the Catholic church. In the US the Camp David agreement was signed—for the first time! And the boat people were leaving Vietnam in fleets of craft of all shape and sizes. The first test tube baby was born, fragile handle with care was the hospital Daily Order. In the art world Dame (Jean) Iris Murdoch produced or wrote the novel of the year 'The Sea, The Sea', in which she explored the quest for the spiritual life for which she was awarded the Booker prize.

1979. The year of strikes in Britain, European Parliament direct elections and Margaret Thatcher became British Prime Minister and stayed for many a year. The Shah of Iran (or Persia as I knew him) was deposed by Khomeini's Islamic uprising. The Soviets invaded Afghanistan, Pol Pot was deposed in Cambodia, the Sandinistas took over in Nicaragua and the SALT 2 agreement was signed. Definitely a year of political upset and change. The good news was that smallpox was eradicated. Film wise my viewing was 'Apocalypse Now'—I thought Brando was speaking a foreign language as I never understood any of his mumbling!

I suggest that the 'Seventies' will contribute about eight events of Millennium note:

- 1973 US Ground troops exit Vietnam.
- 1973 Watergate scandal of the Nixon administration.
- 1973 US Supreme court legalised abortion.
- 1974 Resignation of President Nixon as a result of Watergate.
- 1975 Bill Gates & Paul Allan start the Microsoft empire.
- 1975 The takeover of Saigon by North Vietnam.
- 1977 Launch of the first Personal Computer and the term PC.
- 1978 Birth of the first test tube baby—Louise Brown.

I have better ones that I could contribute but I don't think they would be accepted. I consider my effort with the Limbo Dance Troupe at the Black Star Hotel in Accra, Ghana must have been a world beater even though I broke my glasses getting under at the 5ft 7 in mark! Then again that was in 1964 and I was encouraged to go for the record by George Jackson (CY), Tim Venner (CY), Jan Brewer (GI) and Yapper Yates the TASI who contributed great and loud vocal support!

Onward to the 'Eighties' and for me life in a foreign land and a Navy that was not comparable.

Fleet News

The operational areas that the Royal Navy played a major role in during the 'Seventies' were:

- | | |
|-----------|-------------------------|
| 1973 - 76 | Iceland (Cod War again) |
| 1973 | Bahamas Patrol |
| 1974 | Cyprus |
| 1975 | Beira Patrol |
| 1977 | Belize |

New ships were launched and joined the Fleet and older types were refitted and given new missiles, radar sonar, communication fits, messdeck improvements. New ship names appeared in the Communicator's Commissioning Forecasts as the sea to shore ration was decreased in favour of more sea service. But then we had joined to be seagoing sailors hadn't we? Ship's names and events were plentiful so I can only mention some of them. In 1970 it was HMS *Scimitar*, *Cutlass* and *Sabre* the new FTBs, HMS *Lowestoft*, *Norfolk*, *Antrim*, *Achilles*, *Gurkha*, *Albion*, *Berwick*, *Diomede*, *Falmouth*, *Palliser*, *Puncheston*, *Jaguar*, *Gavington*, *Devonshire* and *Endurance* commissioned and at least 22 other ships recommissioned including HMS *Intrepid*, *Brereton*, *Fearless*, *Hydra*, *Wiston*, *Blake*, *Leopard* and *Rothesay*. HMS *Upton* along with HMS *Lewiston* and sweepers of the Dutch, German, Belgium and French navies cleared an old minefield of 10,000 mines, the largest area reopened to shipping since the Second World War. The wreck of RFA *Ennerdale* which sank after hitting an uncharted coral reef was broken up by a new Far East Fleet method or technique using mortar bombs and torpedo warheads put in place and detonated by RN Wessex helicopters. They had two minutes to get clear! HMS *Endurance* (the old one) met up with Chay Blyth off Cape Horn in the summer of 1971. He later received a welcome greeting from HMS *Ark Royal* 500 miles out in the Atlantic nearing the end of his solo non stop voyage round the world. In 1970 we had the real BLACK TOT DAY, the traditional issue of rum ceased and became history. What a tragedy. Who of us will ever forget Friday July 31, 1970, the daily routine pipe of 'Up Spirits' was to be the last after 300 years. We gathered around our *rum tubs* to perform the last rites and bury the tot. Farewell to Nelson's Blood with black arm bands the dress of the day. I was actually L&RA at NMUU Haslemere so I got myself victualled in for the day as Staff on HMS *London*. We held our service at HMS *Victory* with MAA Tony Beasley (*Ganges* 1949) conducting the service. Where were you on that sad day. HMS *Jupiter* claim to be the last to drink an official tot as they were operating in the West Indies, the furthest West of Her Majesty's ships and working tropical routine! During 1970/1971 the Fleet Chief Petty Officer rank was introduced. and Warrant Officers were now back with the Fleet.

Ships that commissioned or recommissioned in 1971 to 1979 included HMS *Apollo*, *Tiger*, *Hermione*, *Brighton*, *Mohawk*, *Monkton*, *Bossington*, *Hubberston*. HMS *Rhyl*, *Torquay*, *Ariadne*, *Leander* and HMS *Matapan*. *Bacchanate*, *Euryalus*, *Triumph*, *London*, *Tenacity*, *Nubian*, *Zulu*, *Aurora*, *Hermes*, *Eastbourne*, *Niaid*, *Ajax*, *Salisbury* and *Cleopatra*. HMS *Reclaim* was still operating out of Portsmouth using a Type 602E transmitter aided by a Type 641. HMS *Arethusa* and *Penelope* went into C and M whilst HMS *Herald* reduced to a trials crew. HMS *Charybdis* welcomed CRS(W) D (Jumper) Collins the HMS *Mercury* champion one armed bandit player. HMS *Warspite* claimed to be the first RN ship (I know she's a submarine) to navigate without using a magnetic compass. HM S/M *Artemis* (24 years old) sank at her moorings alongside at HMS *Dolphin*, HMS *Belfast* was moored in the Thames, near London Bridge and is a major attraction to visitors. A tribute to the largest cruiser ever built for the Royal Navy and the last major warship to have taken part in the D-Day Landings. HMS *Ark Royal* kept attracting the Soviet's attention and never moved without a Soviet Badger (TU-16) aircraft in attendance. HMS *Albion* was evacuating civilians from East Pakistan whilst the two week war with India was happening. In 1972 the hovercraft unit from HMS *Daedalus* was conducting trials—cold weather—in the Baltic, HMS *Lowestoft* was on passage from Simon's Town to Durban and paused to fight fire on a crippled tanker drifting half a mile of the South African coast. HMS *Penelope* had major surgery for the removal of her 4.5" turret so that she could become a scientific trial ship. HMS *Rothesay* was conducting mortar missile trials *down under*, and off Plymouth the Ikara missile was fired from HMS *Leander* for the first Leander class missile launch. It was also in '72 that Admiral of the Fleet Earl Mountbatten of Burma visited HMS *Mercury* to formally name the HMS *Mercury* New Entry Squadron—Kelly Squadron—after his wartime Destroyer. I seem to recall Noel Coward as the Captain or was that the film version 'In Which We Serve' The landmark clock tower at HMS *Mercury* was no more, the clock itself was retained for possible use in the new church. Trials were in progress of new uniforms for naval ratings. Three versions were on offer and the one we got was pretty much the same as the time honoured uniform we were wearing plus a zip and the loss of the loading tray flap on the 'Bell Bottoms' (sic). In 1973 HMS *Phoebe* became a star as HMS *Hero* in the TV series 'Warship'. HMS *Tenacious* a very much updated MTB, MGB all in one was commissioned, HMS *Lynx* visited Dover, coincidental to the visit was the fact that the HMS *Lynx* was the name of the anti submarine base at Dover during 1939 to 1946. It was in 1974 that HMY *Britannia* sailed round the world in 185 days. She was away for six months and steamed 35,570 miles, visiting 18 countries. HMS *Victory* (Ship) became HMS *Victory* and HMS *Victory* (RNB) became HMS *Nelson*, and RFA *Wave Chief*—everyone's favourite Portland Tanker—went for scrap . HMS *Ajax* was Cowes guardship and HMS *Hampshire* and *Ark Royal* visited Malta, HMS *Bulwark* conducted the first deck landing trials of the new Gazelle helicopter. 1975 saw HMS *Ark Royal* and HMS *Blake* in Rio, *Blake* was on her way home from a Far East deployment. HMS *Chichester* was permanent Hong Kong guardship and together with the *Woverton*, *Beachampton*, *Wasperton*, *Yarnton* and *Monkton* were awarded the Wilkinson Peace Prize. CCY Gerry King was awarded the Royal Victoria Medal (Silver). HMS

Argonaut was observing Russian space satellite vessels perform off the coast of Nova Scotia. In 1976 whilst HMS *Nubian* and *Zulu* performed tribal rites in the West Indies, HMS *Andromeda* was doing battle with the Icelandic Gunboat *Thor* as the Cod War continued. HMS *Glamorgan* as part of TG 317.3 sailed around the world. According to their correspondent the conversation went 'Home again then?' 'Yeah.' 'Where have you been?' 'Round the World' 'Any good?' 'Alright!' He said. HMS *Hermes* and her Commando were out in the cold in Narvik as they exercised in Mid winter.

Who of us will ever forget June 7, 1976 when the Main Gate at Shotley was closed and HMS *Ganges* sailed into history. The last of the RN personnel left Singapore, I believe the last was WRNS 2nd Officer Ros Allchin. I was often one of the last out of Terror Canteen on paynight but I never ever knew if I was the last! HMS *Danae* did Puerto Rico (Roosey Roads and all) and Florida. HMS *Lincoln* was fitted with wood reinforced bows as Cod War defence kit. She never actually put them to the test as the Cod War was declared over.

Where were you in 1977? HMS *Fearless* was in the Med and visited Venice, HMS/M *Churchill* was also in the Med. HMS *Maidstone* sailed to Rosyth for scrapping having completed about 11 years as an Army accommodation ship in Belfast. HMS *Matapan* paid off as sonar trials ship. She'd had twenty years in reserve before refitting for her two year role as a trial ship, The ski-jump take off ramp was under trials at RAE Bedford. 1978 HMS *Amazon* was in Hong Kong and Jenny's Side Party, naturally, painted ship. HMS *Hardy* (last of the Type 14s) paid off into reserve and a host of Leanders visited West Africa on the way home from a transatlantic deployment. The group of Greek Myths included *Jupiter*, *Aurora*, *Euryalus*, *Ariadne*, *Danae* plus the wildlife contribution HMS *Antelope*. HMS *Ark Royal* set off in June 1978 for her last deployment and the end of her career as one of the greatest strike carriers. 1979, HMS *Southampton* was launched, HMS *Blake* visited Gibraltar and HMS *Thorham* spent three days in Paris. Other units of the RN visited the Far East and others spent time in the Middle East and Eastern Atlantic, and as they say 'Ready Aye Ready'. This the Fleet was and this was proved in the early part of the 1980s.

Life in a Blue Suit for the HMS Ganges trained Boy Telegraphist (Scouse in the Sixties).

In 1970 I was a Chief Radio Supervisor (RCI) serving at Naval Manpower Utilisation Unit in Haslemere having recently qualified as a Fleet Work Study Practitioner. At the time we were involved in the manning and training requirements for the Leander Class frigates. On promotion to Fleet Chief Radio Supervisor the powers that be thought I should be back in harness as a communicator so I off I went to take up an appointment as Communication Management Instructor and Mess President. That was a very worthwhile appointment and I spent many hours preparing Comms Senior Rates for the Portland work up, which as every Communicator will tell you was hell! I hastily add that the hell bit applied to all departments going through work up.

In 1973 my sea and air legs awoke and I was appointed as SCO3 on HMS *Ark Royal*, relieving Tony Shuker. My successor as Mess President FCCY Terry Hankey was soon to join me. This was to be my last commission in the Royal Navy. It was a good commission shared with an excellent crowd of team and messmates. In 4V0 Mess we had 108 Warrant and Chiefs and across the passage in 4Y0 114 Chiefs. The accommodation and other facilities (lack of) entitled us to *hard-layers* allowance! It was on 'Ark' that I was introduced to good eating whilst ashore. No more steak, egg and chips, Griff the Chief Caterer introduced me to the world of restaurant food, wine and then on with the run ashore!

The NBCDI and his Jack Dusty run ashore oppo nearly missed the run to the GI Brides social night—we did get them on their feet after the lunch time session in the mess. We'd been detailed off by the Commander to take over this wardroom invite! Age had something to do with it! Even so, the Saturday social turned into a three day hooley and as we explained to the Commander, 'Sir, you said we had to represent the RN and the ship at this invitation and we did!' 'Carry on Mr Eilbeck. Next time I'll choose my words with caution'.

Having gone to pension in October 1975 (Yes I did miss it, not right way but about a year on) and having opted for a contract with the South African Navy rather than Training Manager for the National Dairy Board, the Eilbecks sailed for Cape Town on the RMS *Edinburgh Castle*. Those were two decisions on which I have often pondered. What would have happened had I taken a further five? How would I have fared as the Dairy Board Training Manager? Hindsight and where I am at the moment tell me it was a good decision. The decision to go Permanent Force in the South African Navy in 1978 wasn't but I did stick it out until resigning in the 1980s.

1975 to 1979 saw me as the EW Training Warrant Officer at the SA Navy Signal School (the old Cape South W/T Station) and various periods of service up country in South West Africa and other Border Areas with 5 Signal Regiment the SA Army's EW (Comint) specialists. Interesting yes, recommended no. Interestingly

enough I met up with lots of ex *Ganges* lads in the SA Navy, ex CCY Jim Townsend, Fred Daley (L/Sig), Mick Wood (L/Sig), Paul Daykin (L/Sig), Mike Dutton (PO Stoker), Peter Brown (L/Tel), Ken Barnett (CCY), Alan Haines (CCY), Jock Hutton, Mick Sadd, Dave Revell and many more who were ex Royal Navy such as Eddie Redgrave (1937) and his *Ganges* confirmation class Godfather Tom Bryant, Joe Almond (37), Sky Turner and Bill Jones etc. Now you can see why we have a Simon's Town Division of the HMS *Ganges* Association and a good Royal Naval Association.

Life in the SA Navy was certainly different, in fact it was on my second day at MHQ Silvermine (1975) that I was advised, *'Don't compare anything in this navy with that of the Royal Navy.'* I found this to be true on many an occasion. My favourite yarn is that of the Chief Radio Mech (ex RN) serving at Signal School who was asked for advice by the OC Sig School on levelling ground to make a Field Gun Track and would he arrange a bulldozer. *'Yes sir.'* was his reply, *'What colour, Khaki or Yellow?'* *'A Yellow one would be rather nice,'* said he! Two days later he had the biggest yellowist grader you have ever seen! Once RN always RN. Then there was the ex RN Chief who was picked up one morning at 0745 by a young lieutenant for not saluting. He immediately excused himself by explaining that he was on contract and contract personnel only saluted between 0800 and 1600 daily. *'OK Chief. I didn't appreciate that. Carry on.'* I often wondered what the Commander said if and when the lieutenant advised him of the incident! Yes the Seventies was a decade of big changes in my life, Royal Navy Communicator to South African Navy Communicator and EW specialisation, sunshine for many months of each year and new friends. One of these friends was actually in the same mess (1 Mess) in HMS *Victorious* in 1957 and we didn't find out until 1976! Makes one think.

Royal Naval Communications

Communications in the Seventies was all about ICS3, Satellites and Electronic Warfare. The Buntings saw the introduction of Automatic Distribution and Delivery Indicator Groups, the lamps and flags stayed the same as did the phonetic alphabet. In 1970 Mauritius W/T complete with the only other STRAD computer system was running about a dozen fixed services, ship-shore, CW and RATT Broadcasts. In 1976 Mauritius W/T closed down. Skynet 1A, launched in November 1969, failed within the year so Skynet 1B was launched and *lost on launch*, so US satellite systems were used until Skynet 2B was successfully engineered into orbit in 1974. What about Skynet 2A? you say, that was also lost, due to a fault in the launch rocket. The SCOT satellite system using a 3' 6" dish system was being developed for frigates and above. This system was to be containerised and transportable. C2 and C3 was being discussed by Staff Officers and Ops Officers, the mystery was solved when somebody used the full term – Command, Control and Communications. It hadn't arrived by 1975 when I went to pension and I never heard it in the SA Navy until the late Eighties. On-Line encryption was in full swing and life without the KL7 was so much easier. Submarines were using satellite communication systems and omni-directional UHF antenna array.

During 1970 'Unspecialised' was dropped and Juniors became RO(G): Telegraphist, RO(T): Tactical, or RO(W): Warfare. G, T or W. Not on your Station Card that was still G, T or UA. In August of 1970 (Post Tot) rumour had it that when the Wolfenden Report recommended male homosexuality should be legalised that G, T, and UA would represent Give, Take, or Unable! Electronic Warfare was the flavour of the years in the Comms growth area! Electronic replaced Radio in the 70s terminology.

The last 'Boy Communicator' entrant disappeared from HMS *Ganges* in 1972 and became a Junior, Morse speed standard requirements were reduced to 10 wpm on entry and then increased to 18 wpm during ship pre-joining training.

In 1974 the seamen officer specialist was abolished and they became Warfare specialist, no more Long C officer complete with 3" of white cuff and white handkerchief in pocket. Not to be left behind the submarine communicator became a RO(SM) and Seaman (RPs) were given the chance to be cross trained as RO(SM)s, most declined the offer! In 1979 it changed again, the sub specialisation split and the RO(SM) was the Communicator and the RO(TS) was responsible for the EW and RP tactical systems. In 1975 the Electronic Warfare Branch became part of the Operations branch and in 1978 Radio Operator (S) became Communication Technicians (CT). There was to be many more changes to come with many new short titles and branch splits. Abbreviations required a special two week course to find out what we were and what we had to do! UDT Upper Deck Technician! Was he the sailor? I know that in the SA Navy the Stoker became the Engine Room Attendant (ERAtt). Mind blowing.

There were honours, awards, sports awards and distinctions. For me a special BZ for FCRS J Bailey, who put together a first class article in commemoration of the closing of HMS *Ganges* in 1976. Medals and awards for Cdr P Harland OBE, CRS B Lucas BEM, CRS Ken Ashcroft BEM—Ken the Guzz Chief Sparker who

during his time was the backbone of Devonport Communications training. CRS Mick Lovell BEM, FCRS M J (Charlie) Challinor BEM, LRO Smith winner of the CENTO Morse Reception competition. A bravery award was not forthcoming for FCRS Dennis Alderson who wrote the 1973 article 'The Art of VS is I'm Afraid Dead'. My award for the requestman of the decade must go to the young Sparker who requested for a draft as Royal Yacht permanent crew Sailor. When asked why he wanted to be a 'Yachtie' said *'Because you meet a better class of people on HM Yacht Britannia!'*

CHAPTER 8 – 1980-1989

The Eighties. This was the period when the Royal Navy realised that Command, Control and Communications (C3) in the front line fleet needed a full-on integrated control system. C3, it was said *'Required a staggering infrastructure compared with its predecessors'*. Yes the Navy had modern and more reliable equipments that were easier to operate but the control system for all this equipment wasn't present and additionally there was a shortage of various branch operators. This of course meant that the workload and sea-shore ratios were heavy and really unacceptable. Longer hours, more and more tasks are bound to cause a dip in efficiency and for the Royal Navy this was not an option. So the Eighties saw a concentrated effort by all to provide trained operators at the required numbers and introduce a fully automated and integrated command control and communications system for the Fleet. My knowledge of this period is not as complete as I would like. I was serving in the South African Navy and whilst we had read about C3 and indeed C5 and modern equipments we were subject to an arms embargo, so one settled for what one could get by way of modern equipments. This changed somewhat during the Nineties and presented other problems to the SA Navy. That's another story!

The Navy was in the age of the microchip, the electronic age where changes happened daily not yearly, and today's equipment was out of date tomorrow. The sailor pushed buttons, slept in a bunk and relaxed in the comfort of his air-conditioned lounge complete with bar. This was the only way to go and the Royal Navy achieved this without losing any of the keenness, efficiency and true RN sailor fashion. This was another example of 'Once Royal Navy always Royal Navy'. A quote from 'True Glory' (author Warren Tute) stated: *'The duties change, but the tradition of loyalty and courageous service continuous unbroken, as it has done for longer than in any other fighting service in the history of the world'* This I can vouch for after my recent visits to HM Ships visiting Cape Town and Simon's Town during the Nineties.

The Eighties suffered times of strife and war that made the Seventies appear to have been quiet. There was war and victory in the Falklands with the RN to the fore. Who will forget the scenes at Portsmouth Harbour as the task force sailed and victoriously returned. The TV news clips of the attacks in San Carlos water, the 'Canberra' ignoring it all, the Royal Marine Commando and Parachute Regiments in action. And of course the coining of many new words and phrases. 'Yomping' a very apt description of the slog across the Island. Like the Seventies the Eighties had events of tragedy, happiness, success and disaster in politics, war and peace. The world of technology advanced so quickly we struggled to keep pace with it, I still cannot use my TV/Video controller to its full potential! Culture and art advances shocked us even more with presentations of full frontal nudity, explicit sex scenes. Some of the artistic presentations that were awarded prizes were unbelievable: a pile of soiled and dirty bedding won a government grant at one event! Some amusement, mainly at the outlandish behaviour and fashions of the rich and famous. Madonna, U2 and Paul Simon topped the charts with music and songs.

Events 1980-1990

1980. Solidarity in Poland, Zimbabwe (Rhodesia) gained independence, Iran and Iraq went to war, and the US backed and funded the Contras movement in the Nicaragua fracas. Indira Gandhi became Prime Minister of India. The Anglican Alternative Service book was published and Anthony Burgess wrote 'Earthly Powers'—A spy story no doubt!

1981. Public corporations were privatised in Britain, high unemployment was the order of the day and the SDP was formed. Mitterrand became French President, Ronald Reagan the US President and President Sadat of Egypt was assassinated. The US launched its first space shuttle. Microprocessors were fitted in a variety of domestic appliances and gadgets—I was baffled and beaten by my first remote controller.

1982. Was the year of the Falklands War and victory. Israel invaded Lebanon. Richard Attenborough produced and or directed the award winning film 'Gandhi' and Steven Spielberg gave us ET. Compact discs arrived on the record scene and the Aids virus was identified.

1983. Margaret Thatcher was re-elected Prime Minister. Cruise missiles were installed in UK and Germany complete with the Peace Activists demonstrations that created more havoc than the missiles would have done. US troops invaded Grenada and a civilian government was back in place in Argentina. I never found out how successful the invasion of Granada was! There was nothing spectacular or outstanding in the Arts and Science world.

1984. The miner's strike UK started and carried on for a year causing much sadness and anger in the UK. The IRA bombed the Conservative Convention hotel at Brighton. UK and China signed the Hong Kong

agreement and in India Indira Ghandi was assassinated. Meanwhile Madonna was belting out ‘*Like a Virgin*’—Wishful thinking I reckon!

1985. In Russia Gorbachev became General Secretary of the Soviet Communist party and introduced the policy of liberalisation. There was an Anglo Irish agreement, on what I don’t know. The French Navy went to war and sank ‘*Greenpeace Warrior*’. Was this the long awaited French victorious sea battle? In the arts world Primo Levi gave us *Periodic Tables*, Levi was an Italian novelist and poet of note, in particular for ‘*If this is a Man*’ his experiences as a survivor of Auschwitz

1986. Spain and Portugal joined the EEC, British unemployment figures reached the 3.5 million mark and there was a big bang on the London Stock Exchange, and it wasn’t the IRA! Meanwhile the US bombed Libya and in Russia there was the Chernobyl disaster, which could have been a world-class disaster. Wole Soyinka (who?) received the Nobel Prize for literature. Wole was a Nigerian dramatist, novelist and critic. HIS Nobel Prize was the first presented to an African

1987. Doom and gloom for the UK stock market with the *Black Monday* crisis. The third Thatcher government took its place and the EEC became the EC. The Palestinian intifada or *uprising* commenced in the Israeli-occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip. The science and technology boffins came up with genetic fingerprinting for the forensic people. Democratic elections were held in Spain and terrorist activities flared up in Germany and Italy. Deng Xiaopong gained power in China and Jimmy Carter became the US President. In South Africa, Steve Biko died in police custody. This case became a highlight case during the Truth and Reconciliation hearings 20 years later. In France the Pompidou (not De Gaulle) Centre was opened and Woody Allen gave us the film of the year ‘*Annie Hall*’.

1988. The SDP and Liberals combined forces to form the Liberal Democrats, and in France Mitterrand was re-elected. In Lockerbie the Libyans struck with a terrorist attack on a Pan Am airliner killing everyone onboard and a host residents in Lockerbie. Justice must be done and the killers taken out of society. The Iran Iraq War ended, the PLO recognised Israel and the USSR withdrew from Afghanistan. Oh yes, yours truly resigned from the South African Defence Force, he could fight no more! In the art world Simon Rushdie wrote *The Satanic Verses* and wished he hadn’t. U2 had a hit with *Rattle and Hum*.

1989. The Berlin Wall was demolished; Communist regimes were ousted in Hungary, Poland, East Germany Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria and Rumania. George Bush became US President and De Klerk became President of South Africa. The Chinese still maintained Communism was best and organised the Tiananmen Square massacre to prove it. In France they celebrated the 200th anniversary of the Revolution. Was there a cake I wonder?

1990. West and East Germany became one and Germany was back on the map of Europe. Margaret Thatcher resigned and smiling John Major became British Prime Minister. Not long after Britain joined the ERM. The Cold War was formally declared over but in the Middle East Iraq invaded and took over Kuwait. ‘Here we go again,’ said Jack and the Drafty. Nelson Mandela was released from prison after 27 years and started talks with President De Klerk which put SA on the road to democracy and both men to a Nobel Peace Prize. Further North Namibia gained independence with Sam Nujoma in charge.

Fleet News

The operational areas that the Royal Navy played a major role in during the ‘Eighties’ were:

1980	Belize (again)
1980 – 90	Hong Kong patrol
1986	Middle East. Armilla Patrols

New ships were launched and joined the Fleet such as in 1981 HMS *Leeds Castle* and sister ship HMS *Dumbarton Castle*. These were the new class of offshore patrol vessel. In 1982 three Tribal Class were brought out of the Standby Squadron—HMS *Ghurkha*, *Tartar* and *Zulu* and the Survey Navy recorded 75 years of worldwide survey and recording. HMS *Manly*, *Mentor* and *Milbrook* started work as floating classrooms for New Entry trainees from HMS *Raleigh*. In 1984 HMS *Peacock* and HMS *Plover* sailed for Hong Kong as replacement vessels for the Hong Kong Squadron. They were to be joined later by HMS *Swallow*, *Swift* and *Starling*. 1985 saw HMS *Invincible* in Devonport for a long refit. In 1988 the Lynx helicopter was given a new colour scheme and HMS *Abdiel* the Navy’s only surface minelayer paid off after 21 years service. Meanwhile HMS *Campbeltown* was under-going contractor’s sea trials prior to

commissioning. 1989 saw the stretch as preparing for the closing down and move to HMS *Collingwood* so I have no commissioning forecast to make extracts from. I do know many ships commissioned to take station in many corners of the world and whichever ship you were on may you only have happy memories.

The operational scenario dictated life in the SA Navy during the Eighties, which was a land war in countries across the Northern borders. The Navy conducted various intruder operations with Special Forces and Comint and Elint trips gathering intelligence. I spent a lot of my time liaising with the Army Comint Regt, which was a new experience to say the least. During my various trips I was able to visit many places in South Africa, Namibia, Angola, Mozambique and a couple of islands north of Madagascar. One didn't get too much sightseeing, as we weren't actually tourists! In 1988 I resigned from Life in a Blue Suit (Khaki a lot of the latter period) and ventured forth into the uncharted waters of Civvy Street. That's another story.

The places the Royal Navy visited and the tasks performed were as usual many and varied. Here a few that should bring back memories:

1980. HMS *Ajax* and *Scylla* visited Thiri (Santorini), which is North of Crete, HMS *Jersey* and *Alderney* went home to visit the Channel Islands—good run. HMS *Leander* was in the Kola Inlet watching the Ruskies. HMS *Dee* led a three nation flotilla to Liege to celebrate the city's millennium. The RN hovercraft VT2 P234 took part in underwater explosion trial and is still hovering. HMS *Invincible* carried out pre wetting trial in the North Sea. The ship's company reckoned it's colder than the Med. HMS *Alliance* (last of the WW2 type submarines in the RN) became a museum item at HMS *Dolphin*. My old ship sailed off to the knackers yard—HMS *Ark Royal* was guided out from Devonport (three tugs) to Cairnryan for demolition. The last bits of *Ark Royal* vanished into molten metal in 1984. I must admit I shed a tear, as she was my last sea going appointment in the Royal Navy.

1981. The 'Black Pig' an LCU (Landing Craft Utility) Articised with an igloo—heated glass fibre dome operated in Norwegian waters to see if the heating worked! HMS *Endurance* sailed for her Antarctic season — watch this space

1982. HMS *Endurance* spotted some Argentineans in an improper place at an improper time and sent some marines in to sort them out. HMS *Hermes* and Task Force left Portsmouth for the South Atlantic. The Falklands Task Force was given an emotional send off led by the Rod Stewart song from *Ark Royal* days—'Sailing'. Portsmouth (City and Naval Base received heartfelt thanks for the magnificent co-operation and goodwill that sped the task force on there way so expeditiously). There were many HM Ships, RFA, Regiments, Commando, Merchant ships and many other units in the South Atlantic for the war and after. The events, losses and victories are well documented and the name Falklands on a ship's Honours Board is well earned, as was Trafalgar and many, many others. HMS *Resolution's* farewell message was 'Sea Power for Peace' as she entered the Gareloch to start her two-year refit. HMS *Hermes* (back from war) helped to launch the 'Good Morning Britain' breakfast show. Lord Louis Mountbatten's squadron the 'Fighting Fifth' was back in the Fleet with the five Type 22 destroyers HMS *Southampton*, *Nottingham*, *Liverpool*, *Manchester* and *Exeter*. HMS *Exeter* was proudly displaying her Falklands Battle Honour

1983. It was to Devonport that HMS *Hecate* returned after spending 174 days at sea during which she became the first survey vessel to circumnavigate the South American continent. I must ask for comment from the more senior association members, but didn't Sir Francis Drake manage to do this? Maybe 'Golden Hind' wasn't a survey vessel! HMS *Ariadne*, *Torquay*, *Apollo*, *Liverpool* and *Alacrity* carried out Falkland type gun-line exercises off Portsmouth to entertain some 800 guests from various military staff colleges, schools and other navies. Meanwhile HMS *Illustrious* endured a six-day visit to New York—sheer hell that must have been! Twenty three years on and the Fleet Air Arm gave us back a new AEW capability in lieu of the 849 Squad Gannets we now had 849 Squad Sea King Helicopters.

1984. The Red Fleet (Ruskies) was shadowed during soviet exercises by HMS *Achilles* with RFA *Grey Rover* in attendance. They observed the antics of a Juliet Class submarine, Krivaks, a Kynda cruiser; in total about 50 Soviet vessels were tracked and observed—electronically and visually. HMS *Warspite* did three stints of Falklands patrol. HMS *Sandpiper* acted as a D-Day bombardment ship and produced a magnificent display for the watching crowd on the beach. They used blanks! HMS *Arctura* was with the NATO squadron (STANAVFORLANT) and had her visit to Copenhagen cancelled because of thick pack ice.

1985. The fifth HMS *Ark Royal* entered Portsmouth for the first time. On deck were a Fairy Swordfish and a Sea Harrier both types of aircraft having operated from Previous Ark Royals. Over in Canada RNR manned HMS *Dovey*, HMS *Waveney* and HMS *Carron* visited Nova Scotia. They joined up with 30 other warships for the Royal Canadian Navy 75th Anniversary celebrations. HMS *Brilliant*, HMS *Alacrity*, HM Submarine

Sealion and RFA *Gold Ranger* also joined the party. The Duchess of Kent got some sea time in when she had a day at sea on HMS *Turbulent*. The Duchess experienced a dive routine and then watched the view from the fin—on the surface naturally

1986. HMS *Brazen* berthed in Grand Harbour, the first Royal Navy ship to visit Malta for seven years. I wonder if the Dreadnought Bar and the London Bar were open. My cousin was married to one of the owner's daughters; apart from the two bars in Grand Harbour they had two other 'Inns' up top in Valletta. My cousin left Malta quietly and without announcement in 1968. His wife and Maltese family await his return! As we used to say, 'How do you make a Maltese cross?' HMS *Invincible* took part in shock trials with carefully controlled explosions, all went well and on completion she underwent her long refit. Or was the refit a cover story? Talking about big bangs, HMS *Brilliant* witnessed a 16" broadside being fired by the USS *Iowa*. USS *Iowa* was built in 1940 and is still going strong; mind you she has undergone a modernisation refit.

1987. HMS *Swift* performed a rescue job on a Taiwanese freighter 200 miles off Hong Kong. At the Arctic ice cap HMS *Superb* met up with USS *Billfish* and USS *Sea Devil*. This was a first for a gathering of RN and US nuclear submarines. HMS *Orwell* and the 10th MCM Squadron (HMS *Spey*, *Arun*, *Itchen*, *Ribble*, *Humber* and *Helford*) visited Catalonia whilst HMS *Acitive* was operational on the Gulf Armilla patrol. Hot no, bloody hot yes with temperatures of 45° C which is about 114° F. Other ships in the Gulf were the RN Minehunters HMS *Brecon*, *Brocklesby* and *Bicester* with support ship HMS *Abdiel* and to give them protection HMS *Andromeda*. Up around Arran and the Mull of Kintyre HMS *Intrepid* was exercising rescue and evacuation procedures and HMS *Liverpool* was in the Barents Sea watching the Ruskies at play with their submarines, guns and missiles.

1988. A year of note especially for HMY *Britannia*, she took on fuel during a RAS from a foreign tanker. Not on really, since when has the Queen of England had to take anything other than 'blue blooded FFO'. Insult to injury it was from an American the USS *Andrew J Higgins*. More insults the RAS became an UNREP or underway replenishment. This all happened as the Royal Yacht was on passage from Southern California to Australia via Hawaii. Shame on you Margaret Thatcher and your Ministers. HMS *Ambuscade* was the West Indian Guardship and relieved by HMS *Active* who did a lot of hard work during Hurricane Gilbert. HMS *Cambelltown* got her bell back from Campbeltown Pennsylvania where the local fire service had been looking after it—for fifty years! I wonder why? The Fleet Air Arm must have been in financial trouble as they were flying on and off microlight aircraft. Mind you it was at the request of a gentleman from Cambridgeshire. Did he know about low radar signature profiles or something? Why does Britain's royalty have to take non Blue blood FFO?

1989. In March all three classes of 3rd Submarine Squadron boats did a sail past. There was HMS *Courageous* (Churchill class), HMS *Odin* (Oberon class) and HMS *Sceptre* (Swiftsure class). I thought '*Mix and Match*', was the Dulux paint trade name. HMS *Boxer* was the first ship to enter the newly extended No. 6 dock at Devonport. This dock had been specially lengthened for refitting the 'stretched' Type 22 and 23 frigates. No wet weather routine rescues or skives anymore.

1990. HMS *Cumberland* was operating off Portland in January and HMS *Plover* was tracking and chasing the Hong Kong crooks, smugglers and maritime terrorists. Triads rather than Mafia. This meant many hours, days and weeks of sea time for the three Hong Kong Patrol ships. In March Devonport took a bashing from the worst ever recorded storm, in harbour or dock were HMS *Sandpiper*, HMS *Petrel*, HMS *Alacrity*, HMS *Sheffield* and HMS *Battleaxe*, no damage of consequence was recorded. HMS *Cardiff* represented the Royal Navy at the Sultan of Malaysia International Fleet Review. HMS *Cardiff* came out top of the celebration sports events and this included trishaw and dragon boat events. Well done the lads. I remember the 1950s version of the rickshaw pulling event. In those days you got between the shafts on the return from or to the Fleet Club and jumped clear as rickshaw and Chinese Coxswain went over the edge into the harbour! That is why in later years the Fleet Club was sited way back from the harbour edge! MCM ships from the 1st, 3rd, 4th and 10th Squadron took part in Flotex 90 during which HMS *Sheraton* won the Minehunting efficiency trophy and she was getting on in years.

Ten years in the life of the Royal Navy sailor, ten years to have been proud of and be able to say I was there.

Life in a Blue Suit for the HMS Ganges trained Boy Telegraphist (Scouse in the Eighties)

In 1980 I was an Electronic Warfare Warrant Officer in the SA Navy. No I was not a Golly, I practised the art of Communication Intercept. My appointment as WO in Charge EW training centre had run its course and I was back operational as the WO in Charge EW Control Centre at the MHQ Silvermine. I was also the Chairman of the Junior Rates Mess, this was an additional task and not one I volunteered for. Visiting the JRs

Mess on a pay night was far more dangerous than a skirmish patrol into Angola. What made it worse was that the security patrols and gate guards were armed and unlike the RN they had bullets! Talk about brown underwear is to be worn during rounds. I always sent the Duty Senior rate in first. Tactics! Life became easier when Comnavwest moved in and another ex HMS *Ganges* trained Boy Tel was appointed as OC SAS Sonneblom (Sunflower). Several ex RN Warrant Officers supported him and CPOs and life became orderly, disciplined and happy. Banning birds and booze in the JRs accommodation was a big help and strapping the magazines into the ammo pouch increased the safety factor—Duty Staff had armed 9 mm side arms. I'm OK Jack etc. I was then appointed along with Lt Dennis Duligall (*Ganges* 57), WO Ron Vickers (*Ganges* 57) Sub Lt Ian (Jock) Grant (*Ganges*) as project specialists for the design, development and operation of the SADF National Comint System. There were others of course such as professors and senior scientists from Pretoria University, Grinnaker, Armscor and various other think tanks. This period proved to be a positive and rewarding experience. In 1986 I even managed along with Dennis and Ron to successfully gain a pass in Advanced Electronic Systems at the University of Pretoria (Fuchs Lab). Was I now to become the academic Scouse and join Scouse Einstein, Ken Dodd and Cilla Black as Liverpool Genii Brain! I did use the knowledge I gained. I added it to all my RN training qualifications and training experience (I was after all an Instructor at *Ganges*. Radio Communications Instructor qualified and I did qualify on my IT Course at HMS *Victory*. I had also completed a couple of training analysis and course design courses at RNSTT as well). Meanwhile back in the blue or combat coloured uniform life went on. Having seen the project through to full time operations I was appointed as Station Commander Slangkop Comint Station. Yes, that is correct it used to be the RN Wireless Station at Kommetjie, Western Cape. I stayed at Slangkop until May 1988 when I then left the Defence Force and like Dick Whittington went in search of streets paved with gold. I'm still looking, the closest I've been is a visit to Gold Reef City in Johannesburg in 1987 and a project visit to 10 AA Regt (SA) in 1990, who were based not far from the 'Big Hole' in Kimberley. My couple of days in Kimberly (Holiday Inns accommodation) convinced me that the best place for a big hole is Kimberley! Hot, dry and nothing but nothing to do except watch SABC TV and that is a fate worse than being a big hole. I wonder if it's changed since the departure of the quote Apartheid Regime unquote. They can't really blame the big hole on the Nats as it was the Brits who started it, Cecil Rhodes and Barney Barnato.

So in 1988 I left the SA Navy to join a training company MIRUS. There were two other ex RN and *Ganges* blokes with the company. This was a short-lived period as we found out that one project, a technology transfer of ammunition and ammunition fuse manufacturing and production, was for Iraq. This was sanction busting and helping the Iraq government to boot. The Brit element didn't like this and left. I then joined a computer based training company, which was a great company that produced an excellent product. In 1989 I had a heart attack, which was not major, rather a warning. Whilst recovering I took the time to start the ball rolling to form and commission the HMS *Ganges* Association Simon's Town Division. Once again I called on Peter Brown to see what he thought and then supported by Joe Almond(34) Eddie Redgrave(33), Tom Bryant(33) and Paul Daykin(58) we advertised a get together and the rest you know. In 1989 I was head hunted and joined an Integrated Logistic Support Project Management Company as the training development specialist. Good salary, car allowance, housing allowance company car, telephone bill paid and a small but satisfying entertainments expense account. I stayed with this company until I retired in 1998.

Royal Naval Communications

Communications in the Eighties was all about Satellite communication, navigation, surveillance, early warning, meteorological and earth observation satellites. Some at the design stage, some on the drawing board, some being developed and other already in space. Communication was very much a feature of the space age during the Eighties. It was due to the use of so many satellites or military space systems during the Gulf War that it was called the 'First Space War'. During the Eighties the UK Skynet was fine tuned and enhanced by engineers from RAE and RSRE. Many of the RN Fleet were already equipped with satellite communication equipment by the 1980s and researchers at the research establishments were seeking bigger and better throughout the 1980-90 period. Apart from the Skynet 4 series in orbit or launched into orbit there was the US *Lacrosse* system for Radar Surveillance, KH11 and 12, US imaging systems. '*White Cloud*'—Ocean surveillance, '*Vortex*' Elint satellite, Tracking and data relay satellite (TDRSS), Navstar Global Positioning Satellite (GPS), the SHF Defence Satellite Communication System, Intelsat, Inmarsat the French Systems and of course the Russian Systems. With all this satellite access available one should have had loud and clear communications for 24 hours everyday but I'll bet there wasn't. In fact the Type 691 and 692 were still in use during the 80s and they were often trouble! I wonder what they thought about the struggle we had on HF? How many times did I hear or say, 'Keep trying on 8 Megs somebody will hear us'. They did albeit three days later and it would be Bombay or Chittagong Radio and we were in the English Channel with one for CinC Plymouth! Communicating was a challenge in those days, exciting and requiring a lot of patience

and understanding especially from the bridge, Ops room and originators. Remember those words ‘ Has my signal gone yet’ ‘On the way’ you reply. The silent response is subject to censorship! In South Africa there was a modicum of advancement, Satellites I remembered from my RN days but within the SAN it was just another word. At the Training Centre in Durban they had fairly up to date Comms and EW equipment but at the Signal School we trained using museum pieces! B40, FH4, UA3 (the UA8 and 9 was short of bits) and some very modern Rhode and Schwartz HF receivers. Operationally we had some very good pieces from different sources making a system. As I said previously that all changed during the Nineties, then being a Communicator, RP, Gunner etc was a new and exciting world.

To finish:

An Ode to a Communicator (circa 1914-18)

Of what avail the loaded tube,
The cannon or the shell.
If flags or W/T default,
The Fleet will go to hell.

I did try to update it for a 1980s version but had problems rhyming such words as missile, nuclear weapon and satellite! Onward now to the Nineties and the new Millennium and keep communicating.