

ANDY BRIERLEY'S BLOG

Hello Shipmates,

So much for 'Universal Justice'. The nation's highest legal beagle is putting 'Max-weight' behind the blocking of an Iraqis attempt to get ex Pres. Blair into court for the lies he told that eventually laid waste to his homeland.

No such effort, no effort at all in fact, was expended in defence of several hundred squaddies, on spurious charges laid by Iraqis in that war, not of their choosing, but orchestrated by Blair that we have been hauled to court. Have read much about Blair, pros and cons, to form an impression.

Clarissa Dickson Wright, youngest female to become a barrister, gave insights in her book *Spilling the Beans*. They were in the same group during qualification. Blair's common name was Miranda, not wanted in any group at festive occasions, being considered a toady, greasy type. Cannot help feeling that early group assessment was not far wrong.

Rolls-Royce's chairman, I see, is being hotly pursued by the 'financial authorities' for allegedly resorting to bribery to get orders for aircraft engines, marine drives worth countless millions of pounds over many years. One 'Roller' to a bent Sheik to achieve such a coup seems fair game to me. - who would deny it's how business is conducted in a larger or smaller way, the length and breadth of commerce and industry internationally. Rolls deals affected only 'Rolls' Bottom Line', whilst the chancellor wallowed in 'Rolls' generated tax revenue'.

The much vaunted 'Universal Justice' has no place in the Houses of Westminster: fraud is open, rampant: lobbying blatantly conducted in those hallowed halls, in subsidised bars and restaurants, second houses and palatial venues, at 'Tax Payers' Expense'. The difference between 'lying' and 'perjury' came to me recently. To lie in court is 'perjury' because you do it under oath - on the Bible, mostly. The Noble houses at Westminster labour under no such constraint, hence 'lying' is a major plank of their pontifications.

News from Rosyth windbreaks - sailing is now delayed says the M.O.D., due to 'unspecified technical issues' Yawn, yawn!!

I was questioned twice about the small white ensign in my lapel whilst on late holiday - Brits ask 'What is it?'. These folks had never seen a sailor at home in uniform. That is a national rule by Parliament and M.O.D.. Where is that pride in our 'hearts of oak'?, but worry not, gay marriage has the 'Is' dotted and the 'Ts' crossed, passed into the statute books. We can sit back and relax knowing our vital interests sit in 'proud and pristine' order, after countless hours of debate. Vladimir must be quaking in his mukluks.

It came to pass, those shipmates who attended the funeral of Len Sturdy last year, Thought accommodation, food, location at the Fox and Goose, Brent Knoll, Somerset was of superior, friendly order. A loose desire to repeat the exercise hardened. Thus the first anniversary of

that event saw Right Royal Marine, Peter Tasker, Carol and Brian Hill, Julie and Bob?, Jim Copus, Andy and Jo Brierley back at that most splendid little hostelry. Brierley had knee replacement a week prior, so Jim Copus took over transport for them. We stayed two nights.



Joan Sturdy, Jo Brierley, Andy Brierley & Len Sturdy in Civvy Street

First night half of Len's family joined us for an unscripted visit, to take grub, grog and gossip. Several fat heads dispersed for home as the witching hour struck. Following night the other half of Len's brood turned up for a repeat performance with the 'Super Boys': most flattering.

They also floated off in the night/morning with obligatory fat heads. like most fine gatherings it was self-generating, accidental even! A note-worthy interlude was shipmate Brian Hill's solo public rendition of the 'Oggie Song' - The Tanner Anthem! By that time of night only a standing ovation was good enough! I do think that if he comes up from Plymouth for the reunion he should be invited to the mike for members delectation, following tots and tucker. It is a fair bet ditties are unsung, unknown on today's segregated mess decks, the glue that held ships' companies together, 'chopped' in the interest of equality on lower decks. When shipmates set off on their various compass bearings for home it seemed a repeat visit was pencilled in for '18.

Failed to mention the major upside, not a glimmer of politics surfaced. A complete Brexit blackout.

Once again this year the Great White Father (Chairman Smith) provided us with his horticultural surplus, boxes of flower plugs and, more importantly, short, strong tomato plants, not the spindly stuff from supermarkets. If last year is any yardstick, a long, fruitful season of tasty toms, not to be grown by hydroponics. The perks of being a Superb old boy are not to be sniffed at.

My carrier obsession was bursting last week when China's home-built example was flooded up and towed to a fitting-out dock. When commissioned, a planned intensive two years of trials are forecast to develop suitable aircraft. They say a fully operational 'strike wing' will be on board for year three. A breath-catching timetable. Named *Shandong* she has a sister, reportedly already under construction.

There is no doubt Uncle Sam's satellites have this under close scrutiny. I wager Uncle Joe's descendants have it under even closer watch. They appear to be putting their eggs in the modern 'sub.' basket. Will be interesting to weigh up their respective strategies in about four years time.

Here's a chuckle: that *Ocean* refit, mentioned a while ago, is now at correct figure of £655 million. M.O.D. commissioned it, run of the mill folly for them. But, wait, they have sold it to Brazil for a reported £80 million. I bet really tough negotiations were needed for that deal. Am I repeating myself? if so forgive me, must be something I feel strongly about.

Three or four mile east of my house is the piddling little hamlet of Milton Regis. Can you imagine what it was like on the day before Christmas in 1914? Mrs. Wildish gave birth to a boy called Dick. He died last month, April 2nd, which makes him 102!

He joined the R.N. Engineering Branch and designated Damage Control Officer on *H.M.S. Prince of Wales* who was then engaged in the Battle of Denmark Strait, May '41.

Excellent optical range finding of *Bismarck* sank *Hood* in half a dozen salvos along with 1415 of her crew. Switching target to the *P of W*, she hit her seven times with 15 shells forcing it to break off the engagement. Back in Rosyth for repair Wildish poked about in a flooded bilge and found an unexploded 15" shell that had entered below the water line and travelled 12 ft. inside. That bit of info. I have never read in the many, many reports of the engagement.

We got away with a massive stroke of luck. The national ego would have suffered a ghastly blow, it could be laying alongside the *Hood* to this day. Both done for in 15 minutes!!

You are aware that the *P of W* and *Repulse* were both sunk by the Japanese air attack off Singapore. Wildish, a junior engineer officer, was at his action station down below and was instrumental in saving many lives amongst the black gang. Badly wounded he was dropped into a Carley float from where he watched the *P of W* go down. He was picked up by the destroyer *Electra*, thus avoiding capture by the Japanese. During your own damage control training, if you handled a 'Splinter box', that was a Wildish idea, a simple fix adopted by navies the world over.

The 'planned maintenance schemes' was another Wildish innovation embedded in the R.N. It was reported that for the 'splinter box' he was awarded £25.00 by the admiralty. Vice Admiral Dick Wildish R.I.P.!

Have had a poorly period, hence time to drone on a bit, plus unable to drive and get away from the table. Hope it's passable reading

Tatty Bye,

