

# BROADSWORD NEWSLETTER



Summer 2018

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## **OBITUARY**

**Daphne Canning**  
Wife of Captain William R. Canning  
*DSO MBE RN*  
Passed away on Tuesday 22nd May 2018  
Private family funeral.

A Service of Thanksgiving will be held at All Saints Church, Dulverton on 18th July 2018 at 12 noon.  
Family flowers only.  
Colourful attire please.  
Donations if desired to the Donkey Sanctuary Sidmouth or RNLI both c/o J E Gilbert & Son, 139, St John Street, Bridgewater, Somerset, TA6 5JA or online.

## 2018 REUNION SHIP-SHAPE, BRISTOL FASHION!

Though the Friday night unofficial gathering at the Hole in the Wall pub didn't show the same exuberance as the 2016 Chester reunion, (*Mainly because George Roche kept his kit on!*) it was nevertheless a lively and boozy affair with the usual suspects showing up throughout the afternoon and early evening and some faces seldom if ever seen before, notably ex Royal Marine Dave (George) Pearce (pictured circled) who admitted he's not a Geordie, never has been and is puzzled why everyone calls him 'George'! ... However, he and the other Booties spent some time catching up, as did the rest of us until kicking-out time which was thankfully extended because of the Royal Wedding (What wedding???)



## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting was held on Saturday afternoon at the Mercure Bristol Holland House Hotel, the minutes will no doubt be circulated in due time but briefly:-

Despite threatening to stand down this year, Nick Page and Steve Bullock agreed to stay on as Secretary and Treasurer respectively and along with Pedlar Palmer as Chairman, George Roche as Membership Secretary and myself as Newspaper Editor (more on this later) the existing committee was re-elected en bloc.

The Treasurer, Stevie Bullock announced that thanks to a generous donation, a 'welfare fund' was kick-started. This will be used mainly to provide comforts to those in hospital and to pay for floral tributes, get well cards etc. rather than draw on the Association funds.

Despite a suggestion to hold the 2020 reunion in Sunderland (*Nice try George!*) it was agreed that it would be held in Portsmouth. Bill Skilleter and myself will organise the event.

The Honours Board will be presented to TS Broadsword SCC on a 'Permanent Loan' basis at the dinner later that evening and the Battle Ensign which was presented to Captain Canning was offered to the Memorial Chapel at Pangbourne who declined the offer due to a lack of space. Dicky Davis is attempting to have it placed in the Naval Heritage Museum in Devonport, if that fails, he will try St Nicholas Church or the WO & SR's Mess in HMS Drake.

The First Edition HMS Coventry print also donated by Captain Canning was auctioned and raised £270 for the Welfare Fund. Billy (Wizz) Skilleter is now the proud new owner.

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## **BRISTOL REUNION** ... Cont.

Pre-dinner drinks were held in the bar of the hotel where those who couldn't make the Friday night session were reunited with old mates and special note must be made of the ex-booties who regularly attend but on this occasion were reunited with Dave 'George' Pearce who they hadn't seen since to conflict in '82.



After some initial confusion about timings which gave Dave and Sue Bracken some extra grey hairs (Dave anyway, not Sue who looked stunning!) the evening dinner was a pleasant affair with good food and plenty of grape juice flowing with short speeches from the Chairman, Pedlar Palmer and the Captain.

The Honours Board was presented to John Pike and Jason McCowan of TS Broadsword to which John responded by thanking the members and promising to look after it for as long as it was in their possession. He remarked how proud he was to be associated with such a fine ship's company and pledged to keep us updated on the progress of the Unit.

A raffle was held which raised £262 for the newly formed welfare fund and grateful thanks go to all those who donated prizes.

## **IS THIS THE LAST BROADSWORD NEWSLETTER?**

*Could this be the  
last Newsletter?*

I took this job on some eight years ago and we initially posted copies to everyone in the address list. Unfortunately many were returned as members had not informed us of a change of address and as it was costing over £50 per issue to post, the Committee quite rightly said that it could no longer afford this and it was agreed that it would be sent to the members by e-mail and despite spending hours (if not days) putting together an e-mailing list from available information, again more than 50% were returned as 'recipient unknown'.

As a final resort it was decided that the newsletter would be posted on the Broadsword website only.

This has many disadvantages as we don't really know how many members visit the website other than the 60/70 diehards who regularly attend reunions etc. which means a large proportion of the membership may not see it and these are the ones we want to attract back and reignite their interest in the Association.

Furthermore, the website and the Broadsword Facebook page show the most recent updates such as photographs and important news, further negating the value of having a newsletter.

**However, the most serious problem is lack of articles not shown elsewhere. In a nutshell, I can't put together a newsletter without something to put in it!**

Following on from the Bristol reunion, two or three articles have been submitted and I am grateful to the contributors but need more like this if the newsletter is to continue.

**It is therefore down to you, the members to submit articles and/or suggestions or regrettably, this newsletter will be the last.**

**Send anything to me at [kokane@suremail.gg](mailto:kokane@suremail.gg)**

**Ed.**

During the early 1980s I was the 1<sup>st</sup> Lt of HMS ALERT, a converted Fleet Tender, conducting Maritime Counter Terrorism (MCT) Patrols in the waters around Northern Ireland, primarily in Carlingford Lough. Our job was to board all shipping coming into Warrenpoint Harbour and search them for weapons and other contraband. We also conducted Patrols in Rigid Raiders (RR Mk1) around the local waterways and foot patrols in the harbour and surrounding area, as well as Dolphin Vehicle Check Points (VCP). All in all, quite exciting stuff.

The Complement of HMS Alert was twenty five, two Officers, three Senior Rates ten Junior Rates and ten Royal Marines (Royals/Bootnecks). It was very cramped in a vessel built for a crew of four and we shared one shower and two heads between us. As in all Minor War Vessels we didn't carry any Medical Personnel so myself and the Cox'n, a Petty Officer (Seaman Specialist) were sent to do a one day Medical Course as part of our Pre joining Training (PJT) at the then Royal Naval Hospital (RNH) Hasler. There we learnt how to stich pork and inject oranges, amongst other clinical medical skills. Thus fully trained we Deployed on Operation Interknit.

One dark night with weather slightly marginal our Boarding Party was scrambled to intercept a Merchant Ship coming into the Lough. As per Standard Operational Procedure (SOP) the first RR Mk1 with myself, my Bootneck Body Guard and the other two Royals of the Protection Team approached the ship, while the other RR Mk1 with the Search Team stood off. As this ship had chosen not to put a Jacobs's ladder over the side for us we reverted to the tried and trusted method of a grapnel hook. All hooked on the first two Royals clambered aboard and took up their firing positions forward and aft. Then my Bootneck Body Guard made his attempt to get on board.

Unfortunately at exactly the moment he grasped the rope the ship heeled, swinging him outwards on the rope and as the ship righted he came swinging straight back connecting with the ship with a loud thump and fell backwards into the RR Mk1. It fast became obvious that he was quite badly hurt and despite his protestations I was obliged to recover the other two Royals and abandon the boarding. What in fact had happened was that as he had swung back he had caught his kneecap on a protrusion on the ship's hull, ripping his leg wide open. In fact the skin covering his kneecap was ripped in a half moon shape and flapping in the wind with the bone clearly visible. However, due to the red lighting we couldn't see how much blood he was losing.

Heading back to HMS Alert I advised the Captain of what had happened and asked for him to call the RAF for an Emergency Medivac and have the Cox'n stand by. In the interim I applied a first field dressing and tried to reassure him that he would be OK. Arriving at the Ship, and in now quite choppy conditions, we had a great deal of difficulty getting him back on board. Not helped by the fact, good Royal that he was, he refused to let go of his MP 5 sub-machine pistol.

Safely back on board he was moved to the Sick Bay, aka the SRs Mess, where the Cox'n had the medical chest ready. By this time the shock had worn off and said Royal now in considerable pain was asking for morphine. However, as we were only allowed to administer morphine to gunshot victims I had to politely decline much to his chagrin. At this point the Cox'n and I had to make the fateful decision who would do what job. The coin was tossed and the Cox'n morphed into Surgeon and I into Anaesthetist.

Sadly, of course, we didn't have any proper anaesthetic on board and we couldn't use the morphine, but something needed to be done to ease the Bootnecks pain. Very fortuitously my Cox'n had convinced the Army Quartermaster Sergeant in Belfast, who provided our stores and victuals, that we being the RN were still entitled to a rum ration. So, fifteen years after Black Tot Day, every patrol we went on we were issued a case of rum. As we cut away Royal's immersion suit and underclothes and prepared to remove the field dressing, he became even more distressed. At this point it was time to administer the make shift aesthetic and a half pint of rum was consumed by our wounded Boot-neck.

A couple of minutes later a much more relaxed Royal was ready for the Cox'n to begin. So as he was held down by two other Royals the Cox'n added the anti-septic direct to the wound eliciting a howl from Royal and began to apply his dhoby hitch stitches. Near the end of this magnificent piece of surgery Royal again became agitated at which point another half pint of anaesthetic was administered. Shortly after this our injured Royal fell into a contented haze and the surgery was completed.

Within the hour an RAF Helicopter arrived, it must have been a night when it wasn't raining, and winched Royal up to take him to Musgrave Park Military Hospital in Belfast. The Cox'n and I, well pleased with our efforts duly decided to award ourselves some anaesthetic and with operations cancelled for the rest of the night we slept the sleep of the content.

The next day the Ship received a signal from the senior surgeon at the Hospital: "BZ to the Team who conducted Emergency first aid on the patient, a good piece of work in the circumstances, you undoubtedly saved his leg. However, what we all fail to understand here was why he turned up so inebriated??!!"

Thirty Three years later at the HMS BROADSWORD reunion I was reunited with said Bootneck, our very own Gary 'Mo' Morris !!

## INFORMAL REUNION AT NORTHWOOD - May 2017

At first, it seemed unlikely to get off the ground but thanks to the tenacity and organizational skills of Steve Legge, it worked!

After speaking with George Roche, the possibility of a reunion in the London area to mark the 35th anniversary of the little skirmish we were involved was discussed and Steve took up the mantle.

Steve says, “I worked with the Catering Manager on what we would have for the buffet. Bar stock was not an issue. Probably the hardest thing was the passes, ensuring we got the correct information” - *understandable as nobody get's in to Northwood without full vetting.*

As it was, some 28/30 members of the 1982 ships company, some with their partners enjoyed an evening of fun and frivolity and (in my opinion) the best curry I've tasted this side of Singers! Not to mention the ‘tot’ organised by George—though the cheapskate made us pay for it!



Steve also had special polo shirts made to mark the occasion though mine was a ‘Falklands 25’ polo which I had altered, that’s why it looks different. (*and I called George a cheapskate*) Some faces not seen for a long time turned up, most notably Charlie Cook and Alan Barry. Good to see them again. More photo’s on the website

### What are we doing now? An occasional feature on life after Broadsword and the Mob.

*Steve Legge  
speaks on his  
life after the  
Royal Navy.*

After Broadsword, Steve rose to the dizzy heights of CPOSA serving on HMS Ark Royal , RFA Argus, HMS Southampton and HMS Cardiff.

After leaving the RN he worked in Transport and Warehousing and joined the RNR but life never compared to the real ‘Pusser’



After being made redundant in 2009, Steve was offered a FTRS (Full Time Reserve Service) contract working at RAF Northolt BFPO Secure Hub and did a six month deployment to Djibouti and later was embedded with a platoon supply squadron during the London Olympics.

He has until recently worked out of HMS Wildfire and for the last four-and-a-half years with the Royal Navy Youth Training Team, a job which he says he loves.

**If you are willing to tell about your life after Broadsword and the Navy, send me a brief biopic and I'll put an article together and send it back for your approval before publishing it.**

### IN MEMORIUM

**Francis Peter Osborn (Ozzie) BEM**

Died peacefully in hospital on Thursday 29th March 2018

Served HMS Broadsword (D31) 1949—1951

**R.I.P**

### A Matelot's Lament in the Slanguage of Pusser

There were mis-musters, slop chits, tot time and pay.  
There was rising and shining and hitting the hay.  
There were thickers and strongers and neaters as well.  
There were DQs and chokey and the tiller flat cell.  
There was aft and for'ard, abeam and abaft.  
To civvies this cackle seemed very daft.  
But to us in the Andrew it didn't seem strange.  
Like the draft chits the Jossman could always arrange.  
We were always being seen off and getting green rubs  
And chasing up rubbers and looking for subs.  
We ate yellow peril and Pussers red lead  
And then nine o'clockers before time for bed.  
There was going ashore like a great herd of cattle  
And getting filled in and put in the rattle  
There were buzzes that came from the old galley range  
And the Jimmy whose antics could seem very strange.  
The were runs up to Singers, we ate Bugis Street grub  
And trips out to Honkers and the China Fleet Club.]  
There were limers and kye we'd drink down below  
And at up spirits, two and one, gave us a glow.  
There were times that we'd feel everything's fine  
And times when we'd say, 'Oh roll on my nine'.  
And when nine finally came and we were out on the dole  
In old Civvy street where we knew not a soul.  
We remember the nutty and stale sticky buns  
And dread we'll be missing all the best runs.  
We'll think of the Andrew and wish we were back  
In bells, silk and lanyard, a real tiddly Jack.

# I Joined the Royal Navy.

By Geoffrey (Pedlar) Palmer

I am part of the forth generation of Naval Service, and the last of my stream of the Palmer family. The service started with my Great Grandfather back in 1868, followed by my Grandfather and father who joined at Holbrook Hospital school at the age of ten years. He went on to Greenwich school and eventually served for thirty years in the Royal Navy and was a survivor of HMS Repulse sunk by the Japanese dive bombers in the Far East just after Pearl Harbour.

Dad was underage at the time and was taken to Singapore and repatriated from there. He retired as a CPOEL in 1968 and joined the MOD Police.

Now it's my turn ... Dad used to talk about sending me to Greenwich School and I admit I was dead scared of being sent away but as I was going into the Royal Navy I agreed to go to the Plymouth recruiting office to enquire. "Tell 'em you want to be an electrician" was my instruction, so in I went and asked the question, did the aptitude exam, had my medical and was told I could be a cook. At the tender age of 15 years on the 16<sup>th</sup> September 1969 I was given seven shillings and six pence and a train ticket to Ipswich to join HMS GANGES.

The day soon arrived and after a severe haircut and dressed in my best bib and tucker, dad escorted me to North Road trailway station to catch the 07.30 to Paddington, I was bricking it I can tell you! having never travelled so far on my own. Dads last words to me were that the Navy I was joining was a load of rubbish, he had the best time of it, but more on that later.

I arrived at Ipswich station to find three hundred boys milling around on the platform, I was tired and hungry but I still had the £7.6d and the £20 dad gave me to buy myself out if I couldn't hack it.

We were shouted at and bundled into Pussers buses, trucks and vans and taken to Shotley Gate, into HMS GANGES annex as we were deemed too unclean to enter the hallowed gates. We did get a glimpse of the awesome mast which I spent many hours climbing and writing home from.

We were led into a hut that was roasting hot, had another haircut, the hottest shower I have ever had, a medical examination with 'no holes barred!', then sat down to view a film about our training and life in the Royal Navy.

Then it was time to sign contracts so I signed to serve for 12 years. From there we were fell in outside, three deep. CPOME Goldspink was the person on the dais, he was later to be my instructor. We were dressed in front of him and he proceeded to split the platoon in half, those on his right to be cooks and on his left stokers.

Now I was shocked at this as I was on his left, my hand went up and his look would have frozen lava. "**YOU BOY what do you want?**". "I'm supposed to be a cook" I replied, His reply was "**YOU'RE A STOKER NOW**". (*My subsequent bosses, DO's and engineers all reckoned I would have been a better cook!*). We were issued with full kit which we struggled to carry down to our mess deck.

Ashanti Mess was my billet for six weeks initial training and kit preparation, and after 47 years I'm still growing into the double breasted Burberry I was issued with. Yes! I still have all the kit I was given that day.

Boy! was it hot in that mess deck with the pungent aroma of naphthalene (moth balls). I was hungry and thirsty. After six weeks initial training we were finally allowed to march through those hallowed gates of HMS Ganges, past the mast and into Nelson Hall the drill shed, from there we were allocated our divisions and mess decks. I was given Benbow division, mess 32 in Benbow Lane. My home for the next 12 months or so I thought.

Half way through training, which was very harsh at times, we had to move into Anson 34 in the Long Covered Way. I will never forget the Friday night routine of scrubbing and polishing for Captains rounds held on Saturday mornings, how we dreaded the sound of the Bosun's shrill call preceding the Captain and his entourage. Would we win the cake?

I took part in the ceremonial mast manning for the Families Day in 1970, sadly my dear father had crossed the bar during my training of an illness that I was destined to suffer some 30 years later, but medical science had improved by then so I am here today to tell the tale.

On passing out from Ganges I was drafted into the fleet to serve as JME in HMS Eagle, I joined her in Guzz and was billeted in 5P1 mess on a blue card as fridge watch keeper. 24 about in harbour, 1 in 3 west country at sea, (happy days) I served in her for the last commission taking me to the far east. What a trip for a 16-year-old to behold the delights of Singers, Honky fid, Sydney, Wellington, Freemantle, Cape town, Durban and Gib.

I was drafted from her, passed for leading hand to serve in SULTAN until drafted to HMS Charybdis, a lovely ship and was very happy in her, and managed to pass my boiler watch keeping ticket. I also served in HMS ARIADNE before being selected for Mechanicians course, 2 year full time study at HMS Sultan to pass out with a HND in Marine and Mechanical Engineering. From there I went to Royal Arthur for PO's leadership then on to BROADSWORD as 3<sup>rd</sup> class mechanician. That was in 1980, I worked and studied hard to get my tickets, eventually passing my fleet board for 1<sup>st</sup> class Mech, and was rated CPO by Captain Canning prior to our departure for spring train and deployment to the Gulf in 1982, you all knew what happened then!

After leaving Broadsword, I served in HMS Defiance as a Chippy in SMU and learned a lot about life in sewer pipes! From here I joined HMS Brilliant ending up as chippy, taking her through the first commercial refit in the Royal Navy—a very steep learning curve. Sadly there was a very tragic accident involving the helo on its way to Mombasa while we were patrolling in the Gulf. The R & R scheduled for us was curtailed sharply by nine of our shipmates dying in a crash landing that left nothing but the engine remaining. All nine men were burnt to a cinder. We spent eight days searching the site and jungle area for any possible survivors. A witness said that something had come out of the cab prior to crashing, could it have been a member of the crew? Well the pathologist managed to make up nine persons out of the remains. I was tasked to return home to UK to witness the return of the bodies and attend all nine funerals to be held the following week. I must say I was totally and utterly heart broken by having to answer question from family and loved ones over what happened.

I returned to Brilliant off Dubai and found that the ship had just got on with her task as though nothing had happened except that we no longer had a helicopter. This episode left me mentally scared and unable to function. I was very anxious and fearful all the time, it was here I asked for help, I was diagnosed with PTSD and downgraded medically so I saw my time out at HMS Raleigh at Jupiter Point, one of the best jobs I had in the Andrew. So this brings me to 1994 and retirement, bringing an end of 108 years of family service in the Royal Navy.

On leaving the service I set up a business dealing in sheet metal work and fabrication, starting small but building up to 40 employees turning over £6.5M a year, I built up an impressive catalogue of clients and customers in the Plymouth area, from DML, BAE, Wrigley, Becton Dickenson and others in the manufacturing sector, designing and fabricating tools and fixtures they would use in their operation.

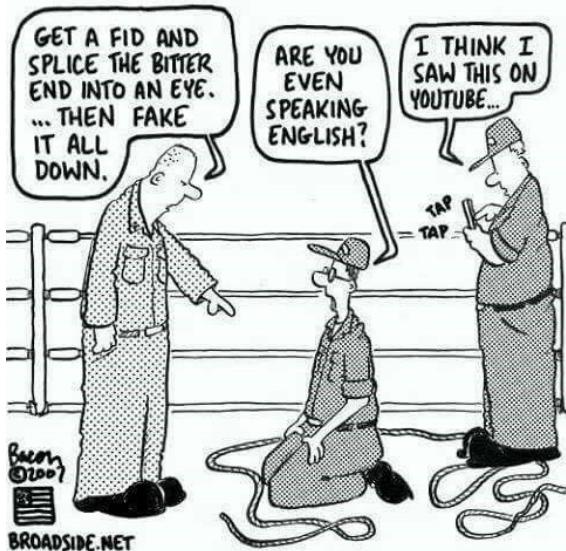
I look around Plymouth and see some of the projects that my company had built and fitted over the years, such as the box office in the Theatre Royal, the Golden Hind on the former Drake cinema, also the bracketry holding down the former anchor of HMS ARK ROYAL. I look with pride at the galleon sitting on top of St Nickolas Church in HMS Drake that was built and installed along with the coach lanterns on each corner of the Drill Shed, now warrant officers and senior rates mess. A lasting legacy of my life.

The year 2000 saw a major and life changing illness for me, I suffered a bleed in my brain, yes they did find one!

I could no longer work at that level so passed out of it into a second retirement, From that time until now, I have had many jobs, one time as an instructor at HMS SULTAN on the Network Rail Apprentice program called Flagship Academy, it was here that my fathers words became clear to me. Indeed todays Navy is a load of rubbish, but for me it was the best of time.

These days I enjoy working at Truro and Penwith College, and hope to continue long after retirement in two years from now

I am proud of my position as Chairman of our association and eagerly look forward to our reunions.



The "Every Sailor a Deck Hand" campaign got off to a slow start.



Join the Royal British Legion on-line at  
<http://www.britishlegion.org.uk/members/become-a-member/>  
 If you have any problems with joining online, phone  
 our contact centre on **0808 802 8080**  
 (free from UK landlines and major mobile networks).



After leaving the mob I was in the RNR at HMS Flying Fox in Bristol. As you may know, the RNR at that time did not have their own mine sweepers and would join various ships of the MCMV fleet for weekends/week/fortnight attachments. On one occasion a young and inexperienced ordinary seaman was on board one such HM Ship and, of course, was 'spammed' straight away for the afternoon & middle on the gangway. He had no idea what he was supposed to do really. Anyway, as RNR personnel were on board, Commodore RNR decided to pay a visit. Not only that, the 1st Lt was an old 'oppo' of his. He had said no ceremony was necessary and turned up in NATO standard 'woolly pulley'. So.....the young RNR OD saluted him on board and the following conversation took place.....

"Ah, young man....so how long have you been in the Reserves?"

"About 8 weeks Sir"

"Jolly good...and how'd 'you like it?"

"It's brills Sir"

"Jolly good. Is the 1st Lt on board? He's a very old friend of mine"

"No Sir, he has gone ashore"

"Oh! Shame, what time is he due back on board, hmmmm?"

"E'll be back about 4 o'clock Sir".

"4 o'clock!!!???? Shall we have it a bit more nautical young man, eh?"

Looking around for assistance from the nautical gods.....the young OD said.....

"About 4 o'clock...**me hearty!!!!!!**" giving a wink of the eye and a nod of his head while speaking like Captain Birdseye!!

Tanzy

Ships don't sink because of the water around them; ships sink because of the water that gets in them.

Don't let what's happening around you get inside you and weigh you down.

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## Invasions of the British Isles

- |         |   |
|---------|---|
| 2000 BC | Celt invasion   |
| 55 BC   | Roman invasion  |
| 410 AD  | First German invasion                                   |
| 793     | First Viking invasion                                   |
| 1066    | Norman invasion   |
| 1069    | Danish invasion   |
| 1212    | First naval base at Portsmouth                          |
| 1215-17 | French invasion attempt<br>defeated by King John's navy |
| 1509 AD | King Henry VII forms Navy Royal<br>.... the end!        |

**THINGMY ON THE PORT BOW!!**

You know, what's it called?  
Long and pointy...Very fast...

**TORPEDO ON THE PORT BOW !!**

