



The Rum Tub or Norrie's Nocturnal and Nautical Natter

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ADULT

A person who has stopped growing at both ends.

BEAUTY PARLOR

A place where women curl up and dye

CHICKENS

The only animals you eat before they are born and after they are dead

COMMITTEE

A body that keeps minutes and wastes hours.

DUST

Mud with the juice squeezed out.

EGOTIST

Someone who is usually me-deep in conversation

HANDKERCHIEF

Cold Storage

INFLATION

Cutting money in half without damaging the paper.

MOSQUITO

An insect that makes you like flies better.

RAISIN

A grape with a sunburn.

SECRET

Something you tell to one person at a time.

SKELETON

A bunch of bones with the person scraped off.

TOOTHACHE

The pain that drives you to extraction.

TOMORROW

One of the greatest labour-saving devices of today.

WRINKLES

Something other people have, similar to my character lines.

HMS Ulster

Rum Tub

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Editorial

By Shipmate Norrie Millen

Hi! Shipmates,

Well I certainly rubbed a few of you up the wrong way with my last editorial. I know the majority of you agree with my sentiments on this dreaded Covid-19 situation, sadly a few didn't and thought I was totally out of order. Be that as it may we are all entitled to our personal opinions and I am not going to offer any apologies for mine

The few that objected to my views stated that they thought the government were doing an amazing job controlling the virus situation. Don't know why but all of a sudden an ostrich comes to mind!

What about these new restrictions that will start on a certain day or time. What on earth is wrong with "Immediate Effect"? Other countries that controlled the situation way better than UK brought measures into force with immediate effect, they did not pontificate, setting up dates way in the future. This action resulted in they had minimal cases and even less deaths than the horrendous high number of deaths in the UK.

People who have lost loved ones and who could not even say goodbye or on lot of cases attend their loved ones funerals have marched on London. They are demanding a judicial inquiry into the way the government have mishandled the situation and feel many more people would have survived Covid-19 and death had the government shut the country down immediately like New Zealand did.

But as I always say: we are still here to complain about it. They say a matelot (and ex matelots) are not happy unless they are 'dripping'

I hope, pray and trust that you all stay on the right side of the grass and have no need for your wooden overcoats just yet. The navy didn't kill us and neither will this if we follow the rules

The way I see it anyway!



IF YOU HAD TO SACRIFICE ONE BRANCH OF THE ARMED FORCES TO DEFEAT COVID-19, WHICH ONE WOULD IT BE? AND WHY THE AIR FORCE?

Lieutenant-Commander Ian Normand, one of the first men to fly at more than 1,000 mph – obituary

He flew fighter-bombers in the Korean War, and over the course of his career handled 124 different types of aircraft

Lieutenant-Commander Ian Normand, who has died aged 92, flew fighter-bombers in the Korean War, and as a naval aero-engineer and test pilot was one of the first men to fly at more than 1,000 mph.

Normand was flying the Seafire Mark 47e, the ultimate and definitive version of the famous Spitfire, at the Navy's Operational Flying School when the Korean War broke out. He progressed to the Hawker Sea Fury, the last propeller-driven fighter-bomber in the Navy and one of the fastest production single reciprocating engine aircraft ever built. In it he learnt aerial combat, bombing and deck landing in the carrier *Triumph* in the English Channel.

He joined 804 Naval Air Squadron in the carrier *Glory* when she was on her third patrol off Korea. There, the Fleet Air Arm had reached pitch perfection: each pilot sometimes flew three and even four sorties a day, serviceability was extremely high, and aircraft landed and took off at half-minute intervals.

Normand was rated as an exceptional pilot, and when *Glory* was relieved after two more patrols, he was one of the pilots selected to take his experience to the carrier *Ocean* and 802 Naval Air Squadron. Between March and November 1952 he flew 150 sorties over North Korea against bridges, tanks, and artillery positions.

On April 22, on his afternoon sortie, Normand lost power but nursed his aircraft to a safe landing on an offshore island: one of the Navy's highly skilled aero-engineers, he professionally noted "fuel starvation" in his flying logbook.

Patrick Ian Normand always claimed that he was born in prison: in fact, he was born on July 13 1927 at Fort House, Johannesburg, where his father was governor of prisons for the Transvaal. Normand Snr had ridden with the Matabeleland Mounted Police on the

Jameson Raid of 1896 and had been awarded the DSO at the Siege of Ladysmith, but when he was forced out of office by the Afrikaner government of South Africa, the family returned to Scotland.

Apart from a few years when his mother escaped the bitter weather to convalesce in South Africa, young Normand was educated in Britain.

In 1944, when the Admiralty still enjoyed a vision of immortality and was the only service recruiting permanent career officers, Normand passed the examination for special entry into the Navy. After a spell at the naval college at its wartime home, Eaton Hall, Chester, in 1945 he started studies at the Royal Naval Engineering College at Keyham, Devonport, to specialise as an engineer.

His four-year degree course included several months at sea in the carriers *Illustrious* and *Victorious* where he gained his auxiliary watchkeeping certificate on steam plants, before sub-specialising in aero-engineering. Normand took on his first flight in July 1950 and flew solo after just five hours and 40 minutes' training.

After Korea, from 1953-55 Normand learned to fly in the jet-engined de Havilland Vampire and the Hawker Sea Hawk and, as a maintenance test pilot, he took delivery of new aircraft from the manufacturer. Then, after a three-month helicopter course, Normand joined the course at the Empire Test Pilot School, Farnborough.

On graduation he worked on armaments and flight testing, then tested catapults and arrestor gear for aircraft carriers, before beginning a study of reheat orifices in supersonic aircraft. Much of this later work was done in the Fairey Delta 2 which, with its revolutionary drop-nose and swept-back wing, was a forerunner of Concorde. Only three years previously, Lieutenant-Commander Peter Twiss

had smashed the world air speed record in the FD2, and in July 1959 Normand became one of the first half-dozen men to follow Twiss and fly at more than 1,000mph.



Lt. Normand in the late 1940's



Lt. Ian Normand in the cockpit of his Hawker Sea Fury

Contemporaries regarded Normand's flying skills as "amazing", especially after he demonstrated inverted spins in Hawker Hunters.

Other appointments in Normand's 30-year naval career included senior air engineer and maintenance testing at RNAS Brawdy in Pembrokeshire and RNAS Abbotsinch, Glasgow, and senior air engineer the teaching staff at RNEC Manadon. In 1966 he returned for three years to RAE Farnborough as a tutor at the Empire Test Pilot School, and in 1969-71 he served on exchange at the US Naval Test Pilot School at Patuxent River as head of flight testing.

His final appointment was at Boscombe Down, where he wrote and amended pilots' notes, the essential guides on how to fly each type of aircraft.

Normand was awarded the Air Force Cross in 1970. On leaving the Navy, in 1975-76 Normand worked briefly for Chemring Group – best-known at the time for the manufacture of "chaff", a defence against radar-guided missile threats to aircraft – where his father-in-law was a non-executive director.

But commercial life did not suit Normand, and he joined the Civil Aviation Authority. He was initially responsible for issuing licences to operators, but in 1980 he became a flight operations inspector. Required to maintain his pilot's licence, he would invite friends and family to join him on flights which were often jaunts to Calais or Le Touquet for lunch, returning with duty-free alcohol, or helicopter flights along the Thames.

When Normand retired from the CAA in 1989 after a 40-year flying career he had flown more than 3,000 accident-free hours in 124 different types of aircraft, both fixed-wing and rotary.

Normand was a keen rough shooter who often developed lasting friendships with farmers and landowners, and an eager gardener who left a succession of married quarters with beautiful gardens. As a glider pilot he gave much time to teaching others, and, until electronics made home servicing impossible, he would never engage a third party to maintain or repair his cars.

In 1951 Ian Normand married Mary Bishop, the elder daughter of Sir Harold Bishop. She died in 2001, and he married Christine Houseley (née Try). He is survived by two sons and two daughters.

ANAGRAMS

PRESBYTERIAN

When you rearrange the letters:
BEST IN PRAYER

ASTRONOMER:

When you rearrange the letters:
MOON STARER

DESPERATION:

When you rearrange the letters:
A ROPE ENDS IT

THE EYES:

When you rearrange the letters:
THEY SEE

THE MORSE CODE

When you rearrange the letters:
HERE COME DOTS

DORMITORY:

When you rearrange the letters:
DIRTY ROOM

SLOT MACHINES:

When you rearrange the letters:
CASH LOST IN ME

ANIMOSITY:

When you rearrange the letters:
IS NO AMITY

ELECTION RESULTS:

When you rearrange the letters:
LIES - LET'S RECOUNT

SNOOZE ALARMS:

When you rearrange the letters:
ALAS! NO MORE Z 'S

A DECIMAL POINT:

When you rearrange the letters:
I'M A DOT IN PLACE

THE EARTHQUAKES:

When you rearrange the letters:
THAT QUEER SHAKE

ELEVEN PLUS TWO:

When you rearrange the letters:
TWELVE PLUS ONE

AND FOR THE GRAND FINALE:

MOTHER-IN-LAW:

When you rearrange the letters:
WOMAN HITLER

Britain And The Bomb

From the Internet, by James Wharton & submitted by Shipmate Kevin Maguire

The UK's history with nuclear weapons explained

On August 6, 1945, the United States detonated a bomb over the Japanese city of Hiroshima unleashing devastation the likes of which had never been seen before.

It was the Atomic Bomb.

Three days later, 300 miles to the south west of the bombing site, the US repeated its action, this time over the city of Nagasaki. The combined result of just those two bombs brought the Empire of Japan to its knees and the Second World War to an end.

Ever since there has been a constant conversation about the balance between using such awesome destructive power to bring an enemy to yield, and the resulting loss of life.

The two atomic bombings of Japan in August 1945 caused the deaths of 226,000 people, by comparison, the total loss of life during the nine-month bombing campaign by the Luftwaffe – the Blitz – killed 40,000. The atomic bombings lasted two days, the Blitz ran almost nightly for nine months. It is those stark numbers that brought into question the humanity behind the use of such weaponry.

The opposing argument to the use of the bombs in Japan was, and still is, that they swiftly brought an end to the suffering associated with World War Two in the Far East.

The debate around the use of nuclear weapons in Japan in 1945 has continued to this day, and certainly is not the only contentious matter associated with the technology.

The Immediate Post War Years

Often lost within the pages of nuclear weapon history are the early stages in the United Kingdom's development and testing of the technology. And, as we will see, it has not always been a period of happy exploration between powers in the west with regards to 'the bomb'.



Hiroshima devastation

In the months after the war, the USA stunned Britain by pulling up the draw bridge and ceasing cooperation around the future development of nuclear weapons.

This was known as the 'end of the special relationship.'

Because of this the UK had to embark on its own journey towards nuclear armament. That journey took seven years.

The 1950s

In 1952 Britain was in a position to test a nuclear weapon of its own.

To do this it found a site off the western coast of Australia and an aging Royal Navy ship from WWII.

A bomb, containing plutonium, was placed on board an empty frigate, HMS Plym, and at 23:59 on October 2, 1952, Britain became only the third country to successfully detonate a nuclear weapon. Britain thus became a nuclear superpower, alongside the USA and USSR.



HMS Plym

Following the successful detonation of the plutonium bomb on board HMS Plym, then Prime Minister Winston Churchill ordered the production of the Blue Danube Bomb – Britain's first nuclear weapon. The initial

batch of Blue Danube Bombs, a weapon also known as the Little Boy, was delivered to the Royal Air Force a year later in 1953.

However, Britain did not have the means to deploy the weapons for two further years.

That changed when the newly designed V bomber - the Valiant - entered service in 1955.

Britain's nuclear weapons capability thus became live and was the responsibility of the V-Class crews based at Bomber Command, known as the V-Force.

58 Blue Danube bombs were produced and placed with V-Force.

The Blue Danube weighed a hefty 4.5 tonnes and boasted a yield equivalent to that of 10 to 12 kilotons of TNT. But to those pushing the Government on with respect to its nuclear exploration, apparently that was not enough and soon plans were afoot to create a much larger version carrying a yield of around 40 kilotons.

Producing such a weapon would not be straightforward in large part due to the complexity of mining the materials required. It was a matter of cost and like the debate around morality, the argument around cost is another long-standing characteristic of Britain's nuclear history.

Soon after Britain had taken receipt of its first Blue Danube, global bomb tech progressed with the testing of the first thermonuclear weapon by the United States. This, in turn, prompted the Soviets to do the same ... and suddenly Britain's brand-new nuclear arsenal became old fashioned.

Arguments to the contrary of spending millions, even billions, of pounds on nuclear weapons have not been centered upon the notion that to buy them would be a waste, instead the focus has always been on whether the money would be better spent on conventional forces.

This position came into play and was supported by eminent personalities as the decision over whether to upgrade the UK weapons cache to thermonuclear status was mulled over by parliamentarians in the mid-fifties.

One of those early doubters was First Sea Lord Earl Mountbatten, second cousin to HM The Queen and the Uncle of HRH Prince Philip.

Alongside Field Marshal Gerald Templer, then Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Mountbatten felt that the expenditure required to continue

developing weapons greater in destruction than that of the Blue Danube would be far better spent on strengthening conventional forces such as armour, aircraft and ships.

Lord Mountbatten said:

"The nuclear arms race has no military purpose. Wars cannot be fought with nuclear weapons. Their existence only adds to our perils."

He based his argument on the fact that Britain's nuclear arsenal was, and would always be, small by comparison to those of the USA and Soviet Union and therefore any war that was ever going to come Britain's way would have to be land

based because each of those two nations had more than enough nuclear weapons to destroy the world many times over, creating a status quo.

Mountbatten and Templer were hinting at a stalemate that became known as mutually assured destruction (MAD) and it is this principle that has maintained a world order of peace where the use of nuclear bombs is concerned right through to today.

However, Mountbatten and Templer would lose the argument and Britain would get its thermonuclear weapons. A cabinet report from Churchill's government at the time read:

"If we did not develop megaton weapons we would sacrifice immediately and in perpetuity our position as a first-class power. We would have to rely on the whim of the United States for the effectiveness of the

whole basis of our strategy."

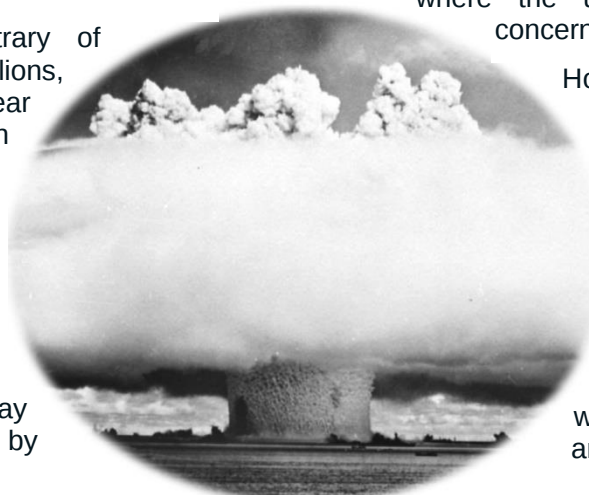
This paved the way for Britain to trial bigger, more advanced weapons just a couple of years later.

WWII

Hiroshima And Nagasaki: The Devastation Of The Atomic Bombings



The Vulcan entered service replacing the Valiant aircraft within the V-Force.
Credit Crown Copyright



An American Atomic Bomb test off Bikini Island in the 1940's Credit: PA

Britain's first H-bomb experiment was conducted on May 15, 1957, at Malden Island, today part of the Kingdom of Kiribati in the Pacific Ocean.

The bomb was dropped from Valiant at a height of 45,000 feet, at the time the highest altitude a thermonuclear bomb had been dropped from in the world.

In the same fashion seen four years earlier, Britain became the third country on the planet to test a thermonuclear weapon. The small island nation, with its limited post-war financial reserves, was doing its best to keep up with the USA and the Soviet Union.

This test was part of Operation Dapple. The period saw further weapon tests in the region, including at neighbouring Christmas Island (called Kiritimati today).

Associated to the debate around the morality of using nuclear weapons in anger, is the debate about testing them in the name of science.

Critics of nuclear testing cited the impact on the environment, the health of indigenous people and the consequences to nature as their key reasons for opposing the practice. Much of that criticism has since been levelled directly at Britain for the decades-long consequences of its weapons testing at places like Christmas and Malden islands in the late fifties and early sixties.

At the time of the testing, Kiribati was still under British colonial rule and perhaps this is another key reason why the nuclear weapons programme of the era is still being pulled into question today.

In a 2015 statement to the United Nations, Ambassador Makurita Baaro, Kiribati's permanent representative to the UN, made a passionate argument that was, at moments, scathing toward the UK about the testing his country had endured decades earlier.

The statement included the following messages:

"In 1962, my family spent time on our home island with my grandparents in a rural village in one of the outer islands in Kiribati.

One evening, not long after sunset, there was a sudden flash of orange light that rushed up into a mushroom cloud high in the sky and then lit up the whole sky, bright orange.

"There was a flurry of birds, most of which fell dead to the ground, and the villagers ran to the church next to my grandparents' home loudly saying, 'Hail Mary.' My father knew what it was. He heard it on the radio in the village. It was the nuclear test on Kiritimati (Christmas Island) which is more than 4,000 kilometres away. Fish died and floated to

the surface of the water and we had a feast the next day.

"A year later, I started school for the first time, one of my classmates had no teeth. She never had teeth. Another boy in the same class had patchy white and brown skin and was forever teased for this. Both my classmates had something in common; they were born in Kiritimati where their parents were when atmospheric tests were conducted between 1956 and 1962."

Ambassador Baaro continued:

"Today, our communities still suffer from the long-term impacts of the tests, experiencing higher rates of cancer, particularly thyroid cancer, due to exposure to radiation. In some places, the environment and food sources remain highly contaminated although studies done by those who conducted these tests have cleared these areas and indicated they are safe for us."

The 1960s

The two men had faced down the possibility of nuclear war with the Soviet Union during the Cuban Missile Crisis. JFK also signed off on Britain's purchasing of Polaris. Credit: PA.

The special relationship between the UK and USA was repaired as the 1950s ended.



Nuclear protestors in England 1961. To this day, protests continue around the UK's status as a nuclear weapon state. Credit: PA



President John F. Kennedy with Prime Minister Harold Macmillan in 1963.

This rapprochement was prompted primarily by a fear that the USSR was advancing in its weapons development at a faster pace than that of the Western superpowers. The chief reason for this was the successful deployment of Sputnik into orbit around Earth.

Positive consequences of the recommencement of cooperation were quick.

The agreement allowed for the exchanging of nuclear technology, not exclusively limited to weaponry. The USA supplied Britain with nuclear fuel which directly resulted in the building of the UK's first nuclear powered submarine, HMS Dreadnought.

In return, Britain briefed the USA on its state of the art propulsion technology, which was implemented into the building of an entire new class of American submarine.

Dreadnought would enjoy a 20-year life with the Royal Navy after its launch by HM the Queen in 1960. It has the charming record of being the first Royal Navy submarine to surface at the North Pole. A feat its crew achieved in 1971.

Added to the agreement of joint exploration in nuclear technologies was a separate memorandum of agreement to share weapons. Chiefly, the deal was about giving Britain access to American bombs so that its own nuclear weapons reserve did not look so dwarfed by that of the Soviet Union. In exchange, the UK allowed the USA to park its Polaris submarines in Scottish waters.

But the deal was not all it was cracked up to be as the Americans would not simply just hand over US nukes to British personnel.

Instead, the arrangements that were agreed allowed for US nuclear weapons to be stored in locations that both American and British personnel would have access to. The oversight and day-to-day maintenance of the weapons remained in American control. Even the protocols that were designed should the weapons be needed by Britain (assuming the US gave authorisation) provided problems. It was timed at no less than ten minutes to hand the

weapons over to British control, and ten minutes when the wrath of nuclear annihilation is closing in is a terribly long time.

Britain rightly felt that all the barriers equated to America virtually having a veto on UK nuclear weapons policy. And it would not do at all. The American weapons were phased out almost as soon as they had been placed in the joint locations in the UK and Germany.

The 1960s saw the arrival of the Intermediate Range Ballistic Missile (IRBM), an advancement in nuclear weapons strategy that arrived for Britain in time for the Cuban Missile Crisis.



Royal Navy Polaris submarines HMS Resolution Revenge and Repulse on the River Clyde in July, 1987

The Cuban Missile Crisis is sometimes thought of as being an exclusively American and Russian affair, but Royal Air Force personnel at Bomber Command found themselves painstakingly committed to the responsibilities that were

heading Britain's way should shots be fired by either side. Targets identified and programmed to be attacked included six cities, more than 40 airfields, several air defence control installations and 20 enemy IRBM launch sites. Britain was not assuming it could sit this one out. And for the first time, thanks to the arrival of IRBMs, Britain could boast having two methods of delivery: via missile, or via the V-Force.

Polaris

Polaris equipped submarines were operational for 28 years until being phased out and replaced by Trident in the 1990s.

In the weeks and months after the Cuban Missile Crisis, Britain's nuclear weapons age entered a new era when it secured Polaris.

However, it would take a further six years to enter service with the Royal Navy following the brokering of a deal between Prime Minister Harold Macmillan and President John F Kennedy.

Polaris provided Britain with its first submarine based nuclear weapons system.

As part of the programme, from 1969 Britain's nuclear deterrent included four Resolution class submarines each armed with 16 Polaris ballistic missiles.

Each of those missiles was able to deliver three thermonuclear warheads.



Nuclear submariners in Polaris missile control on HMS Resolution. Credit: MOD(N)

Polaris submarines were based at Faslane. It provided Britain with at least one submarine on patrol at secret locations around the world, thus the UK had a constant at-sea nuclear deterrent.

Nuclear submariners Polaris missile control on HMS Resolution. Credit: MOD

Polaris remained operational for 28 years and became Britain's sole nuclear deterrent programme after V-Force's phasing out in the 1970s.

During their service, the Polaris submarines Resolution, Renown, Revenge and Repulse conducted 229 consecutive and continuous patrols. The contribution the crews of those submarines had given Britain for all those years was praised by Prime Minister John Major as the last of the submarines was retired. He said:

"Because of these patrols any possible aggressor has known that to attack the UK would provoke a terrible response."

The last submarine of the Polaris era, Repulse, was decommissioned at Faslane on August 28, 1996.

Polaris was replaced by Trident, an upgraded nuclear weapons system that had been secured following many years of purchasing and technology sharing between the UK and USA. It remains the UK's nuclear weapons system to this day.

There's nothing like a little tomato soup to soothe the soul. Even if it's cold. Over ice. With a celery stalk...and vodka!



Wow... and I thought wine in a box was good value!

By Shipmate John Soanes

Dear Shipmates,

On a personal note, I continue to "Plough on", I have good days and bad days, sometimes painful, sometimes not. Ann and I both remain optimistic and hope for the best trying to enjoy life. As the saying goes; "Keep taking the tablets and plough on"

I have been doing quite a bit of reading recently especially about modern methods of minesweeping where everything is done remotely, no more towing large quantities of wires and ironmongery and was reminded of

the old fashioned methods we used for many years.

This poem well describes the art!

SWEEPING GETS TEDIOUS DON'T IT?

The funnels on fire,
My screws are bent,
I've parted a wire,
My floats! I've lent.
The Fodens smoking quite a lot,
My flaming winch is now red hot,

Not ours the fighters glow,
The glory and the praise,
Unnoticed to and fro,
We pass our dangerous ways,

We sift the drifting sea.
And blindly grope beneath,
Obscure and toilsome we,
The fishermen of death,

But when the great ships go,
to battle through the gloom,
Our hearts beat high to know,
We cleared their path of doom

John is Chairman of Torbay RNA and often contributed articles for Rum Tub. Recently he has had several bouts of cancer, currently not being treated due to Covid-19

**Has anyone else bought the Covid-19 test kit off of Amazon?
Got mine yesterday, tested today. Apparently I'm pregnant!**

The Last Royal Navy Victoria Cross Winner

Lieutenant Robert Hampton Gray RCNVR

Lieutenant Robert Hampton Gray's final act, sinking the Amakusa, earned him the Victoria Cross.

It is 75 years since the Royal Navy's last Victoria Cross winner.



During the Second World War, Canadian Lieutenant Robert Hampton Gray was assigned to the Fleet Air Arm and a member of No. 1841 Squadron.

He was based on board **HMS Formidable**, which had joined the Royal Navy fleet in the Pacific Campaign and was involved in strikes on the Japanese mainland.

On the morning of 9 August 1945, Gray was asked to fly his corsair over Onagawa Wan, a bay off the East Coast of Japan where enemy shipping had been spotted, and seek targets.

He was instructed not to take any unnecessary risks as it was believed that the war with Japan would end soon and the Soviet Unit had attacked Japanese Forces that morning.

On his missions Gray sighted five enemy ships in the harbour and attacked.

Corsairs onboard the deck of HMS Formidable off the coast of Japan.

Coming in as low as 50ft and leading the attack, Gray was shot at ferociously, causing one of his 500lb bombs to be blown away.

The second however he hurled into the coastal defence ship **Amakusa**, which exploded in the engine room and detonated the magazine.

But as Gray's Corsair passed over the enemy, it was engulfed in flames and corkscrewed into the sea.

From attacks against Hitler's flagship **Tirpitz** in the Norwegian fjords to strikes against Japan, Robert Hampton Gray had "consistently shown a brilliant fighting spirit and most inspiring leadership".

His final act, sinking the **Amakusa**, earned him the Victoria Cross.

It was the final VC of 182 awarded in World War Two and to date, the last earned by the Fleet Air Arm and Royal Navy.



Corsairs on the deck of HMS Formidable

Britain's last surviving World War Two Victoria Cross hero turns 100

From the Internet by Ben Philip

Britain's last surviving Victoria Cross holder for air action in World War Two has turned 100.

Flight Lieutenant John Cruickshank, of Aberdeen, earned the honour aged 24 during an attack on a German U-boat.

Despite being badly injured, the pilot and his crew managed to sink the submarine.

The Victoria Cross is the highest recognition for valour that can be awarded to members of the British and Commonwealth Armed Forces.

The incident in question happened on 17 July, 1944.

A Flying Officer at the time, he was piloting a Catalina flying boat, protecting British vessels from German U-boats in the Norwegian Sea.

A member of the crew spotted a vessel ahead of them.

They immediately went on the offensive, and began a bombing run through heavy gun fire.

However, their bombs did not release.

Despite having now lost the element of surprise, he turned the aircraft around and attacked once again.

This time he released the bombs himself and successfully destroyed the submarine.

His navigator was killed and co-pilot seriously injured.

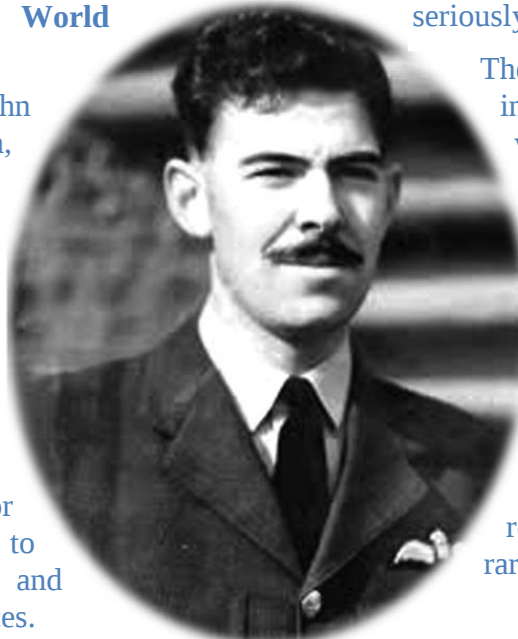


Image © John Cruickshank

The pilot himself suffered 72 injuries, including serious wounds to his lungs and lower limbs. He refused medical attention, but managed to get himself, his aircraft and crew back to their base at Sullom Voe in Shetland.

His injuries were so serious that he never returned to operational flying, leaving the RAF in 1946, and resuming a career in banking - rarely speaking of his experiences to anyone.

In 1995, he said of his honour: "I hold this (VC) in

trust for all those who flew with the command during the war.

"And of course I also keep in mind all the members of my crew at that time who so magnificently carried out their duties."

In 2008 he said: "You don't get involved in that kind of thing thinking of any decorations or any recognition. It was regarded as duty."

'Others less fortunate'

In 2013, he was given the opportunity to fly in an aircraft similar to the one he piloted during the war.

He said: "It wasn't all my efforts, there were efforts of many others. We were very fortunate. There were others who were less fortunate than I was."



Image © John Cruickshank - The Catalina

He was joined by his friend and former RAF serviceman, Bob Kemp, who said Mr Cruickshank was an example to all aircrew, having displayed leadership of the highest order.

Mr Kemp said: "He's a true gentleman. Quiet, reserved with a great sense of humour. When he tells one of his stories, he often roars with laughter before he reaches the punchline.

"But he has an amazing memory, and his attention to detail is notable. And for a centenarian, John has much for us to admire."

Such is the modesty of the man, Flt Lt Cruickshank is celebrating his 100th birthday quietly.

**Anyone else's car
getting 3 weeks to the
gallon at the moment ?**



EVERYDAY COVID CHECK
AT 5PM OPEN A BOTTLE OF WINE,
SMELL IT, POUR IT AND TASTE IT,
YOU ARE GOOD. CELEBRATE BY
FINISHING THE BOTTLE. YOU ARE
WELCOME!



Coronacoaster

noun: the ups and downs of a pandemic. One day you're loving your bubble, doing work outs, baking banana bread and going for long walks and the next you're crying, drinking gin for breakfast and missing people you don't even like.

Gregg Bemis, flamboyant millionaire who bought the wreck of the Lusitania - Obituary

Submitted by Shipmate Kevin Maguire

He sank a fortune into trying to solve the mystery of the luxury liner torpedoed by a German U-boat

Gregg Bemis, who has died aged 91, was an American millionaire and owner of the world's second most famous shipwreck, that of the Lusitania, the luxury passenger liner torpedoed off the coast of Ireland by a German U-boat in 1915 with the loss of 1,200 lives, among them 128 American citizens.

It was the defining act of terrorism against innocent civilians of the early 20th century, and eventually drew the United States into the First World War.

Bemis's interest in the Lusitania had originally been piqued purely by the possibility of making money; he regarded what was left of the stricken ship – and her precious cargo of copper, bronze and silver – as a sound investment which could profitably be sold for scrap. But he quickly came to appreciate the spellbinding allure of her story, and the mystery of how she met her doom.

In particular he became exercised by the continuing debate over whether the vessel was secretly carrying war supplies from America – still neutral in 1915 – to Britain, nine months after the start of the First World War.

For the best part of half a century Bemis devoted himself to trying to establish why the huge ship sank in just 18 minutes – compared with the death throes of the Titanic, which took two hours and 20 minutes to go down –

and what caused a second explosion, moments after the torpedo hit, reported by surviving passengers and other observers.

However, although Bemis subscribed to the widely held conspiracy theory that the British government was anxious to conceal the presence of munitions in the Lusitania's hold, he never managed to clinch his argument with absolute proof.

The Cunarder was steaming from New York to Liverpool when the torpedo struck at 2pm on May 7 1915. Fifteen seconds later, another, even more powerful explosion rocked the ship; she sank, bow first, in a mere 18 minutes.

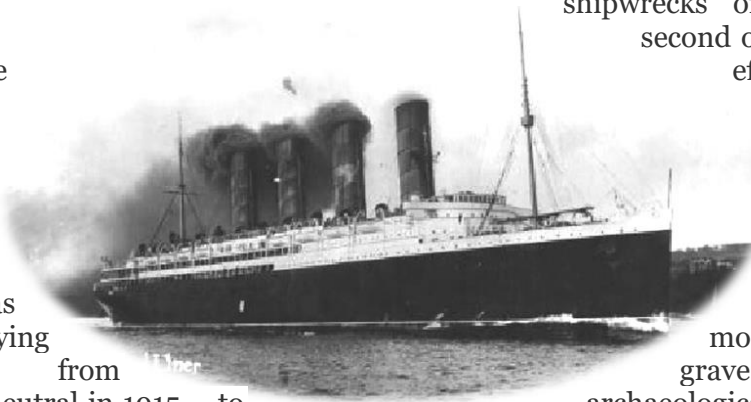
On both sides of the Atlantic the sinking was depicted as a heinous crime against non-combatants, and when America finally joined the military alliance against Germany in 1917, the sinking was cited by many as a justification.

Although Bemis controlled the salvage rights to one of the most historically significant shipwrecks of the modern era – second only to the Titanic – his efforts to solve the mystery of why the Lusitania sank so quickly were thwarted by the Irish government, which regarded the ship as part historic monument and part war grave, a fragile archaeological site that could be desecrated if Bemis had physically altered its remains.

Launched in 1906, the 790ft Lusitania – so fast, sleek and opulent that she was named the Greyhound of the Sea – held the speed record for crossing the Atlantic until 1909, when she lost it to her sister ship, the Mauretania.



Gregg Bemis



Among the passengers on her last voyage were a number of eminent politicians, artists, academics and businessmen, as well as the Irish art collector Sir Hugh Lane, who was reported to have had with him on board paintings by Titian, Monet and Rubens, each encased in a protective lead tube.

This revelation led to the Irish government placing an “underwater cultural heritage order” on the ship to dissuade treasure hunters, blocking Bemis and other divers from bringing artefacts to the surface.

A flamboyant and outspoken figure, Bemis had owned the Lusitania wreck since 1982, buying the salvage rights as an investment and estimating the scrap value of the steel, bronze, and brass on the historic ship at about \$12 million. But as the years passed he sank so much of his own fortune into trying to solve the secret of her sinking that his expenses had long ago outstripped her salvage value.

The ship lies 11½ miles off the coast of southern Ireland in 300 feet of water. To dive that deep, Bemis wore a dry suit (which, unlike a wet suit, is sealed so that no water can get in) and breathed a mixture of helium, nitrogen and oxygen.

Because of the inherent danger and greater atmospheric pressure in such a deep dive, Bemis could stay on the bottom for only five minutes; as far as he knew, no other diver of his age had gone so deep.

“It was very dark. There was virtually no light. Visibility was about 25 feet,” he recalled. “But the stuff down

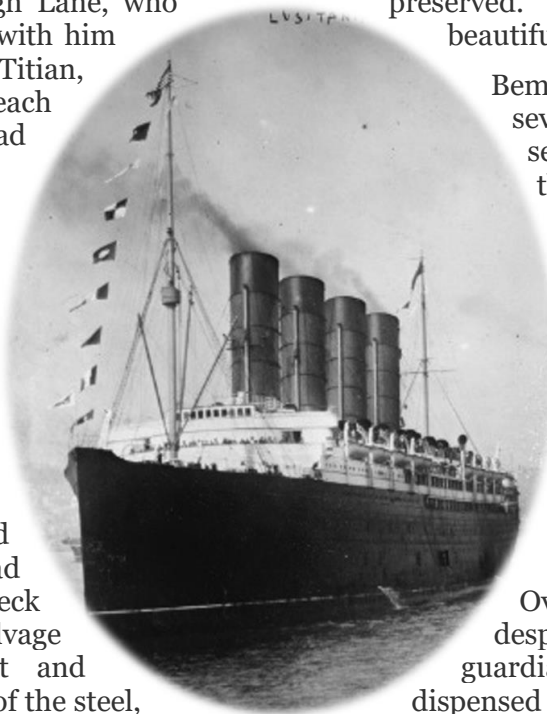
there is absolutely beautiful. I could see fixtures from the ship, and railings. Nearly everything there should be brought up and preserved. It was just beautiful, beautiful.”

Bemis descended to the wreck several times and financed several dives by others. But these explorations upset the Irish government, who assumed jurisdiction over the wreck following a change in maritime law in 1987. In a series of well-publicised legal battles, Dublin insisted that preserving the remains of the Lusitania trumped Bemis’s rights to explore his own property.

Over the years, Bemis despaired of Ireland’s cultural guardians in public utterances that dispensed with the usual niceties. Even his own legal representatives conceded that Bemis could be regarded as “a somewhat eccentric, obsessive, difficult, undiplomatic pain in the arse”, a description that Bemis himself did not dispute.

When Dublin repeatedly insisted that the government’s sole priority was to protect the Lusitania, he replied: “Protect it from what? They are not protecting it from the ravages of the ocean, nor the fishermen’s nets, nor the pirates, but only protecting it from the owner and historical truth.”

As well as his interest in the Lusitania, Bemis also investigated the fate of the Estonia, a Tallinn-Stockholm ferry boat that went down in rough seas in the Baltic in 1994 with the loss of 852 lives. Bemis suspected foul play, based on evidence gathered during an unauthorised dive he made on the wreck in 2000, and his charge prompted the Swedish



authorities to issue a warrant for his arrest.

Farwell Gregg Bemis Jr was born in May 1928 in Boston, Massachusetts, into a family whose fortune derived from bag-making, and later plastic packaging.

After graduating in Economics at Stanford University in 1950, he spent two years on active service in the US Marines including a one-year tour of duty in Korea. On his return he graduated from Harvard Business School in 1954, and over the ensuing 25 years worked in the top management of three Fortune 500 companies.

He owned and ran The Ocean Corporation, which trains commercial divers and other underwater workers; he was also chairman of Deep Ocean Engineering, a world leader in the production of remotely operated underwater vehicles or ROVs. He took up scuba diving in the late 1960s, around the time he became interested in the Lusitania project.

In 1968 Bemis read a newspaper article about a friend who, with a former Navy diver, planned to build an underwater breathing system which would allow divers to work safely at then-unheard-of depths while avoiding the life-threatening effects of decompression.

Their goal was to harness such a system to salvage the Lusitania, whose rights the diver had bought for £1,000 from Britain's War Risk Insurance Office, which had paid claims on the shipwreck decades before.

Intrigued, Bemis joined the two men in their project. Although the venture failed, Bemis and his friend retained ownership of the company's remaining assets, including the salvage rights.

In 1982 he bought out his partner's share for a dollar, becoming the Lusitania's sole official "salvor", and made his first dive on the wreck, bringing to the surface silverware, dishes and other artefacts. "I finally said, Dammit, it's my boat, and I'm going to go down and give it a big kiss."

His legal woes began in the mid-1980s, when the British government laid claim to the wreck. Bemis successfully proved his

ownership in court, but in 1987 a change in international maritime law meant that the Lusitania now lay half a mile inside in Irish territorial waters.

Lusitania: among the passengers on her last voyage were eminent politicians, artists, academics and businessmen, as well as the Irish art collector Sir Hugh Lane, who was reported to have had with him paintings by Titian, Monet and Rubens encased in lead tubes

Worried that she was vulnerable to plunder, Ireland's cultural ministry, the Department of Arts, Heritage, and the Gaeltacht, placed a protective order on the vessel which remains in force to this day.

Bemis ran for Congress twice and three times for the New Mexico state legislature as a Republican. For some years he wrote an outspoken column for his local newspaper, the Santa Fe New Mexican, his conservative views putting him sorely at odds with the city's default liberal ethos. Until this year he played soccer twice a week.

To mark the 100th anniversary of the Lusitania disaster in May 2015, Bemis and his diving partner Eoin McGarry designed a small steel plaque commemorating the victims, which was laid on the wreck's hull just forward of the bridge. Attached to it was a watertight capsule containing the names of the dead.

Bemis was aboard the boat that took the divers to the site and could not resist taking a jibe at the Irish government with the plaque's final line: "Hopefully someday the truth around the sinking will be revealed."

In 2019 he signed the wreck over to a Co Cork museum group, saying that at his advanced age "there is only so much more I can do to further this project".

Gregg Bemis was married and had five children.

Gregg Bemis 1929 -2020