

THE BRITANNIA NAVAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATION

...From the Secretary/Vice Chair

Dear Members,

Sixteen members attended the Sunday zoom meeting on 12th December. This was your opportunity to bring something to our Mince Pies and Sea Poetry party! Virtually of course, but we were treated to a medley of a personal selection of favourite naval prose, including amusing anecdotes and other tales from the sea. Martin Muncaster read a naval excerpt from his recently published autobiography 'The Voice, the Face'. John Foreman bravely gave us a rendition of his adaptation of 'O'er the Sea and Far Away' and we all joined in! Bob Horner brought us Masefield and all the way from the USA David Botwinik recited 'Old Ironsides'. Malcolm Lewis offered us the amusing 'Nelson and his Navy – Gunner Joe'. Finally Brendan O'Farrell brought to us a shedload (advisedly) 'of jocular colloquial measurements from the artificers. All rounded off with a sing song from Rob White.

The Bear situation – face to face or online is under review pending Government advice and members views.

John Wain BNRA Secretary

www.Britannia-naval-research-association.org

...From the Treasurer/Technical Support

John Foreman our Treasurer will be working hard on our accounts to bring you the latest update at our AGM in January. We don't want to disturb him so please, if you have not done so already, send in your subscriptions as an early Christmas present. We depend on your subscriptions to produce and send the journal and to enable JW as our Secretary to keep you up to date with meetings, events and visits.

BNRA Facebook Group

This is a BNRA only members group where questions, answers and links to maritime things can be shared with other members there. To join is simple. You will need a Facebook account and for that you will need some internet connection and an email address.

It is simple to set up a new email with a free email account and use that. Ask to be my Facebook "friend". I will check your membership status and, if satisfactory, friend you and send an invitation to the site. You then join and I un-friend you so that limits the junk mail from Facebook. You are in! Everything should be free so just some time invested.



Dear Member

...From the Chairman

Seasons greetings to you all. We hope you all enjoyed our zoom meeting this month on our traditional December subject of sea poetry and prose. Hopefully fortified with something stronger you will also be thinking about naval and maritime contributions to the BNRA model, art and photography exhibition in February. We also hope that you have received the latest issue of the Journal with my grateful thanks for exhaustive proof reading by Frances and JW.

To get you in the mood please also see Frances' Notes and Queries excellent seasonal image of a sailor celebrating Christmas the old fashioned way among other articles to get you rattled!...

Please also don't forget your chance to be present/vote at our AGM in January, prior to some more excellent presentations.

Thank you for all your support during the year. I and the committee wish you a Merry Christmas and a happy New Year.

Dr Vaughan Michell, Chairman (VAM)

BNRA AGM 2021 Annual General Meeting

Will be held at 10am-10:30 at our January ZOOM Meeting

BNRA Committee Members – Nomination form

The present core committee is willing to stand:

Chairman :Vaughan Michell -----or alternative -----

Secretary: John Wain ----- or alternative -----

Treasurer: John Foreman ----- or alternative -----

Please send to the Secretary/or attend and vote
Absence of a vote will be a vote for the status quo.

NB Other committee members below are appointed by the core committee Please contact the secretary on 07790928825 to express any interest.

Deputy Secretary: Susan Amos
Special Events Manager: Kathy Clarke
Shipwright: John Diestler
Bosun: Brian Hill
Photographer: tba

Thank you for your vote.

Did you miss or have any problems with the BNRA Zoom Meeting?

Please let me know (John Foreman) if you have any issues accessing it.

We also try to repeat BNRA meeting recordings where possible for members who may have missed the meeting.

Enjoy!

BNRA Calendar & Events Schedule 2022

**BNRA Zoom Meetings 10am – 1pm
online until we can return to the Bear, Woodstock**

* **Sunday 16th January**

BNRA AGM, brief reports, membership and accounts and election of officers and appointments. Followed by Steve Dunn (if face to face at the Bear) who discusses his latest naval book 'The Power and the Glory, or naval films if online.

* **Sunday 20th February**

BNRA Model, Art and Photography exhibition. Please send us the images of your contributions and we look forward to presenting these during the meeting. Followed by Andy Peters: 'The Ship Carver who created the new Cutty Sark Figure Head'. Andy is one of the few ship carvers continuing in this centuries old craft.

- **Sunday March 20th 2022:** Brian Hill: 'The Monsoon Traders' A study of early Arab trade in the Indian Ocean and the arrival of the Portuguese adventurers. Then Susan Amos: 'The Disaster of HMS Port Napier, Isle of Skye, WW11'
- **Sunday April 24th 2022:** Dr Vaughan Michell: 'The Future Royal Navy'. Then Richard Holmes: 'Lost Naval Dockyards of Kent'.
- **Sunday 21st May: ONS 2022 at St Anne's College Oxford University.**

The Oxford Naval Symposium 'A Celebration of 20 Years of Naval History with the BNRA' - ten papers on maritime themes and the Alan Villiers Memorial Lecture

Summer Recess – with trips and visits tba

These meetings will be either Zoom or if the Covid crisis is resolved we intend to return to our conventional venue at the Bear Hotel Woodstock as soon as is feasible. On return to the Bear we will also aim to run the zoom meetings simultaneously.

Please contact John Wain to arrange attendance
07790928825..



RESEARCH NOTES & QUERIES

Christmas at Sea

Christmas Day 1955 aboard *HMS Loch Lomond* at Trincomalee!



By tradition on Christmas Day officers serving in HM Ships dress as ratings and vice versa. This picture, taken in the Wardroom shortly before Captain's rounds, shows L to R: the Electrical Officer James Jacques, Gunnery Officer Tony Hooper, Sub-Lieutenant Alan Bax (dressed as a Somali stoker) and the Medical Officer 'Doc' Shaw. The Buffer with two of his Somali stokers wearing Christmas Day finery. Back in the 1950s, HM Ships on passage for service in the Persian Gulf would embark Somali stokers at Aden.

Riddle

Woman on a
wheel,
Ship on the sea,
Eddystone
Lighthouse,
What can it be?

Answer later in this issue

**Please contact me if you
have any contributions to
the notes and queries
section of the BNRA
Newsletter**

Frances Miller (email:
bateaudolfijn@hotmail.co.uk)

NOTES & QUERIES



Christmas at Sea - Image from *Harpers Weekly* December 20, 1870

A Hot Cargo!

In my September 2021 Notes & Queries I wrote of the fate of the barque *Inverness* which was abandoned in the South Pacific after her cargo of coal caught fire. David Bone in his book *The Brassbounder*, a series of vivid vignettes from his second voyage (1891-92) as an apprentice in the 3-masted steel barque *Florence*, recounts a tale of spontaneous combustion in another coal cargo. The ship was six days from San Francisco when a deep seated fire was found in the fore-hold and proved impossible to extinguish. The hatches were battened down again and the crew prayed for a fair wind to get them within hail of assistance. In the following days the Captain, a canny and tight fisted Scot, came up with a 'cunning plan' designed to prevent both a tugboat master and the San Francisco pilot from discovering the fire. This involved a series of course changes in fog and light airs to bring the ship into San Francisco Bay from the north, with hanging stages on the starboard side, abreast the fore-hatch, with a painting team at work to cover the blistering plates. It was only as the towing hawser was let go that the tugboat skipper realised how he had been fooled. A brilliant account of life at sea in the last days of sail. In reality *Florence* was the *City of Florence* built 1867 and wrecked off the California coast in 1900 following a change of name.

The *City of Florence* (later the *Agostina Terrizzano*)

Image found on: <http://www.clydeships.co.uk/view.php?ref=4538> owner of copyright unknown.



RESEARCH NOTES & QUERIES

Frances Miller (email: bateaudolfijn@hotmail.co.uk)

20TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BNRA

Dear Members

In 2022 we will be celebrating 20 years of the BNRA. In that time we have come from humble beginnings of our first meeting to help save the Chesapeake Mill organised by JW followed by myself and JW assembling a 6 page newsletter (the beginning of the Journal and our first symposium at Rhodes House, Oxford University. From then on the BNRA has been made by our members - yourselves and all of your contributions and passion to preserve, promote and research from Drake to Dreadnought and beyond...

As part of our celebrations I will be developing a bumper edition of our Journal with an index of all the Journals issued and a reminder of past events and the development of the BNRA. The committee also has other events planned. But we need your input!

It would be great if you can write or email to us the things that you value about the BNRA and your best experiences of what we have collectively achieved

Dr V Michell (vambolini1916@gmail.com)

NOTES & QUERIES - TEASER

"The Four Admirals"



Image bought as a loose print so have no idea what book it might have come from. **Can members identify the "Four Admirals"**.



Riddle Answer: An old-fashioned penny between 1860-1894, after which the ship was removed from the design

FACEBOOK – A REMINDER



BNRA Facebook Group

This is a BNRA only members group where questions, answers and links to maritime things can be shared with other members there. So, what is on our site? Notifications of events that we do and others we decide you might be interested in. Links to films and videos that we have come across. Comments and questions.

Let's face it – why not try it!

John Foreman & James Walters

RESEARCH NOTES & QUERIES

Frances Miller (email: bateaudolfijn@hotmail.co.uk)

Research Project - The Rattlers

A friend reading Robert Radcliffe's novel *Upon Dark Waters*, set aboard a Flower Class Corvette on escort duty in the Atlantic during WWII, has queried the order "sound rattlers" as a call to Action Stations and asked if I could explain the provenance. No, I've never come across the expression before and it has escaped inclusion in my dictionaries of naval slang. Likewise there is very little to be found on-line, apart from queries from others seeking enlightenment.

Googling has increased my store of knowledge and I learn that, since the 18th century wooden rattles have been variously used as bird scarers, as a call to arms aboard fighting ships, by Victorian police forces to summon reinforcements, and in both World Wars to warn of gas attack - in the trenches in WWI and by ARP wardens in WWII. At some time the Navy replaced the wooden rattle with a mechanical klaxon the sound of which will be familiar to many from vintage WWII films. As they became redundant, large numbers of battle rattles and gas rattles were sold off, suitably painted in team colours, and taken to football matches.

More information and images can be found on these web sites:

<http://www.thepirateslair.com/9-british-royal-navy-battle-rattle.html>

<https://www.shipsnostalgia.com/threads/rattlers-and-klaxons-alarms-on-submarines.29757/>

And you can find a good description of a WWII klaxon here:

<https://www.worthpoint.com/worthopedia/royal-navy-klaxon-ww2-mechanical-514532920>

I'm hoping another BNRA member will be able to provide more information on this subject, plus dates for first use in the Royal Navy and introduction of the klaxon

NOTES & QUERIES

1917 Gas Rattle in the Science Museum collection