



PROBUS RECORDER

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE PROBUS CLUB OF GILLINGHAM, DORSET - No. 190 - November 2020
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CHAIRMAN'S JOTTINGS - FROM NICK HALL

It is difficult to escape the current feelings of despondency that seem to be knee-capping our lives while we all wait for the magic panacea of an effective vaccine. The chance of a magic potion by Christmas is said to be 'slim' by the head of the Vaccine Taskforce, and even when one does appear I have the feeling that its distribution and management will cause more than a little "*fluttering in the doves*" - of the press and politicians alike.

Enough of idle thoughts; Club members battle on, being aided by Peter Grange who continues to organise on-line Zoom meetings, and Alan Poulter who continues to encourage members to meet in the open air for a nourishing but socially-distanced cup of coffee on the Town Meadow. I thank both of them for their efforts, and hope that they will feel able to continue, particularly for the sake of those stalwarts who venture out as the weather cools. While we still have no goal of general 'freedom' at which to aim, and while our government-imposed diktats rule supreme, going out - to inns and restaurants - is possible, but not in any sizeable social group; but at least it allows escape of a sort from one's home environment. (And it makes a change from gardening!)

One development that I am compelled to mention is that we are about to lose another stalwart of the Club - Peter Marshall. He and Rita have decided that the time has come to move to a property that requires less constant attention than demanded by 'Potomac'. For a number of very understandable reasons, they are moving to enjoy the delights of Torquay. I am sure that you will all join me in wishing them every happiness for their future on the English Riviera.

However, this has left me with a small problem - who is going to edit and produce our monthly Newsletter? Peter will be a hard act to follow, especially since his deep knowledge of journalism places him head and shoulders above most of us in the ease with which he produces the Recorder. However, and after much worrying deliberation, I have decided to take on the task myself. It is really a case of 'winging it' since I have no journalistic knowledge, but I will certainly give it my best shot. You have been warned!

WELFARE NEWS from Gordon Banks.

Firstly, our thoughts are with **Dick Ripper**, who was taken to Salisbury Hospital last weekend with a suspected urinary infection. This has proved to be more serious and together with a kidney problem, the prognosis is not good and he is being brought home to Shaftesbury by his daughter this weekend. Jenny says Dick is being typically realistic and will be pleased to hear from his friends during the coming weeks.

Chas Allberry is making good progress, having physio twice a week; and Graham Strood is having a series of hospital treatments by telephone. They are both in good spirits.

Brian Garton is in South Petherton and making slow progress. Sidonie does not drive, so goes by taxi to visit Brian, but is concerned about the impact if a further lockdown occurs?

Finally, good luck to **John and Christine Houchin** who are due to move from Langham to Sutton Veny on Tuesday 3rd November. Meanwhile, **David and Daphne Bryan** are experiencing a frustrating delay in their planned move to Scotland.

A man goes into a library and asks for books about paranoia. The librarian leans forward and whispers: "They are right behind you".

What do you call a frenchman wearing sandals? "Phillipe Phillope".

SOME MEMBER TALKS WE NEVER HAD ...

Kreuzerkrieg - A Forgotten Pacific Ocean Episode of WW1 - by Ian McLellan

My interest in Easter Island, an isolated dot in the Pacific Ocean, led me to a fascinating episode which had profound effects on Britain's supply routes in WW1 and WW2. The Kreuzerkrieg strategy was the use of cruiser squadrons by the German navy in the more remote parts of the oceans, which enabled them to keep their big battleships close to home to fight their enemy's big warships there.

In WW1, in its attempt to control expansion of the British Empire, Germany had nine territories in the Pacific - part of New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, Nauru, the Marshall Islands and part of Samoa. It also had three treaty ports in China. The German navy used cruiser squadrons as a way of controlling their colonies and threatening other nations' shipping. In early August 1914, a squadron of 5 cruisers, 3 light cruisers and 2 heavy cruisers - Scharnhorst and Gneisenau - based in Tsingtao, China and ready to disrupt supplies and terrorise their opponents during wartime.

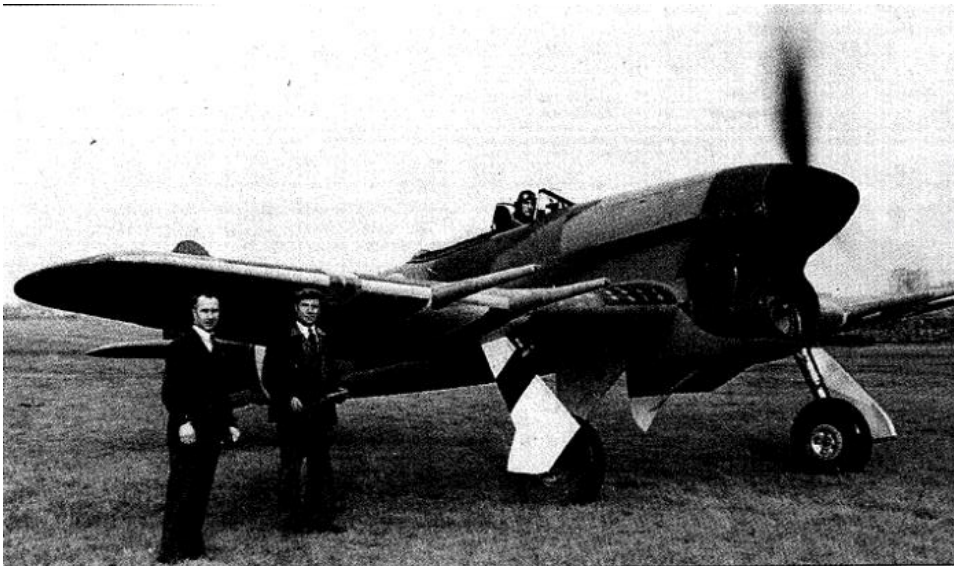
The squadron sailed Eastwards across the Pacific eastwards and another cruiser, the Leipzig, on detachment close to the USA, made its way to join them. On the way, it sank an American civilian ship. This affected public opinion in the USA, making them more willing to join the allies. This developed further when the Lusitania was sunk off Ireland. Another cruiser, the Dresden, also moved to join them in the Pacific and in its journey captured 5 ships. Captured ships were often stripped of supplies, food, coal and other items and then sunk. The lack of communication worldwide at that time meant the ships just vanished, creating confusion and consternation.

Having captured or sunk various merchant ships, the German squadron including 5 cruisers, arrived at Easter Island on the 12th October. Due to the lack of communication to this isolated island, which normally only had a supply ship once a year, the islanders did not know that war had been declared in Europe. We know of this from a British archaeologist, Katherine Routledge and her husband who had arrived there in their yacht which they had built for an expedition. The German ships refilled their stores of beef and mutton from the island's livestock and re-coaled using supplies from captured merchant ships.

The destruction of shipping sent out shockwaves in the Admiralty with respect to Britain's ability to import essential goods and foodstuff as well as naval implications. The First Lord of the Admiralty was Winston Churchill and it was deemed essential to destroy the cruisers and a British group based at the Falkland Islands was ordered to engage and destroy the German squadron. They steamed to the Pacific to find and engage the German ships and battle commenced off Coronel on the 1st November 1914. The British ships did not manage to control or severely damage the enemy and HMS Monmouth and HMS Good Hope were sunk. This victory for the German squadron was celebrated on their ships. The British ships regrouped at the Falkland Islands and the German ships eventually sailed round Cape Horn into the Atlantic. On December 8th 1914, battle commenced and there was a British victory in the Battle of the Falklands. The German ships were severely damaged and sunk, one escaped but was trapped and scuttled. This and the loss of its ships off the east African coast meant the strategy of Kreuzerkrieg had failed. However, the effect of the many merchant ships sunk by the cruisers caused great concern to the British government as it had threatened our vital supply routes. In fact, the German concept of disrupting trade routes continued with armed merchant ships and U-boats and again caused consternation in Whitehall.

In WW2 there was of course the same concern about our trade routes due to German raiders and battleships as well as U-boats. Winston Churchill would have remembered his WW1 worries and this I think led to his orders that the German naval ships should be bottled up and destroyed. This was reflected in the sinking of the Bismarck, the battle of the River Plate and in our attacks on the battleship Tirpitz in the Norwegian fiords which was seen a threat to the vitally important Russian convoys. These culminated in its sinking. I think this shows how much Kreuzerkrieg affected thinking in both World Wars. The probable reason we do not know much about the German activities in the Pacific in WW1 is that most of the records were lost when their ships were sunk at the Falklands.

The Hawker Typhoon – by Alan Poulter



I have been watching a TV programme called SPITFIRE WORKSHOP (on channel MORE 4), which features the work of a company at Biggin Hill aerodrome that built the two-seater Spitfires and now runs flights for those willing to pay the £1,000 cost.

The company now restores Spitfires and other World War II aircraft and a few weeks ago, the programme showed a Hawker Typhoon beginning to be restored, all be it from a

small amount of the rear fuselage that has survived. It seems that at the end of the war all these aircraft were broken up for scrap – their roles as a ground attack aircraft deemed to be redundant. This led me to find out more about the aircraft. I knew of it, but the role of Spitfires and Hurricanes during the war overshadowed its history.

The plane was designed by Hawker's Sidney Camm (the only aeroplane designer to design a bi-plane, mono-planes and a jet plane) as a fast fighter with eventually a Bristol Sabre engine of 2,400 HP. Unfortunately, the plane did not perform well enough at high altitudes. It was thus re-assigned to a ground attack role as its sturdy build allowed for a variety of ordinance to be carried, from two 500lb bombs (later 1,000lb bombs) to eight rockets and armour piecing shells from its four Hispano long-barrelled cannons.

The Typhoon built a reputation as a tank buster in the northern European theatre of the war, although the actual figures for tanks destroyed were somewhat optimistic as most targets disappeared in smoke and flames. But the plane could destroy most German military equipment and vehicles. There were 23 Squadrons in the 2nd Tactical Airforce and they became legendary- "You want a bridge taken out? A Headquarters building destroyed? A Panzer Division? - No problem!" The plane became more well known in France than in Britain although it did operate from southern England airfields.

A Trust has been set up to finance the re-build the plane (about £2million required) and one surviving Sabre engine to flying condition. The programme showed modern metallographic techniques being used to refurbish parts of the original airframe to restore their strength and hardness, taking many months just to do one hoop of the fuselage frame.

More information can be found on: [Wikipedia- Hawker Typhoon](#) and [Warbirdsnews.com](#)

PERHAPS THE LAST SUNNY FRIDAY MORNING THIS YEAR ON THE MEADOW??



'A Night in an Iban Longhouse, Borneo 1965' -



This is a treasured memory from Roger Lester – just visible, bottom right.

This photo was taken on an interesting night as we were being entertained by a very hospitable host, despite the shrunken heads hanging above us. We got there by longboat with outboards, going up river in the evening. We took whisky and were plied with Tuac (rice wine) and were fed on pork and rice. They ceremoniously killed the pig for us. Having then spent the night sleeping on rush mats, we boarded our longboats and shot the rapids back to camp and a day's work. This was an experience, sadly never to be repeated.

It took place while we were at Nanga Gaat in the Borneo mountains with four Wessex-5 helicopters and our task was to transport Royal Marines, SAS and Topographers (mapping Borneo) to and from their destinations every day, not far from the Indonesian border. We were a detachment of 848 Naval Air Commando Squadron and our aircraft carrier 'home' was HMS Albion (nicknamed the Old Grey of the Borneo Coast). And it was one of the best times of my Naval career.

The monthly Recorder continues to provide the only regular link for all our Probus members during this long Covid19 period of lockdowns, etc. Since this is my 'farewell' edition, I would like to send my heartfelt thanks to so many members who have provided such interesting contributions over the years. Please send future contributions to the new editor, Nick Hall – his e-mail address is: secretary@clintonhall.co.uk