

## 'Tally Ho!'s Last Hunt.

It was early in 1959 when the menacing black shape slipped its moorings and moved quietly out from the shadow of the depot ship 'H.M.S. Forth' into Msida creek. Under the command of Lt PAD Melhuish, 'Tally Ho!' though it was not realised at the time, was leaving Malta on her last mission, to carry out a 'Barex' exercise in the Gibraltar straits, a thousand miles away to the West.

"Stop Port, In port engine clutch", came the order from the bridge, and very soon the gentle hum of the ships vent fans was drowned by the reassuring rumble and vibration as the port engine roared into life, and the boat began to pick up speed. "Stop Starboard, In starboard engine clutch" followed, and soon we were underway being driven by those two huge 6 cylinder Vickers diesel engines out into the Mediterranean sea once more.

The Engineer Officer was Lt Marsh, the Chief stoker was Jas V (Jumbo) Johnson and the SPO was Bill Bailey ( 'T' boat Bill Bailey), and I was a Part Three trainee eager to learn and to qualify as a Submariner and to be able to wear the newly issued Submarine badge – a gold wire embroidered emblem of an early Submarine, to be worn on the left cuff. This was known throughout the service as 'The Sausage on a stick', and was not too popular with the people. One man on 'Tally Ho!' who wore his badge with pride was Sammy Seal, known to all as – 'Sammy Seal-Submariner'.

The following weeks were quite hard going with learning all about the Submarine and her complex systems, about the Watch and Station Bill, Action Gun crew ammunition supply party, the function of the 'ExactoGear' ( An hydraulic system that enabled the torpedo tubes to be fired from the control room ) Emergency change over drills and falling into the trap of "What is the Ashwell System?"\*and the back breaking physical effort required when it was decided that 'they' wanted number 9 and 10 external torpedo tube outer doors shut – when they were open, and open when they were shut. A task that usually took a couple of stokers a good ten minutes of sweating struggle each to complete. All this and Donk shop watchkeeping too.

Barex, is an exercise to test the ability of surface navies and air forces to seal off the Gibraltar straits to – shall we say – uninvited Submarines. 'T H!' was acting as one of the uninvited guests. The Royal Navy and the US Navy had several ships, plus aircraft, trying to intercept us.

I believe that we penetrated the straits undetected several times, some times at periscope depth, some times deep, at least once 'snorting' and I understand that we did it actually on the surface once too.

The Americans claimed that they had detected us and had fired a homing torpedo, and they produced this strange looking fish – with a smashed in nose cone, but they must have hit a rock or something, but it certainly wasn't us !!!! Passing through the dimly lit control room, my stokers wheel spanner navigational tool put us somewhere inside the North African coastal waters at the time.

Apparently, during the last world war, The Captain of 'Tally Ho!', Lt Bennington, had played the record 'A Hunting we will go', very loudly when attacking. Unfortunately we didn't have a copy of that record at this time as this would have been a good time to play it.

Some weeks previous to this trip 'T H!' had 'Stored For War' and though most of the additional stores had been returned in board, there was still lots of stuff that we didn't normally carry, laying around – such as a false deck of canned food in the accommodation space, and the odd extra 'big end bearing' in the Donk shop. This type of 'T' boat always sat pretty low in the water, but when she was fully loaded with a war outfit of torpedos, 4" ammunition, candles and canisters and all the other 'comforts', she was really unable to dive until she had run out a fair way to use up some stores and fresh water to lighten her.

The Barex was a very realistic exercise with the surface ships 'pinging' most of the time at various ranges, whilst we tried everything possible to evade them, but 'Tally Ho!' was an old lady now with enough casing rattles to give the opposition a fair chance.

During the quieter times on the run out and back, some of the basic metals that had been loaded, and not unloaded, such as brass round bar – intended to be used for making bolts, drive shafts etc – in emergency, found themselves being converted on the old MYFORD lathe in the back end of the motor room, into some very nice ornamental gun barrels.

On a previous trip to this one, the boat had been deep for the night, somewhere off Malta. The usual precautions had been taken when coming up from deep early in the morning, including sonar sweeps all of the way up. On reaching periscope depth, the Captain had done an 'All round look' before ordering 'Surface'. The Officer-of-the-watch and a lookout had disappeared up the tower, and within seconds there was a panic stricken voice screaming "Dive, Dive, Dive" !!! Klaxon – Klaxon – Flood 'Q' - Full ahead together Group up. Planes hard to dive - Keep 120 feet, Get that bubble aft !!!! A pale and shaken OOW and Lookout arrived in the control room clipping hatches after them.

The deadly still conditions that are not too uncommon in the Mediterranean had resulted in no contacts showing up in the sonar sweeps. The sun was low on the horizon, so only when the OOW had arrived on the bridge had he seen the bows of a large tanker bearing down on us. We had surfaced right in his path. The tone of the voice had conveyed the message that things were not as they should be, and the appropriate actions were quickly taken. Not having gained full buoyancy, the boat dived again quite quickly as the Tanker ran over the top of us, and its screws passing over the donk shop can't have missed us by many feet. I hate to think how near his bow had been.

Another 'hair raising' experience was whilst running along at PD in an area near to Malta, we suddenly became aware of a loud scraping noise moving along the hull. Was it just a fisherman's buoy – or an old anchored sea mine. What seemed like a

lifetime passed before the scrapping noise stopped and what ever it was slipped astern. In reality, so close to the Maltese fishing grounds, it had to be a buoy – but no one would have offered odds either way at the time.

‘Snorting’ doing a ‘Standing Charge’ on one engine whilst propelling, keeping depth on the other main motor, Off Malta one time, we were only just making headway when the OOW looking through the periscope saw a fisherman about to secure his boats mooring rope to the snort exhaust mast sticking up out of the water. ‘T H!’s snort mast had a swinging float, snort head valve with two exhaust pipe ‘horns’ reaching up above on either side of the intake valve. It must have been an odd sight seeing two bits of pipe sticking up out of the water, with a wisp of smoke drifting out of one of them, seemingly not moving. The fisherman changed his mind and rowed away very quickly when the engineroom was ordered to ‘Blow the snort exhaust’, and a jet of sooty water shot high in the air from the pipe on the stopped engine. That man still probably believes in horrible sea dragons till this day.

The Barex exercise culminated in a few days ‘jolly’ alongside in Gibraltar with the huge rock and giant grey ‘sheerlegs’ towering above the Submarine. The crew always enjoyed the English beer, food and relaxed atmosphere of Gibraltar, when the RN patrol more often than not, drove drunken matlots back to their ship, rather than lock them up for the night. Of course, there was no drunkenness amongst the ‘Tally Ho!’s crew, well – that depends on what you call drunkenness.

When we got back to Malta, the boat was going into H.M. Dockyard, Malta for her DED period (**D**ocking and **E**ssential **D**efects). This was long before the dockyard was taken over by Baileys. The procedure was that a Submarine would carry out a deep dive before docking for her DED, so enroute back to Malta we dived and went deep to 300 feet. Not a bad depth for a seventeen year old lady that was built under war time conditions. Surfacing again we ran back into Malta and a couple of days later saw her in dry dock. As usual in a short refit, lots of Maltese ‘dockies’ swarmed over everything and lots of bits were dismantled and whipped away. Windy chisels hammered away all over the place, with the blinding blue flashes of the arc welders and the ever present smell of bitumen paint and drying out marine life, heavy in the air.

One visitor to the high and dry boat was the Admiralty constructor, wanting to make checks on the state of the ‘Tally Ho!’s hull. One of the seamen was invited to chip the paint and corrosion away from a place quite near to the forehatch, and the constructor made some tests here. Later, Lt Marsh, the Engineer Officer was talking to the constructor about his findings and was told that the test spot near the forehatch was **about as thick as a good thick biscuit tin**. The optimistic Engineer Officer said “Well what do you think our diving depth will be now ?” “**Well, we may let you trim down a bit !**” was the disappointing response.

The ‘Tally Ho!’s’ eventful days as an operational Submarine were now over. For the next weeks she laid alongside ‘Forth’ whilst it was decided what was to happen to her. Most of her stores were disembarked and some of her crew were drafted off.

For myself, I was returned to Spare Crew inboard, until 'Tapir' arrived back from her deployment to Karachi – short of one Killick Stoker. As I had at that moment just been rated Acting LM(E) I soon found myself drafted to the dreaded 'Tapir' – the S/M 1 canteen boat. (The Malta squadron was at that time the First Submarine squadron. 'Dolphin's' squadron was the Fifth Submarine Squadron). I became the Donk shop killick on 'Tapir', just in time to help clear up the mess caused by changing about fifteen big end bearings during her deployment.

'Tally Ho!' sailed out of Malta for her surface passage back to the UK whilst I was at sea on 'Tapir', and the next time I saw her, she was a sad figure alongside Petrol pier, performing her final task of 'Alongside training boat'. Even in this menial task she had gained extra fame. Being one of the last of the 'Submarine shaped Submarines' she took the part of a German U boat for the 'alongside' shots for a film being made I believe was H.M. 'U' Boat. (H.M s/m Graph) The original film from which the recent film U571 was 'ripped off' by the Yanks. Even then she still had her slight list to Port, a scar from the last war gained when under the command of Lt Bennington in the Far East she was in conflict with a Japanese gunboat. Her port side ballast tanks were ripped open by it's screws. Then she had limped home to Trincomalee in Ceylon for repairs, and being only a young boat then was soon back at sea. Now, being over twenty years old, her next appointment was with the breakers yard.

\* 'Ashwell System'. One of the questions for the Part III exam.

Whilst sitting on the toilet in the passageway, directly in front of your nose was the 'Vacant' and 'Engaged' door locking latch marked 'Ashwell System'.