



Gordon Duffy

I was a war baby, born in 1941, father was in the bootnecks so he was not at home much until after the war. The family stayed in the same house in Newcastle under Lyme until well after I joined the RN in 1958.

I went to Grammar School when I was 14 (late developer, no change there). Found it hard going particularly when told that you just had to catch up on the rest who had got two years tuition under their belts by then. Result was I joined the RN as an Artificer Apprentice rather than go on to the 6th form. I was the first person from the school to join the RN who did not go to Dartmouth.

Started at HMS Fisgard, 16 months there, two and half years at Collingwood.

Joined HMS Lion in 1962, this was a tiffs paradise and a Harry Hobbs nightmare, large numbers of techies! Managed to survive a work up in the Med during the very cold winter in UK 62/63. 12 months in the Far East including a visit to Saigon. Spent most of my hard earned cash on "Sticky Greens"

Drafted to HMS Llandaff (diesel frigate) in 1964, Devonport based for refit, thence HMS Eastbourne (Whitby class) in 1965. Did a few weeks in Collingwood learning all about Sonar and met my first wife at a dance in Buckley Hall. HM Ships Eastbourne, Tenby, Torquay

and Scarborough were the Dartmouth training squadron. Spent a lot of time at sea but also lots of visits but returned to Devonport at the end of each term. Sheer hell really, the sequence of terms went something like West Indies, Med, North East America/Canada, Home waters, Scandinavia, then round again. Got married during Easter leave in 1966 then off to Scandinavia for four months.

Drafted to HMS Caprice in 1966, left the Eastbourne on a November Friday night in Greenock, visited parents in Newcastle Under Lyme on Saturday, wife in Lancing Sussex on Sunday, flew to Nairobi from Heathrow on the Monday evening thence Mombassa.

Interesting introduction to HMS Caprice, had to spend best part of two weeks in a hotel in Mombassa with 34 others (I can only remember Nick Carter the Chief Stoker and Bob Coles the Ch OA). The Ship, when it arrived, was suffering from condenseritis (it always did) but off we went for a Beira patrol or two over the Christmas period then off to Aden for self-maintenance and thence home.

Aden was a disaster! The ship was anchored off and we ended up with no electrical supplies other than from emergency lighting from a small generator on a pontoon alongside. The stokers watchkeeping on the pontoon erected a small mast from which was flown a pair of female panties to be ceremoniously "dipped" to passing ships and visiting officers. HMS Zulu was brought alongside to provide us with cooked meals but no electrical power because Caprice was dc and Zulu ac.

Departed Aden and then through Suez to conduct a Type A (fully recorded) shoot off



Cyprus or maybe Crete. Essentially the shoot was to establish the state of the gunnery system prior to going for refit in Chatham. The results were so poor (caused by a long period without power in Aden) that a technical court of enquiry was set up in Portsmouth on our return. I was recalled from leave, great fun if you like that sort of thing, being interrogated by Captain Watson who was shortly to become Captain of Collingwood.



The rest of the Caprice bit is common knowledge, perishing cold refit in Chatham whilst in dry dock, shore side heads, donkey boilers et al. My daughter was born while we were away in 1968, when this picture was taken. (Graham Jackson had the same experience, the girls were 8 months old by the time we saw them on the

dockside in Pompey). Left the Caprice at the end of the trip drafted to the gunnery range at HMS Cambridge at Wembury Point and then outside in 1971 because the tot was abolished!

So into civvy street, got a job working for Yard Ltd consultants in Glasgow but based at MOD Foxhill Bath as effectively the permanent rep on the Trafalgar class submarine programme, moved to the area and stayed 9 years.

Next job was Plessey Templecombe on Vanguard class sonar but based at Portland. Family moved to Weymouth in 1980 and we stayed until 1984 when I returned to Yard Ltd but this time in Glasgow and we moved to North Ayrshire. Stayed for 12 years mainly

working on submarine manoeuvring room design, but also a Canadian Patrol Frigate (six months in St John New Brunswick) and then several years at Scottish Nuclear at East Kilbride working on Torness Power Station fuelling machine improvements.

Made redundant on returning to the office in Glasgow, moved to Devon 12 months later in 1997 still out of work. Soon as we moved I was offered two jobs in Bath and one in Addlestone Surrey, all Navy related. Accepted a job at BMT Bath, thinking, will just do a weekend commute for a couple of years until I retire at 60. BMT sent me to MOD Abbey Wood Bristol for three months to kick off what became the Type 45 destroyer machinery control system design. Stayed there until March 2008, job done, ship at sea!!

Last 12 months have been odd jobbing for friends and neighbours but have just embarked on a career as a Tour Guide for Backroads Touring having mastered the art of driving a minibus.



Likes, Real Ale, Good Wine, Good Food.

Dislikes, Political Correctness, Corrupt Homosexuals in Government, Spin.