

# HMS Caprice

(World Cruise 1968)

# Association



*Portland 1967 - Matelots with guns!*  
*From Association Archives*

Feb 2020



Issue No 73



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The cover pic always amuses me – the Caprice armed party doing its “aid to the civil power” exercise on the Portland work up. The thought of sailors with guns terrified most of us – I assume there was no live ammunition issued. Firearms were best left to the Marines – Jack was safer with cutlasses. ME John West is clearly visible in his tin hat, head and shoulders above everyone else, but who is the guy in front with the loudspeaker ? No doubt the motley band “rioters” enjoyed themselves. When we see gangway staff on modern warships equipped with sub machine guns I often wonder if they are loaded and they know how to use them.

With this newsletter is a stamped addressed questionnaire - can ALL members please return it even you just want to say *rubbish or get lost* . It is important that we know what members think.

*Graham Latter*

## RIP Dave Cummings



Member Dave Cummings sadly crossed the bar on Sunday 19th January. The Funeral was on Tuesday 4th February at Dumfermline Crematorium, Scotland.

Dave wrote his profile for this newsletter (No. 52 Sept 2010) and also sent us an article about a memorable voyage *The transit of the Rufus-M* with the redoubtable Soapy Watson (No 57 May 2012). Past newsletters can be viewed on our website Newsletters page. Dave & Janis attended many reunions and helped to set up our Edinburgh reunion in 2014 - see pictures below





## Bristol Reunion 2019 Report

*Thanks*

To **Bob Mason & Alan Payne** for their work setting this up, also the IOW rep Jackie.

To **Dave & Lin Silva and Wayne & Myra Mobley** for again running the raffle which generates a sizeable amount to our Funds.

This was our first reunion organised by IOW Tours. The hotel accommodation was adequate but the quality of food was generally agreed to be poor and the cost of drinks very expensive – some might say extortionate. These considerations were always looked into when the Association ran its own reunions and will be taken into account in future by our Reunion organiser Gordon Duffy.

Due to a misunderstanding in the IOW schedule the Annual Meeting on the Sunday started at 1000 instead of 1030. Apologies to those who missed the start but every effort was made to inform everyone of the altered time. These meetings have always started at 1000 and will do so in the future to allow time those who have to travel to get away as early as possible.

Annual meetings have usually been amiable and very brief (the record was at Dawlish at just 2½ minutes!). However this one was somewhat fractious and lasted well over 30 minutes – I am considering wearing a tin hat for the next one!



Concerns were expressed with the ceremonial format of Sat evening and there were reservations about the large contingent from Tamworth RNA. In fairness to Bob M. & Alan P. they had done all they could to boost the numbers. There is an article about Tamworth RNA on page 5.

**There were only 22 Association members** – well down from previous years and NOT SUSTAINABLE to obtain a booking in the style of previous reunions. So that we can address these issues please return the enclosed questionnaire.

### Questionnaire

With this newsletter is a stamped for reply Questionnaire.

Please seal and return it so we can find out your views about your Association.

Replies will be kept confidential and we will publish the findings in the next newsletter. Say what you think!





## Chester Reunion 2020

**Friday 25 to Sunday 27 September at the Queen Hotel**

[www.hallmarkhotels.co.uk/hotels/hallmark-hotel-chester-the-queen](http://www.hallmarkhotels.co.uk/hotels/hallmark-hotel-chester-the-queen)

The hotel is not only a very nicely appointed premises (have a look at their website) albeit an ex railway hotel but is very conveniently situated in the middle of Chester. The venue has been carefully chosen to offer an interesting weekend for a wide range of members interests and capabilities.

Chester itself offers parks, gardens, Cathedral, Zoo, racecourse and interesting shopping in that smaller retailers are present in numbers. There are walks on the City walls. The hotel is situated opposite the main railway station, which is convenient for those arriving, by rail. It is also within easy walking distance of the many attractions, so there is no need to feel trapped in the hotel if you don't bring a car or cannot walk too far.

For folk who wish to get out and about further afield Chester is a good starting point for visits to North Wales, The Wirral and Merseyside.

The whole objective of these reunions is of course to meet with former shipmates from 1968 and have a yarn and a pint or three. Over the years there has built up a core of members and wives and partners who attend on a regular basis some of whom take considerable trouble to attend from such as California, New Zealand, Crete, Spain, Manchester and Glossop.

The result is that friendships have built up over the years. This does not preclude members attending whom maybe reticent about joining a throng who are relatively familiar with each other. This association's members and their wives/partners are decidedly not stuffy; they are a friendly bunch and would love to welcome both members who have not attended for a while and those who have never attended.

Some early reunions were held at the RNA club in Tamworth and a very informal one continues to be held in June each year thanks to Bob Mason and Donna and Alan Payne. The Association welcomes Tamworth RNA members to its reunions on a reciprocal basis; this is to the mutual advantage of both organisations and leads to a broader spectrum of attendees.

We look forward to welcoming some new faces this year and also some familiar faces from years gone by so don't let the Pennines get in the way if you happen to live in the East!

*Gordon Duffy*





## Queen Hotel Assessment

### A “Trip Advisor” report from Gordon Duffy

I visited the premises and stayed overnight on January 14<sup>th</sup>. Verdict very good indeed. Excellent friendly helpful staff, large well appointed rooms in a substantial modern building annex and I don't imagine those in the old part of the hotel would be inferior.

It was very quiet inside, no road noise whatsoever from the buses that serve the railway station, the station and hotel are essentially in a cul de sac.

The function room is large and has a dance floor, the smaller function room has similar facilities should our numbers not warrant the larger room. Both have a self contained bar which will be manned on both evenings.

For those that like real ale a barrel will be put on for us, failing that there will be a “runner” to get the proper job from the public bar.

I personally hate making tea in a cup or mug with tea bags and I prefer tea in a pot and also at the breakfast table and not decanted from a thermos jug. But don't let that put you off!

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## 2020 Tamworth Weekend June 5-7

Tamworth RNA will once again extend a very warm welcome to all members and friends of the HMS Caprice 1968 Association for an informal fun couple of days.

**Friday - Evening Games** evening, with challenge matches against Tamworth RNA. Club.

**Saturday** - Free day to enjoy the delights of Tamworth, or visit the National Arboretum – a really rewarding place for all veterans.

**Saturday Evening** - Dance ‘til late with fantastic live entertainment provided by “Crash”. Those who attended the Lincoln reunion will remember this great duo. A Tamworth Buffet – including the famous **Sandiback Dripping Pieces!**

There is a decent “Travelodge” (Tamworth Central) only 10 minutes’ walk (or stagger) from the Club for those who want accommodation.

Please let Bob Mason know that you'll be attending E-mail [robertm50@talktalk.net](mailto:robertm50@talktalk.net), or Tel 07495 464 765.

More details are on a poster on the Association Website Reunions Page.





## RNA Tamworth & the Caprice Association



Some of our newer members who have joined since 2000 may wonder why there is so much mention of Tamworth Royal Naval Association (RNA) and why we now have a Tamworth weekend as well as our main reunions.

The Associations' roots go back to Tamworth RNA. After the inaugural *Five ROs meeting* in 1995 Association member Bob Mason volunteered to host a 1996 reunion at Tamworth RNA. Bob was (and still is) Chairman of Tamworth RNA. At this time the fledgling Association had already grown to 19 members. For the next 3 years (1996 - 1999) reunions were held in Tamworth with accommodation at various hotels in the Town and Friday evenings in the RNA club. This photo is from the 1995 reunion at the club.



By 2000 with membership now at 43 it was getting just too large for Tamworth RNA and the reunion was held at Chatham. Annual reunions weekends have since continued at various locations around the UK.

In 2014 with the main reunion being held at distant Edinburgh it was decided to offer an alternative option and the mid year **Tamworth Weekends** were started which have continued ever since. So for many years Tamworth RNA has provided a very warm welcome and hospitality to Caprice Association members.



Tamworth RNA Club is housed in **The Unitarian Chapel, Victoria Road, Tamworth**, which was formerly a Presbyterian chapel. It was built in 1724 and is a listed building.

The club interior walls are covered with ships crests, photos and a huge amount of Naval memorabilia.



The National Arboretum is a short distance away and well worth a visit.

The Association's standard is housed at the club.

## Slides from Pat Hobbs

Going through Harry's effects Pat came across these 3 photos on slides.

We think they must have been taken in Simonstown in 1968 but do not know who they are. It seems there is 1 PO, 1 Killick and an AB.

Can anyone identify them? - maybe someone in the S & S branch?





## KEN BROMLEY

I was born in Weymouth, Dorset on August 4<sup>th</sup>, 1951, and lived on Portland until I was seven years old. When I was born my father was still in the Navy, so my early years were spent in close proximity to the RN. In 1958 the family moved to Luton, Bedfordshire for a few years, and then again in 1964 to Gravesend, Kent. My schooling was the standard 10-year programme for that time, and I finished school in the summer of 1966.

In November 1966 I travelled up to Shotley Gate, to **HMS Ganges**, and signed on for 12 years active service. I enjoyed my time there, as much as anyone could, as I was being prepared for what was to come.

In November 1967 I was drafted to **HMS Vernon** for basic TAS/UC training. Many hours were spent in big navy blue trailers ping-pong for and sinking imaginary submarines.

In early February 1968 I got my draft papers for **HMS Caprice**. After being kitted out for the tropics and duly passported, I was flown down to Cape Town and joined the ship on February 21<sup>st</sup>. The next morning we slipped and put to sea headed for the Beira Patrol. So my

only run ashore in Cape Town was a tilley ride from the airport to the ship.

Some recollections I have from the patrol:

Just before pipe down, the Navigator read excerpts from Winnie the Pooh over the Tannoy as "Book at Bedtime". I will always remember the hush that went over the mess as he began to read each evening . . . truly amazing the things that will make matelots shut up and listen!

One mid-afternoon during the first week at sea, I wandered up to the fo'c'sle and stretched out on the starboard wash deck locker. After a short nap in the shade I was shaken awake by L/S Bricknell, who told me in somewhat colorful language to get back aft where I belonged. I don't think there was anything personal in the rebuke; it was just that Brickey just couldn't stand to see anyone relaxed on his part-of-ship.

I also remember the intoxicating smell of freshly baked bread coming from the galley while standing watch-on-deck for the morning watch, and the dedication shown by the anglers on the quarterdeck trying to hook the elusive Garfish. I have many more recollections of my time on Caprice, too many to list here unfortunately.

I left Caprice in February 1969 and joined **HMS Pembroke** the following day. Most of my time there I spent as dining hall party. A necessary but uninspiring job, but the upside was that there was always plenty of food and drink to be had.

In June 1969 I joined **HMS Jupiter**. We were assembled in **Victory** barracks awaiting the ships arrival from the Yarrow Shipbuilders. Because idle Jack is the Devils workshop we were put to work at various tasks in the barracks, and for a week, Two of us were sent daily to the ship **Victory**. We did some light cleaning every forenoon, and were just "available" in the afternoon. We weren't allowed too much free





rein because it's really a museum. But at least now I can say I served some time on the **Victory**.

After sea trials (during which the port side propeller came loose . . . oops!) and work-up, we were ready for action. In February 1970 we left Guiz for a ten month cruise around the West Indies and a short stop in Venezuela. During one of the visits to Bermuda I met my future wife Karen in Hamilton. She was on vacation with some friends, we kept in touch, and two years later we were married. The ship spent Christmas 1970 and New Year in Gibraltar as guard ship. Berthed astern of us was the **Caprice**. That was the last time I saw the old girl. As an aside, on July 31<sup>st</sup> 1970 the Jupiter was the farthest ship west, and so had the dubious distinction of being the last Royal Naval ship to pipe "Up Spirits" at the appointed hour for rum issue. . . a sad, sad day! In 1971 Jupiter was part of the NATO squadron visiting Norway, the eastern United States and Canada. For a two-week stint I was assigned to the **USS Dahlgren** as a "working guest". It was an interesting departure from the normal routine.

In September 1971 I was drafted back to **HMS Vernon** for my UC2's course, and on completion I was kept on as Ship's Company, working in the TAS/Weapons shed doing mostly rope work all day.

IN February 1972 I joined HMS Juno in Faslane and two days later the ship steamed south to Chatham. In March Karen and I got married and in April the ship left for four months in the Mediterranean. I spent two years and seven months on Juno which included another trip to the Med., a trip around Scandinavia, a lengthy dry-dock refit in Chatham and participation in the second Cod War. I had already put in for discharge by purchase and on October 13<sup>th</sup>, 1974 I left Juno for **HMS Nelson**. I was in Nelson barracks for two days, and on October 16<sup>th</sup>, 1974 I left the Royal Navy.

On October 30<sup>th</sup> Karen and I left for the United States. At that time the country was in a recession and jobs were scarce, but I did get a job in a carpet and tile store and worked there for about a year and a half. Then I got a part time job in a department store auto center while I





went to school for auto mechanics. After graduation in July 1977, we moved to York, Pennsylvania and the following month I was hired by the local Mercedes-Benz dealer. I worked there as a mechanic for just over ten years. In June 1987 my daughter Andrea was born, and shortly after that we moved to our present address in Red Lion, which is close to York. In December 1987 I was hired by a Mercedes-Benz dealer in Baltimore, Maryland. In February 1989 my son Scott was born. My daughter and granddaughter Emma now live near Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, and my son in Richmond, Virginia. I worked at the Baltimore dealership for thirty years, the last twenty-eight as Shop Foreman, and retired from there on December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2017.

On reflection, the year I spent on **Caprice** was the best year of my time in the RN. I experienced more in that year than at any time to follow. A circumnavigation of the globe is in itself a unique experience, but there were so many other things that occurred that it's a time in my life I'll never forget. Some of those experiences I have illustrated in poems that have been published in this newsletter.

**Likes: Being retired, travelling abroad and woodworking.**

**Dislikes: Clothes shopping, poor workmanship and winter driving.**

## Poppy Selling

No doubt all our members will purchase their annual poppy for Remembrance Day, but have you ever considered selling them for the Royal British Legion?

I have done this for over 10 years and have found it very rewarding. I am allocated four 2-hour shifts and man a stall just after the checkouts at a Morrison's supermarket. Believe me you see all human life walk past there! The stall is decked out with numerous items of Poppy merchandise



I find it helps to dress up smartly and wear a semi "uniform" navy Caprice blazer. RN tie and a VETERANS badge. Most folk are very supportive and give very generously. I have had £10 & £20 notes pushed into the collecting tin. I usually raise £700 - £800 over the 4 shifts.

Our sadly departed Harry Hobbs did a round in his local village for many years and utilised his considerable persuasive powers to raise substantial funds!

If you can spare a few hours in October/November just contact your local British Legion branch or contact me if you have any queries.

Graham Latter



## From Powdered Milk came Rum !

One day a messmate came to me,  
And said "Brom, I'm in a fix",  
'Seems I had to save his tot for him  
With my ersatz dairy mix.

However, if there was a lump  
And it failed to make it through.  
My messmate would be quite upset  
With, well . . . you know who.

He'd bragged of my prowess see,  
Of turning powder into milk.  
"With no lumps," he told his oppo's,  
"And it pours like liquid silk."

So the next time I was cooks',  
I made the milk with care.  
For a little later on that day,  
The challengers would be there.

"Now then," all the doubters said,  
"Don't talk a load of rot."  
But said the stalwart lad "It's true,  
. . . and I'll back it with my tot!"

Came the appointed hour,  
The naysayers there in force.  
With the mesh and another fanny,  
To catch the milk of course.

Well . . . now it's a serious matter,  
No longer chum-to-chum.  
The gauntlet has been thrown,  
And it has the smack of rum.

My mate began to pour the milk,  
And we watched without a sound.  
The milk sluiced through the mesh,  
But nary a lump was found.

The wager had it simply,  
The milk's poured through a mesh.  
And if no lump is found,  
Then his oppo's one tot less.

Disbelief abounded in that  
All the milk went through.  
My messmate, now quite happy,  
His one tot now . . . was two.

My mate was quite chuffed with me,  
For helping him win his bet.  
The next day I was plied with rum,  
Oh yes . . . he let me have a whet!

Ken Bromley  
September 2019





## **Pedro's Poem (Stage 6)** **Around the World in verses & curses !**

Barry Davies' final episode of the world cruise - Mexico to Home

*Leaving Frisco we headed down to old Mexico*

*I thought this would be great to see*

*After a night in a Mexican prison*

*Just how wrong could a person be*

*We started through the Panama*

*The donkey engines pulled us through*

*The Caribbean lay before us*

*With seas of azure blue*

*San Andreas was our first Caribbean port of call*

*A very friendly isle*

*All day carnival and free beer*

*In memory of Captain Morgan, they looked after us in style*

*Kingston Jamaica wasn't fun*

*A pretty violent place*

*Locals beating up our guys*

*And stabbings taking place*





*Puerto Rico was a great place to be  
So vibrant, full of fun  
Great bars and beaches  
And the home to Bacardi rum*

*We left the Caribbean and headed out to sea  
The Atlantic lay before us we had a way to go  
Travelling to the Azores, our final port of call  
We travelled many miles, how many I don't know*

*After a rough passage across the Atlantic  
We arrived back in Blighty  
Our journey around the world was done  
Christmas leave was granted, I was heading home for festive fun*

*After fifty years I still reflect on that marvellous time  
Travelling around with friends and shipmates  
So I raise a glass to you one and all and drink your health  
And wish you all happiness, good luck and wealth.*

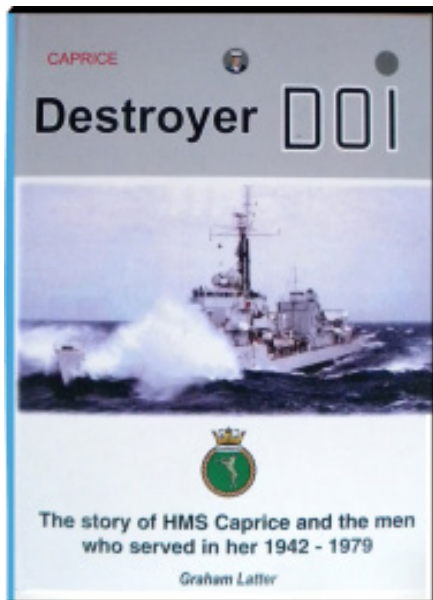


Many thanks to Barry (AKA Pedro) for this epic poem  
of the 1968 cruise totalling some 1648 words in 50 verses - Ed.



## Caprice History Book

The second issue has now all been sold. A third issue will be reprinted this year. If anyone has any recollections or other info you might like to be included please contact Graham Latter.



## Contributions from Members

Many thanks to Gordon Duffy, Barry Davies and Ken Bromley for contributing material for this newsletter - keep em coming!

## 50th Anniv. Badge

If you have not got one, but would like one it's **FREE** but just send us £2 to cover P & P.



## Association Website



[www.hmscaprice1968.org.uk](http://www.hmscaprice1968.org.uk)

Our website is kept fully up to date and you can view newsletters online. It has had over **25800 hits** to date and has attracted many new members.

There is also a very good picture archive of the Caprice from 1942 to 1979, and up to date Association & Reunion News.



## Finance Report

**Funds** - We currently have £1,594 in the bank. From that we have to fund the Questionnaire cost, next 2 Newsletters, raffle prizes and any other expenses for the Chester Reunion

**Rum** -3 full bottles (worth around £96 UK and equates to around 36 tots).

*Thanks to all those members who have generously donated rum in the past but with the new reunion arrangements we do not need any more at this stage.*

**Thanks to all our members who pay subs by standing order – it saves us no end of time and hassle!**

**Assets** - Apart from rum, the value of assets, and stamps, slops items etc, totals **£113**



**We are running down our slops supplies as most members will have purchased them by now if they wish to.**

**Please make out any cheques to HMS Caprice (1968) Association**



**RN Anchor Badges Brooch Pin Badge**  
£5 (3 left)



£5 (1 left)



**Tie Pins - £6 (1 left)**

The Association has a PayPal account which is a simple way of transferring payments into our bank account for purchases or subs, especially if you are an overseas member.



Just use **pay@hmescaprice1968.org.uk**



## HMS Caprice (World Cruise 1968) Association

[www.hmscaprice1968.org.uk](http://www.hmscaprice1968.org.uk)

The Association, founded in 1995, is open to all who served on **HMS Caprice** at any time during her memorable **World Cruise in 1968**. An annual subscription of £12 is payable in January.

### Membership Secretary *John Bishop*

43 Woolwich Close, Bursledon, Southampton SO31 8GE  
 jb@hmscaprice1968.org.uk Tel 02380 403 921

### Website Editor & Records *Graham Latter*

62 Mill Rise, Swanland, East Yorkshire HU14 3PW  
 gl@hmscaprice1968.org.uk Tel 01482 632 276

### Reunion Organiser - *Gordon Duffy*

2020 Main Reunion is Chester on Sept 25 & 26 Sept

### Tamworth RNA - *Bob Mason & Alan Payne*

Next Tamworth Weekend - 5 & 6 June 2020

### *Absent shipmates who have crossed the bar...*

#### Ex Association Members

AB (QA2) John Dunn RO2(T) Dave Windsor ME1 Bob Harris L.Sea Mick Walsh  
 AB Dougie Richardson LCEM Danny Smith L/Sea Brian Watson  
 Surg. Lt Richard Couch Lt. Peter Fowler RO2(G) Greg Farmer  
 RO2(G) Dave Jennings POEL Syd Pawley LREM Chris Davis AB(G) Dennis Friedl  
 POSA(V) Brian Hobbs POME Harry Winterbottom Cdr Tim Bevan  
 AB David Cummings

#### Ex Crew Members

LRO(G) Ali Dow RO2(G) Dave Matthews ChME Nick Carter CEA Don Farrow  
 CERA Paul Hockey PO Writer Dave Walters ME1 Don Swain Lt. Peter Higgs  
 AB Michael Nightingale POME Bill Burgess  
 Chinese Laundryman Lou Moon Chuk



*They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old.  
 Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.  
 At the going down of the sun, and in the morning,  
 We will remember them*