

CHAPTER 3 - Part 3 The Cherry Boys

We sailed from Guam for the first of our South East Asian ports (Hong Kong) during our operational deployment in the Indonesian Confrontation. Details of the Confrontation can be read here <https://rnzncomms.org/2016/05/12/the-forgotten-campaigns/>

Royalist's story continues with her arrival 20th May at HMS Tamar in Hong Kong where we stayed for a two-week maintenance period and whilst alongside, we reverted to Hand Message Organisation with the RN Commcen at Tamar taking communications guard for us.

As approximately three quarters of the ships company were under 21, we were mustered on the focsle and addressed by the British Provost Marshal of the Military Police. His speech included the dangers of brothels, bars, tattoo parlours and out of bounds areas. To make sure that we knew where the out of bounds areas were, we were each given a pamphlet showing diagrams of Hong Kong Island and Kowloon where said areas were - need I say more.

LRO(W) Mike Catlow had persuaded the SCO that he would like four RO(G)s for watchkeeping duties in the EWO during exercise phases. Subsequently, Lou Simonsen and myself plus two others whose names I have forgotten, were introduced to the delights of Radar Recognition Exercises. The RRXs were on tapes that were played back on the REH3 tape recorder in the EWO. Also alongside at HMS Tamar was a County Class Destroyer, HMS Devonshire. Mike arranged for us to visit the EWO on there. What a difference! You could drive a mini moke in the ship's main passageway and the EWO was full of mysterious looking equipment with coloured lights and screens. Far more technical looking than the one UA3 that we had.

Royalist was represented ashore by various sports teams. Some of the communicators played rugby, water polo, golf and soccer. Bob Ohlsen was in the golf team and after the fiasco in Honolulu where he had to wear 10s ashore, got badly sunburnt and threatened with self-inflicted wounds by the sick bay, he was allowed to wear civvies after that as the rest of the team were officers and senior rates. I had played hockey at Tamaki and Philomel but had to settle for the soccer team. The only game we won was against the US Marines in Pearl Harbor. We were thrashed by the British Army over in Kowloon but took commiseration by the hospitality shown afterwards, even if one of the squaddies pinched my camera!

Part of the maintenance alongside was to paint the upper deck. The hull was done by Ah Moy's side party as she had the contract to do the ships alongside at Tamar. As the ship was going to be involved during the Indonesian Confrontation, the pennant numbers either side were painted out. This was so that the ship couldn't be recognised as HMNZS Royalist. Bit bloody silly as we were the only cruiser on station as well as being the only operational Dido Class in existence!

Ah Moy's girls would also come through the ship after each meal with their cleaned out kerosene tins to collect the food scraps from all the messes to be used for pig food (No, not the Wardroom...). Her intelligence system was excellent as she knew when ships would be sailing and to where.



Side Party

A bit of cultural relief was to visit the Tiger Balm Gardens. Cement figures depicted chinese folklore. The gardens were not that big but the visit was worthwhile.



Some of us even found time to visit one of the floating seafood restaurants at Aberdeen on the southern side of the island, where you could select your own live fish for the main course. The fish would dart about in the huge tanks trying to avoid the net. Eventually your selection was netted and taken to the kitchen to be prepared while you enjoyed the many appetisers and entrees beforehand. Jumbo restaurant was the biggest and the best - it was like a palace inside and you were treated like royalty, even if you were a lowly matelot. I went back there again in 1982 and 1988.



Jumbo seafood restaurant

In 1965, there were three floating restaurants but in 1988, it was down to two.

Wanchai was the favourite haunt for matelots - bars and tattoo parlours. There was actually a Suzie Wong Bar where one night a big punch up resulted between Aussies and Brits. We just sat quietly in the corner and watched as the British MPs came in with batons swinging and hauling the matelots off the deck and out of the bar. Those that had "AUSTRALIA" on their uniforms were left behind.

Not far from the naval base was the Star Ferry Building where ferries trundled backwards and forwards across the busy harbour between Hong Kong island and Kowloon. At the ferry building was a chemist's shop where the proprietor was known as the Mad Chemist. More like a sex shop - sold everything from different kinds of condoms (ribbed ones, ones with feathers on, different colours, etc) "Stay Hard" lotions (which I was led to believe was only cheap after shave...), Admiralty Fleet Orders (AFO's) - small booklets on pornography, etc.

All good things come to an end and we were off to Singapore - still Cherry Boys

More to follow...