



The Bulldog Bulletin



Patron: Her Majesty The Queen

President: Priya Guha British Consul General

The Newsletter of The Royal British Legion
California Branch No 1

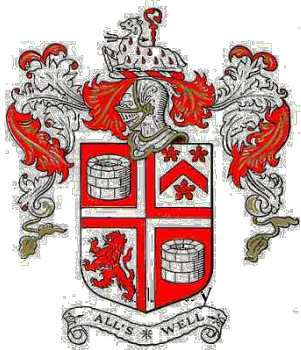
February 2012



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FINSBURY

The Royal British Legion

California Branch No 1
C/O 2616 Snowy Egret Way
Elk Grove, CA 95757

E-Mail Address sweetman@britishlegionusa.com
Web Page <http://www.britishlegionusa.com>

Contact Phone No 916-714-0748



LEWISHAM



HAMMERSMITH

RBL Chairman's February report,



The January meeting was a short meeting, the things that were discussed was where we are going to hold our meetings after this year. Roger Farrow said that he would check with the American Legion to see what could be available for our meetings; there have been several suggestions of how we can hold the meetings. We have had one electronic mail of the Bulldog Bulletin; I hope this is working out for everybody. I have cut the mailing down by 75% and I'm just mailing about 26-27 letters to those who have requested it. Please let me know if this is satisfactory. The next meeting will be February 21st. at the Veteran's Memorial, Van Ness Ave, San Francisco at 6:30 p.m. **Please note the time change**

Pat

First HMS Victory to rise from sea bed

Jack Grimston Published: 22 January 2012

It was the pride of the Royal Navy and the greatest warship of its age.

Now the remains of HMS Victory, predecessor of Nelson's famous flagship, are set to be raised from the sea bed nearly 300 years after it sank in a storm off the Channel Islands.

Among the wreckage 240ft below the surface are more than 100 bronze cannons — and, some believe, £500m in gold coins.

This week, the Ministry of Defence is expected to announce that it has signed a deal that would lead to the most important excavation of a British sailing ship since the raising of the Mary Rose in 1982, although almost none of the structure remains.

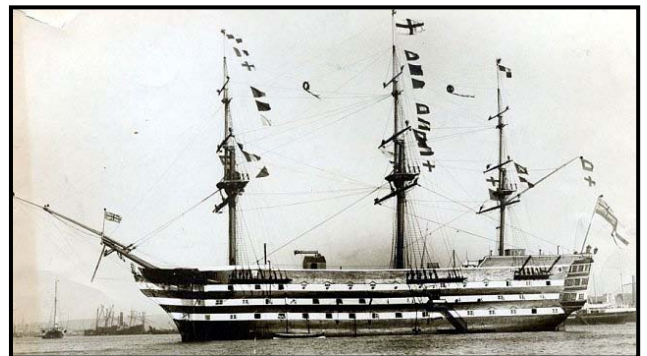
The wreck is being handed over to the Maritime Heritage Foundation, a charity set up by Lord Lingfield, the Tory peer formerly known as Sir Robert Balchin.

He is a relative of Admiral Sir John Balchin who was on board the Victory when it sank in October 1744 at the end of an expedition against the French.

The foundation is expected to employ the Florida-based company Odyssey Marine Exploration to carry out the recovery, which could begin this year.

The guns and other artefacts from the ships will be displayed in British museums. Under salvage law, Odyssey, which found the wreck four years ago, would probably receive the bulk of any treasure.

The Victory has been damaged by centuries of shifting currents and sands.



BARRAGE BALLOONS

A comforting sight to many during the war years. "a plastic bag filled with hydrogen" was how one news reporter described them. Sixty feet in length and thirty feet high when fully inflated with 20,000 cubic feet of hydrogen, these balloons seemed to hang from the sky around every city in Britain. The risk of a lightning strike was a big worry to the ground operating crews. Just after midnight on July 26, 1940, a total of 28 balloons in the Bristol, Avonmouth and Filton area were struck by lightning and brought crashing to the ground in flames. In late September, 1939, a severe storm tore loose many balloons from their moorings causing around sixty of them to drift as far away as Sweden. Another problem was RAF planes from surrounding training schools striking the balloon cables. This happened on a number of occasions with fatal results for the pilots.

MOONLIGHT SONATA

On the night of November 14/15, 1940, the German Luftwaffe, under the code-name 'Moonlight Sonata', bombed the English city of Coventry. Founded in 1043, the city had a population of a quarter of a million in 1940. Industries in and around Coventry included the Armstrong Whitworth aircraft factory and the Hillman, Daimler and Standard motor vehicle factories. The raid, personally led by General Albert Kesselring, destroyed 50,749 houses and shops and killed 554 of its citizens and wounded 865. The 14th century St. Michael's Cathedral, Coventry's most famous building, was destroyed. Churchill knew beforehand, through Ultra intercepts, that Coventry was about to be bombed, but to evacuate the population or to engage in great strength the bomber fleet as it approached, would have alerted the Germans that their Enigma security system, "My most secret service" as Churchill called it, had been penetrated. This tragic decision that the British Prime Minister had to make was the only way to protect Ultra, one of the most important weapons of victory in the whole war.



The Ruins of Coventry Cathedral.

OCEAN LINERS' CLOSE CALL

On December 17, 1939, five ocean liners carrying 7,450 men of the First Canadian Division, arrived at Liverpool. Unknown to them, they had narrowly escaped what could have been a major sea disaster. The passenger liner Samaria, showing no lights, had passed right through the convoy unaware of the convoy's position! It struck the wireless masts of the escorting carrier HMS Furious on her port side, struck a glancing blow on the port side of the next ship astern, the liner Aquitania, then passed close down the starboard side of the third and fourth ships sailing in line ahead. If the Samaria had collided head on with the Furious, the ships following would have all crashed into her. During the last three years of war, the Cunard liners Queen Mary and Queen Elizabeth carried a total of 1,243,538 American and Canadian soldiers across the Atlantic.

[Angela Lansbury](#)

Mini Biography

British character actress, long in the United States. The daughter of an actress and the granddaughter of a high-ranking politician, Lansbury studied acting from her youth, departing for the United States as the Second World War began. She was contracted by MGM while still a teenager and nominated for an Academy [Award](#) for her first film, [Gaslight](#) (1944). Two pictures later, she was again nominated for Best Supporting Actress, this time for [The Picture of Dorian Gray](#) (1945). Now established as a supporting player of quality, she began a long career, often as "the other woman" in major productions and as the leading lady in lesser films. Her features, while not at all old-appearing, gave her an air of maturity that allowed her to pass as much older than she actually was, and she began playing mother roles, often to players of her own age, while yet in her thirties. She concentrated more and more on stage work, achieving notable success in a number of [Broadway](#) plays and musicals, winning four Tony [Awards](#) in sixteen years. Although active in television since the early 1950s, she obtained her greatest fame in the 1980s by starring in the light mystery program "[Murder, She Wrote](#)" (1984). As Jessica Fletcher, she became known and loved by millions for well over a decade. She also became known for the odd fact of almost annual Emmy [Award](#) nominations for the role without ever winning for it. An institution in American theatre and television, she is also an inspiration for the graciousness of her personality, which is often exploited and always admired.



HMS Barham (November 25, 1941)

The 31,100 ton British battleship, part of the British Mediterranean Fleet, blows up north of Sidi Barrani after being hit on the port side by three torpedoes from the German submarine U-331 commanded by Kptlt. von Tiesenhausen. About four minutes after the torpedoes struck the Barham's 15-inch magazine exploded which completely disintegrated the battleship and sending up an enormous cloud of black smoke which covered her sinking. A total of 862 crewmen perished including her commander, Captain G. C. Cooke. There were 449 men rescued from the water by the destroyers HMS Hotspur and HMAS Nizam. The U-331 was later sunk on November 17, 1942, by torpedo-carrying Swordfish from the carrier HMS Formidable. (32 men died, 15 were rescued). Kptlt. Hans-Diedrich Tiesenhausen was one of the rescued and survived the war. He died on August 17, 2000, in Vancouver, Canada, at the age of 85.



It was during a spiritual séance in Portsmouth that the apparition of a dead sailor appeared and told the gathering, which including his mother, that his ship had been sunk. The ship in question was the Barham. The gathering was presided over by Helen Duncan, a citizen of Edinburgh and one of Britain's most respected materialization mediums. The dead sailor's mother then contacted the War Office asking for details of the sinking and explaining how she came to hear of it. As ship sinkings during wartime was classified 'Secret' an investigation was launched and Helen Duncan, a mother of seven, was arrested and charged under the Witchcraft Act of 1735. After her release from prison she continued to bring comfort to grieving wartime families. In 1951, the Witchcraft Act was repealed and four years later Spiritualism was formally recognised as a religion. Helen Duncan died in 1956 at age 59 after many attempts to clear her name.

You learn something every day!!!!

Did you ever wonder why there are no dead penguins on the ice in Antarctica - where do they go?

Wonder no more!

It is a known fact that the penguin is a very ritualistic bird which lives an extremely ordered and complex life. The penguin is very committed to its family and will mate for life, as well as maintaining a form of compassionate contact with its offspring throughout its life.

If a penguin is found dead on the ice surface, other members of the family and social circle have been known to dig holes in the ice, using their vestigial wings and beaks, until the hole is deep enough for the dead bird to be rolled into and buried.

The male penguins then gather in a circle around the fresh grave and sing:

"Freeze a jolly good fellow"

"Freeze a jolly good fellow."

Then they kick him in the ice hole.

You really didn't believe that I knew anything about penguins, did you?

It's soooo easy to fool people. I am sorry. I fell for it too !

You must read this.....a proper decision by the courts...for a change.

FLORIDA COURT SETS ATHEIST HOLY DAY

In Florida , an atheist created a case against Easter and Passover Holy days. He hired an attorney to bring a discrimination case against Christians and Jews and observances of their holy days. The argument was that it was unfair that atheists had no such recognized days.

The case was brought before a judge. After listening to the passionate presentation by the lawyer, the judge banged his gavel declaring, "Case dismissed!"

The lawyer immediately stood objecting to the ruling saying, "Your honor, How can you possibly dismiss this case? The Christians have Christmas, Easter and others. The Jews have Passover, Yom Kippur and Hanukkah, yet my client and all other atheists have no such holidays..."

The judge leaned forward in his chair saying, "But you do. Your client, counsel, is woefully ignorant."

The lawyer said, " Your Honor, we are unaware of any special observance or holiday for atheists."

The judge said, "The calendar says April 1st is April Fool's Day. Psalm 14:1 states, 'The fool says in his heart, there is no God.' Thus, it is the opinion of this court, that, if your client says there is no God, then he is a fool.

Therefore, April 1st is his day.

Court is adjourned..."

You gotta love a Judge that knows his scripture!

The First World War has been described as clash of twentieth century technology with nineteenth century tactics. Millions of soldiers, both volunteers and conscripts, fought on all sides, with Kitchener's Army being a notable all volunteer force.

Much of the war's combat involved trench warfare, where hundreds often died for each yard of land gained. Many of the deadliest battles in history occurred during the First World War, including the Battles of Ypres, Vimy Ridge, Marne, Cambrai, Somme, and Verdun and artillery was responsible for the largest number of casualties during the First World War. Vast quantities of explosives were used. Despite having been outlawed by the Hague Conventions (1899 and 1907), chemical weapons such as mustard gas, phosgene and tear gas, and aerial bombardment were used. Casualties from chemical weapons were few but the psychological impact was devastating. Countermeasures such as gas-masks became more effective as the war progressed.

Perhaps the most powerful weapons of the Great War were railway-mounted heavy guns, which became increasingly larger. As each belligerent nation increased the firepower and range of its artillery, the other nations were required to respond likewise in order to prevent the technological superiority of any given military power. The naval guns of the day were the largest guns on the planet, and weighed hundreds of tons apiece. Thus, a method for transporting these guns was essential, and railroads became the favored means. The largest U.S., British, and French rail guns were severely outranged by the German Krupp, Max E, and Paris Guns.

Fixed-wing aircrafts were first used militarily during the First World War. Initial uses consisted primarily of reconnaissance, though this developed into ground attack and fighter duties as well. Strategic bombing aircrafts were created principally by the Germans and British, though the former used Zeppelins (dirigible balloons) to this end as well. U-boats (submarines) were used in combat shortly after the war began. Alternating between restricted and unrestricted submarine warfare during the First Battle of the Atlantic, they were employed by the Kaiserliche Marine in a strategy of defeating the British Empire through a tonnage war. The deaths of British merchantmen and the invulnerability of U-boats led to the development of several countermeasures: depth charges (1916), hydrophones (passive [sonar](#), 1917), blimps, hunter-killer submarines (HMS *R-1*, 1917), ahead-throwing weapons, and dipping hydrophones (abandoned in 1918). To extend their operations, the Germans proposed supply submarines (1916). Most of these would be forgotten in the interwar period until World War II revived the need.

Tanks were introduced in World War I by the British and created mechanized warfare that dominated the rest of the twentieth century. The first tank was nicknamed *Mother*. The first use of tanks was during the Battle of the Somme on September 15, 1916. This was not as successful as intended, but as a start the tanks proved their value against the machine gun. Trenches, the machine gun, air reconnaissance, barbed wire, and modern artillery with shrapnel helped stalemate the battle lines of World War I by making massed infantry attacks deadly for the attacker. The infantry was armed mostly with a bolt action magazine rifle, but the machine gun, with the ability to fire hundreds of rounds per minute, blunted infantry attacks as an offensive weapon; therefore, the British sought a solution and created the tank. Their first use proved tanks needed infantry support and massed formations, but within a year the British were fielding tanks by the hundreds and showed their potential during the Battle of Cambrai in November 1917 by breaking the Hindenburg Line while capturing eight thousand enemy and one hundred artillery guns.

Captive balloons were used as stationary reconnaissance points on the front lines. Balloons commonly had a crew of two with parachutes; upon an enemy air attack on the flammable balloon the balloon crew would parachute. Recognized for their value as observer platforms, they were important targets of enemy aircrafts; fixed, they were also heavily defended by anti-aircraft guns. Blimps and balloons helped contribute to the stalemate of the trench warfare of World War I, and the balloons contributed to air to air combat among the aircrafts to defend the skies for air superiority because of their significant reconnaissance value. The Germans conducted air raids during 1915 and 1916 on England with the intent to damage the morale and will to fight of the British and to cause aircrafts to be reassigned to England away from the front lines.

THETIS SUBMARINE DISASTER

In 1939 the Royal Navy suffered its worst ever submarine disaster just 40 miles from where it was built in Birkenhead.

During the maiden voyage of Thetis - the pride of the Royal Navy - 99 men tragically lost their lives - not through battle, but through an unfortunate accident. Inside Out joins a Liverpool theatre company as they prepare to stage a new play based on the story of the ill-fated submarine, Thetis.

In the summer of 1939 a major rescue operation to save the lives of 99 men trapped inside a submarine came to an abrupt and pitiful end.

For three days, in the heart of Liverpool Bay, just 38 miles from land, the men on board battled the effects of carbon dioxide poisoning, waiting for a rescue which never came. On June 1, 1939, Thetis prepared to make its maiden voyage.

The voyage was to be a test run and dive in the home waters of Liverpool Bay. Conditions on board were extremely cramped, with the submarine carrying 103 men - twice the number she was designed to carry.

Only 69 of Thetis's crew were sailors, the rest were mainly engineers from Cammell Laird. Laird's workers were offered the opportunity to disembark prior to the dive, but all chose to stay aboard.

Thetis's initial attempt at a dive was unsuccessful as the vessel, for some reason, was too light.

The decision to allow seawater into the torpedo tubes to add weight to the submarine fell to Lieutenant Frederick Woods. Without the knowledge that the outer torpedo doors were already open and the tubes full of seawater, Woods gave the order.

Woods was also unaware that a few weeks earlier, a painter, working on the other side of the torpedo door, had allowed enamel to drip inside the test tap and solidify. With the test tap blocked, Woods believed it was safe to open the door inside the submarine. Stoker Walter Arnold was in the third compartment and immediately knew the dive was not progressing as it should.

"He knew something was wrong when he felt a blast of air go past him, most unusual in submarine, explains his son Derek." As soon as he felt that blast of wind he knew something was wrong, but he didn't know what." With hundreds of tons of water filling the first and second compartments, Thetis nose-dived S.O.S

It took over three and a half hours for the telegram raising the alarm to arrive at the Navy's Submarine Headquarters in Portsmouth. Operation Subsmash was put into action by Captain I.A. McIntyre but his efforts were beset by bad luck, bad timing and bad judgment.

The best rescue ship was hundreds of miles away, aircraft reported inaccurate locations for Thetis and cutting equipment was ordered late. On board, levels of carbon dioxide became dangerously high.

During the night, 60 tonnes of drinking water and fuel-oil were dumped allowing Thetis to rise stern first. Submerged for 13 hours, oxygen on board was quickly running out. "They were sleepy basically, they just didn't have energy, they couldn't think straight," says Derek.

"They weren't making any conversation, they were not making any efforts, they were just going down, and down and down."



The submarine was to become a tomb for the 99 men on board



Many aboard were engineers from Cammell Lairds

Lt. Woods, Stoker Arnold and two other men managed to escape through a hatch, yet four men died attempting to escape using the same route.

A wire hawser was strung around the stricken submarine and held in place by a salvage ship. They planned to keep the stern up during the rising tide.

However the strain on the wire was too great and the hawser snapped, leaving Thetis to sink to the bottom of the sea.

The bodies of the 99 men who suffocated remained inside Thetis for a further four months until the submarine was salvaged from the bottom of the Bay.

No individual was ever blamed for the disaster.



Thetis was only 38 miles from land when she sank

The story lives on

The theatre company Rejects Revenge, has created a new stage production based on events the disaster called Out of the Blue, due to open in February at the Liverpool Everyman Theatre.

For the actors it'll be their most serious work to date.

Director John Wright explains how the play uses a variety of theatrical styles to bring the story to life.

He says, "We've got scenes that are quite realistic in the broadest sense, other scenes which are really quite surreal, scenes which are comic and scenes which I think are very poetic."

Despite being based on real life events, John is quick to remind theatre-goers, that as with many stories based on fact, there is also present, an element of fiction.

"We are making a story and that means we make things up," explains John.

"We're not being absolutely true to the letter - we're being true to the spirit."

For the 99 men who tragically died in the disaster their memory lives on in the hearts of their families, and now, thanks to Out of the Blue, in the minds of theatergoers across the country.

