

Steam Pinnace – Newsletter – August 2023



Update:

By Brian Mansbridge: It's good to be able to report routine maintenance is underway again as approval has been given for this

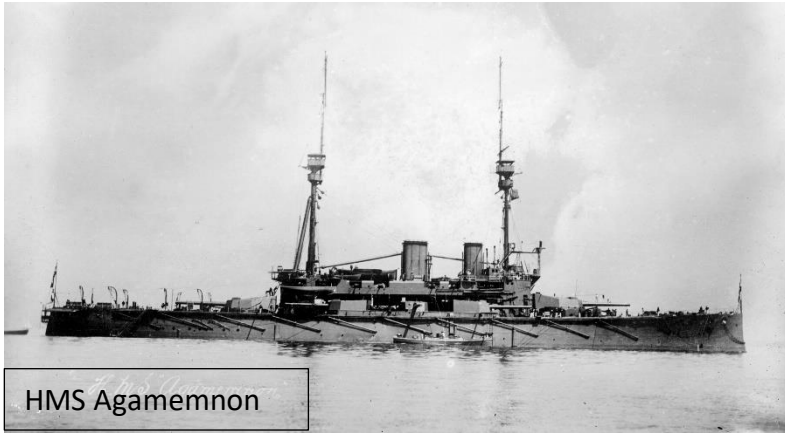
work by experienced volunteers. The following engineering tasks have been progressed:

- The compressor was run up after a further week of drying off. It ran long enough to blow down the boiler water. All are signs that the motor got wet and is drying out with use. The investigations as why it tripped the power supply also identified that the compressor pump turns extraordinarily easily, it is obviously showing wear due to age/use, it was manufactured 2002.
- Tom is working on the steam leak reported on the whistle/safety valve pipework.
- The boiler room bilge pump wiring connections were improved and sealed against ingress of damp.
- After blowing down the boiler the front manhole was removed and the attached photos are internals of the leak area. Clearly there is corrosion around the rivets in the area of the leak while most other rivets are clean. This will probably mean a replacement rivet; it has been left open and we have not interfered with the suspect area to allow the experts to view first.
- Sadly the findings in the boiler will need attention prior to raising steam again. We cannot avoid the fact that the summer of steaming is slipping by. Also the current requirement that any outside contractor has to provide a RAMS (formerly a H&S Statement) for approval prior to working onboard also takes time.

Correction – in the opening article last month the 199 cox'n was referred to as “Mansfield” rather than **Mansbridge**. Editor's apologies for the confusion – Mansfield was a naval engineering colleague of the editors.

A selection of related cigarette cards.





HMS Agamemnon

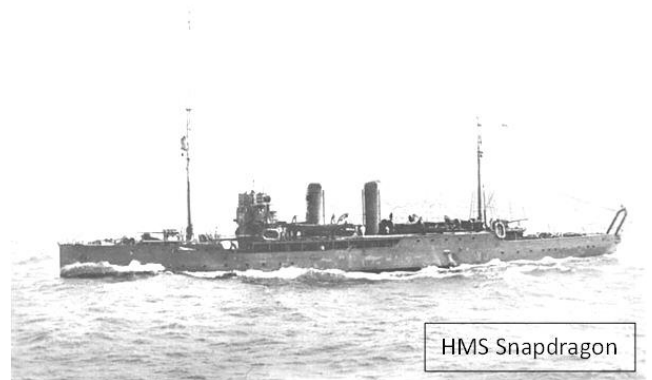
Early Radio Controlled Warships - Part 2

Continuing on from last month's article which introduced the exercise to convert the steam powered battleship HMS Agamemnon to radio control in 1920/21 as a moving target ship.

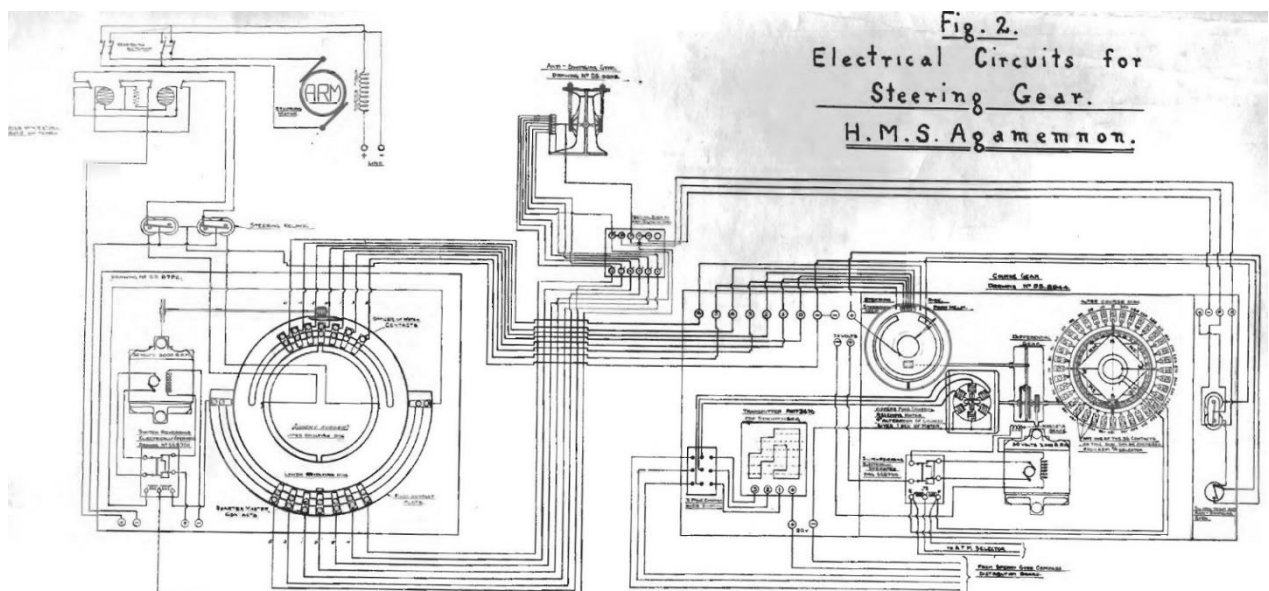
HM Signal School, Portsmouth and Chatham dockyard provided all the gear for the steering system and the dockyard fitted it. The dockyard produced and fitted all the gear for controlling the engines and oil fuel valves. She sailed from

Chatham for Portsmouth on July 21st, 1921, and carried out trials for the steering gear on passage without the wireless control element. Aircraft bombing and machine gun trials were planned for late August but the three weeks of practical testing asked for by the Signals School were "dispensed with". On 23rd and 24th August the trials went well except for a few "pea valves" failing. A few more failed on the 25th and on the 26th all the valves failed. According to "Unmanned Systems of World Wars I and II" by H. R. Everett: "2.41 The pea valve detector tube is located within this waterproof cylindrical housing for the radio receiver (Signal School M129 undated) indicated the original pea valves were replaced by D1 valves manufactures by Messrs Cossor". (Note: A.C. Cossor Ltd. was a British electronics company founded in 1859. The company's products included valves, radios, televisions and military electronics. The company was purchased by Raytheon in 1961). The bombing trials were successful. Every available pea valve was then collected and the mounting panels modified. These were trialled successfully on August. 31st. As no more pea valves were available and so the Signals School commenced a trial to produce their own valves. On September 7th and 8th HMS Snapdragon, a 'Flower'-class sloop of 1250 tons, was fitted out for controlling and produced excellent results except that more pea valves failed and the trials had to be stopped to ensure sufficient valves were available for machine gun trials on the 9th. This was the first time that Agamemnon was completely abandoned and this trial was successful.

The Signal School produced a specification for new valves (D1X) and these were put out to tender. After a trial on October 18th it was decided that she was ready to proceed north for the role as a target ship for the



HMS Snapdragon



Atlantic Fleet. There was still concern that Agamemnon's eight sets of receivers and aerials would not stand the shock of incoming shells. As a result they were hit with a sledgehammer and a 200 lb projectile repeatedly dropped on the deck on top of the control rooms. It was considered that the controlling ship might have to circle Agamemnon to ensure contact with the remaining serviceable aerials. An "indicating device" was fitted to Agamemnon's conning tower to give a visual signal when a control order was received. The trials report indicates that she was quite difficult to steer with 5 to 8 degrees of overshoot after course changes which took 5 minutes to steady.

Various trials of the five engine and oil fuel pump controls were satisfactory but noted that they had aimed for gradual increase and decrease to avoid fluctuations in water levels and steam pressure as the auxiliary machinery was not under control. Also "when steam in all boilers any delay between abandoning ship and commencing to work up the speed of main engines should if possible be avoided"!

ELECTRIC CIRCUITS FOR CONTROL OF STEAM REGULATING VALVES.

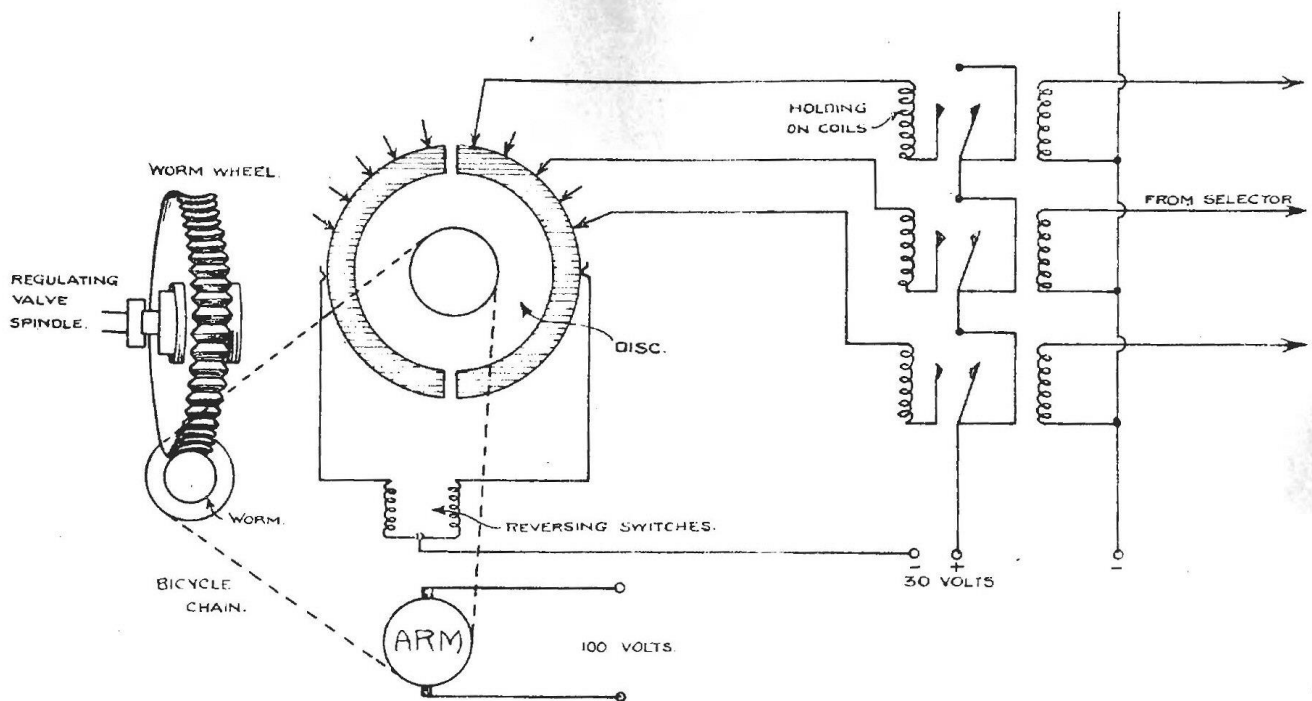


FIG 3

Experienced seamen and engineers are no doubt by now envisaging 17,000 tons of battleship at 15 knots steaming up the east coast completely out of control following a control signal failure. The trials team did too! She was fitted with a clockwork mechanism that ran for fifteen minutes after the last control signal was received. A further incoming signal reset the fifteen minute cycle again. Failure to reset caused the steam to the main engines to be shut off. Experienced engineers will also realise the potential effect of this!! This system was later modified to reduce the boiler pressure to a minimum – to prevent all the safety valves being floated by the earlier system. After three minutes a Very flare was fired and after a further three minutes the main engine regulating valves were closed. In the event of a main electrical system failure, a battery bank was used to initiate the shut off.

The project used a control system wavelength of 10 metres, still in its infancy in 1922, but was found to be less susceptible to interference. The transmitting aerial current in Snapdragon was reported as 1.5 amperes giving a range of about 2 miles.

Thanks again to Clive Kidd (retired 199 crew) and Heather Johnson (Librarian, Special Collections, National Museum of the Royal Navy) who initiated the discussion on this topic and found historical documents.



Ratings of the WRNS going on leave, Osea Island, Essex 1917-18. Reprinted under IWM's Non Commercial Licence. The foredeck hatch looks much like that on a pinnace. Sailor on the right can't believe his luck!

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King Reviews the Fleet 1934. There is a short sequence of a steam pinnace leaving a gangway around 6.50 minutes in. Thanks to Brian Aitchison who spotted the this.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g9ASXjjqOOo>

Naval inspection by King George VI 1935 Should read George V and there is a conflict of dates over the same event above. Early shot of the same steam pinnace and some nice aerial shots.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qVMECJkipRU>

NEVER BE AFRAID TO
TRY SOMETHING NEW.
REMEMBER, AMATEURS
BUILT THE ARK;
PROFESSIONALS BUILT
THE TITANIC.

National Historic Ships have produced an interesting list of historic vessels for sale as of June 2023.

<https://www.facebook.com/NatHistShips/posts/pfbid026ZYze7DoZHnCzEuEnhtvBUbuZmXeU5eG5Mw2otgUc1zbiHToQvo8sMCnNUMVYDfPI>



GOLDEN HAZE (left) is believed to have been built c1885 as an Admiralty Pinnace. Originally built for steam propulsion she is on the National Register of Historic ships. Her history is uncertain prior to 1974 when she was found abandoned in Goole and carefully restored on Windermere and the Norfolk Broads.



MIENS RASC, a Thornycroft HS Target Towing Launch, built in 1944 (right)
One of 14 Battlefield Class high speed target towing launches built by Thornycroft for the MOD in 1944 and believed to be the only seagoing vessel left of her class. In great condition and currently used as a fully functioning liveaboard.

.....and fifteen other classics.

Thanks to Mike Critchley who found this.

For information: 43rd World Ship Society Naval Meeting

30th September 2023, 0900-1730

In the Royal Maritime Club, 75-80 Queen Street, Portsmouth PO1 3HS.

PROGRAMME

0900 'Below Decks' open – participants assemble, Book Sales etc

1030 Coffee

1050 Introduction

1100-1200 Fifteenth DK Brown Lecture – **Dr Paul Brown: Elizabeth's Navy: 70 Years of Decline?**

1205-1300 **Alex Grover: Innovation & Tragedy: The Story of the Courageous-class Aircraft Carriers 1915-1940**

1300 Lunch

1345-1355 Answers to Pre-Meeting Quiz. Announcement of winner (who will set the 2024 Pre-Meeting Quiz!) of the Richard Osborne Prize.

1355-1445 George Moore Photo-Quiz – set by **Professor Aidan Dodson**

1450-1545 **Mark Brady: The Art of Claus Bergen and the Revival of German Naval Power between the Wars**

1545 Afternoon Tea

1600-1655 **RN Presentation Team**

1655 Closing Remarks

1700-1730 'Below Decks' remains open for Book Sales etc.

Sale of Naval-Interest Books The sale at the 2022 Naval Meeting of 'naval-interest' books surplus to the requirements of the WSS Chatham Library was a great success, and despite prices being 'very reasonable' (i.e. well below what one would normally expect to pay, whether on-line or on the High Street) raised a significant sum to support that Library. It is intended that the exercise will be repeated – and that a list of books to be offered for sale, in the first instance specifically to those attending the 2023 WSS Naval Meeting, will be circulated in July to those who will attend the meeting, with those books subsequently ordered being available for purchase/collection at the meeting on Saturday 30th September. If you wish to attend the 43rd WSS Naval Meeting please complete the form on Page 2 of this document and:

☐ Post to Mr M R Brady, 40 Magdala Road, Cosham, PORTSMOUTH PO6 2QG

or

☐ E-mail it to mrbrady@btinternet.com

For further information contact **Mark Brady** (Tel: 023-9237-9278, or as above).

Application form: 42nd World Ship Society Naval Meeting

30th September 2023, 0900-1730

in the Royal Maritime Club, 75-80 Queen Street, Portsmouth PO1 3HS.

From: (*Your Name – Capitals, please*):

I wish to attend the WSS Naval Meeting on 30th September 2023 (Attendance Fee £14-50)
(*Delete if appropriate*) I wish to book a Buffet Lunch (Price £15-50)

It is requested that payment (£14-50 or £30-00, as appropriate) be made in advance (by Friday 22nd September):

By Cheque (payable to 'WSS Naval Meetings'), mailed to Mark Brady (address on Page 1)

Or

By Bank Transfer to the account 'WSS Naval Meetings', Sort Code 30-98-97, Account Number 75146862. (*If paying by Bank Transfer please give your surname as the 'Reference'*)

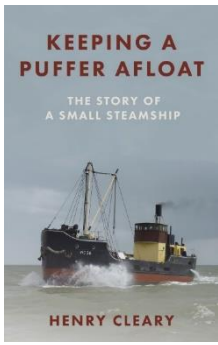
Please post/E-mail this form to Mark Brady (addresses on Page 1) as soon as convenient – so he has an idea of the number of participants (we might need to book a larger room, Who Knows?). Payment (see above) may be made closer to the date of the meeting.

To receive the list of 'naval interest' books to be offered for sale to those attending the meeting please provide:

Your Postal Address (*Capitals, please*)

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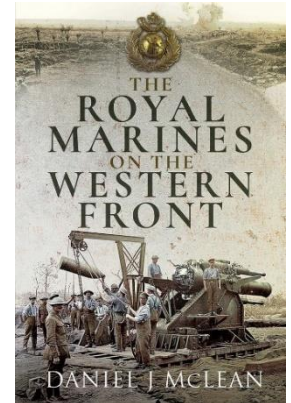
and/or E-mail address



Keeping a Puffer Afloat The Story of a Small Steamship Henry Cleary; Troubador Publishing; Jul 2023; ISBN: 9781803137513. From the heart of Rosyth naval base in 1978 five volunteers set out on VIC 56, an elderly steamer snatched from a scrapyard fate. With only a basic radio and a compass made usable by one of the crew, they set out down the North Sea. Turned away by some ports and welcomed in others, she began a new life on the London river just as Docklands was being reborn. This was the first of many challenges to keep the steamer going and family, friends, work colleagues and sympathetic visitors were ruthlessly enlisted to help. A rare survivor of wartime shipping, the puffer attracted interest around the Thames estuary and in 1989 sailed across the North Sea to Flushing in Holland. VIC 56 appeared in arts events and in the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Pageant in 2012 before being donated to Portsmouth

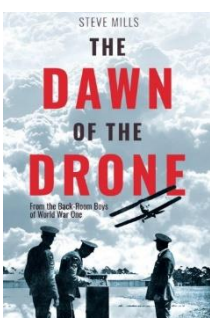
Boathouse 4 in 2019 where she is a popular exhibit. Trips were only possible through the heavy work programme of the engineers to keep the engine, boiler and other machinery in good order. Henry Cleary was the owner of VIC56 until she was donated to Boathouse 4. Available direct from Troubador Press - <https://www.troubador.co.uk/bookshop/sport-hobbies/keeping-a-puffer-afloat/> The editor offers a talk "The Clyde Puffer - one of Scotland's best-loved boats" in the area around Portsmouth/Fareham which also looks at VICs.

THE ROYAL MARINES ON THE WESTERN FRONT DANIEL J MCLEAN Pen & Sword Books; Feb 2021; 144 pages; ISBN 978 1 52676 386 0. This comparatively short book encompasses a little-known aspect of the history of the Royal Marines. From the mud of the Somme to the amphibious raid on Zeebrugge the RM fought in almost every element of the Great War. Today they are known world-wide as an elite commando fighting force, but this has only been their role since 1940. Until 1923 they existed as two separate Corps – the Royal Marine Light Infantry (RMLI) and the Royal Marine Artillery (RMA), both serving with distinction on the Western Front. This book examines and explains the engagements in which they were involved, the equipment used and the organisation and training undertaken in considerable detail.



JUTLAND: FRESH THOUGHTS, C F WALKER and V A MICHELL; Indomitable Press; 2019; 240 pages ; ISBN-10 1916314228. The first part of 19 easily readable and illustrated chapters, is compiled from notes made by Commander Charles Walker, a naval historian, who served in the RN from 1914 to 1932 and again from 1939 to 1945. And the second part of a further 10 chapters, is by Dr Vaughan Michell, the renowned maritime technical researcher and Chair of the Britannia Naval Research Association.

THE DAWN OF CARRIER STRIKE AND THE WORLD OF LIEUTENANT W P LUCY DSO RN David Hobbs; Seaforth 2019; 386 pages; ISBN-10 1473879922: .On 31 March 1918 the Royal Naval Air Service (RNAS) comprised approximately 55,000 aircrew, maintenance and other support personnel. All changed on 1 April when the RNAS and the Royal Flying Corps were absorbed into the Royal Air Force. The consequences of this was a throttling of naval aviation in favour of the RAF philosophical panacea of strategic bombing and total oversight of anything that flew. Naval aviation was relegated to fleet reconnaissance and fall-of-shot reporting in future fleet actions.



THE DAWN OF THE DRONE - FROM THE BACK ROOM BOYS OF WORLD WAR ONE Steve Mills; Casemate Publishers; November 2019; 336 pages, ISBN-10 : 1612007899. In the dark days of World War I, the first remotely controlled experimental aircraft took to the skies and unmanned radio controlled 40-foot high-speed Motor Torpedo Boats ploughed the seas in Britain. Developed by the British Army's Royal Flying Corps and the Royal Navy these prototype weapons stemmed from an early form of television demonstrated before the war by Prof. A. M. Low. The remote control systems for these aircraft and boats were invented at RFC Secret Experimental Works commanded by Prof. Low, which was part of the organization of 'back-room boys' in the Munitions Inventions Department.