



Medusa

Summer Newsletter July 2025.

I must start with an apology that this newsletter is well overdue. My excuse is that I finally wrapped up my parents' estate (I was executor) in April and was immediately pitched into moving house myself. Thirty years worth of my stuff and the residue of two generations before has taken some sorting out. The good news is that I am settled in my new home which is 5 mins drive away from Medusa.

An unexpected surprise early this year was a letter from the Second Sea Lord thanking the Medusa team for supporting the Royal Navy, in particular the cadet forces.

Barry Ford.

Barry decided this spring that it was time to retire from Medusa. He has been with us for 26 years during which time he has served as engineer, mate and cox'n. Barry has had a lifetime at sea with the Royal Navy, the RN auxiliary service, the Maritime Volunteer Service, Shieldhall and Medusa. He commanded the respect of all the crew and was very much 'Father' of the ship. Personally, I have been grateful for his friendship, knowledge and advice. Last year he was presented with a Transport Trust Lifetime Achievement Award by HRH The Princess Royal. At the Medusa AGM he was presented with an engraved decanter and glasses and I hope that it has dispensed the odd tot of rum. We hope that Barry will stay in touch and appear at some events.



Barry and the ship he has given 26 years' service to

The year so far.

We started the year with the Support Group AGM held at Hornet. As well as a few formalities this was a great social event. Richard Hobbs agreed to stay as chairman, Tim as vice, Pam as secretary (at least for this year) and Stephen Farrington took over as treasurer.

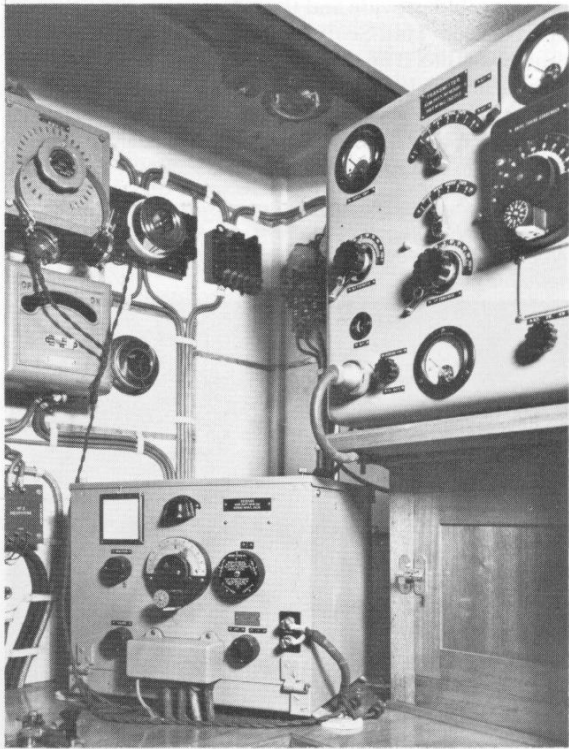
Much work had gone on over the winter clearing the defects lists, painting and a few upgrades. The wireless office now looks much more as it did in 1944. When Medusa was built, she was fitted with the Marconi TW12 transmitter and receiver. This was later replaced by the Collins TCS equipment made in the USA. For a while I had a TW12 receiver on long term loan but returned it when I gave up on trying to get a transmitter. Then, last year, both appeared on E Bay and I bought them. They were located in Norfolk so drove up to get them only to find they had been purchased from the Isle of Wight some time previously when the radio museum there closed down. I kicked myself for having missed that. Both were in poor state but thanks to Robin Hooper the cases now look like new. I have high hopes of getting the 90 year old receiver to work but the transmitter is a step too far especially with a 1500V HT supply.



Marconi TW12 W/T installation.

MTB 66 W/T installation

(Vosper Ltd)



Marconi TW12 equipment aboard MTB66 in WW2.

149



Team effort on Medusa

The first trip of the year was to take Medusa round to Victoria Quay for liftout. The whole exercise went smoothly with lift on the Monday and launch on the Friday of the same

week. The weather obliged and the team worked really hard, so we returned to our berth looking like new.

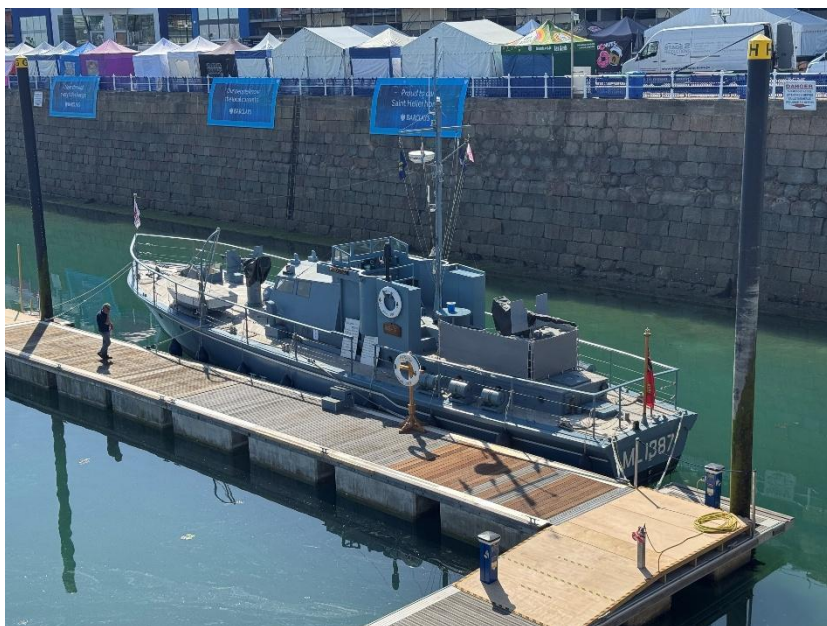
The next event was our training weekend. We do this every year to check our emergency procedures and sharpen our skills after the winter. It's a two day event with Saturday alongside and then Sunday at sea. We cover emergency steering, man overboard, fire, flood, first aid plus training for new helmsmen and some practice alongsides for the watch officers.

Over the last months our port engine had become very smoky on startup. The engineers were on the case and worked through the possibilities. The first and most obvious was injectors; these were sent away for overhaul, but though several needed attention this showed little improvement. Next was to work back through the fuel injection system. There were plenty of things to check and the only thing amiss was a very small amount of play in the coupling between the drive and the injection pump. A quick chat with Gardner Marine Engines confirmed this was the culprit and they were able to supply a new drive shaft and coupling as well as assisting with fitting it. The result was impressive, no smoke at all which was a relief with our upcoming deployment to the Channel Islands.



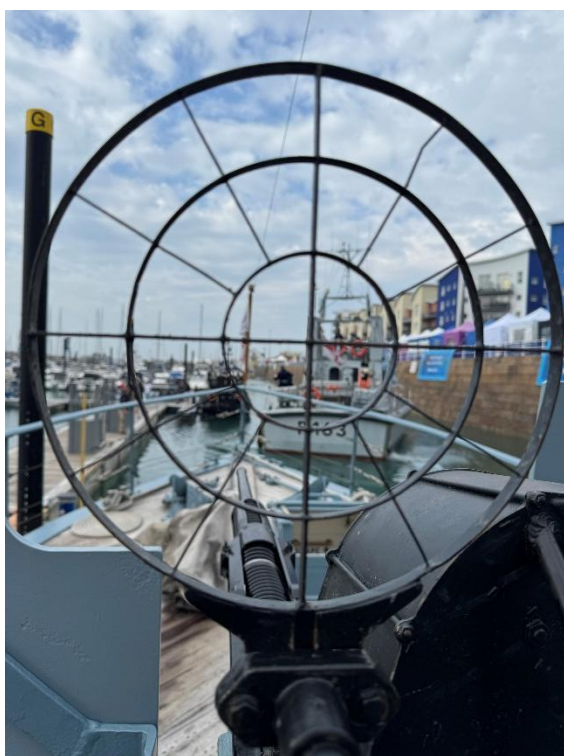
Ed Dewar, Ed Wyatt and Chris Harman working on the port engine.

On 30 April we set off for Alderney; the weather was kind and we had a lovely passage across. The following day we continued down to St Helier for the Jersey Boat Show. There was some confusion and contradiction on where we should berth so we did our own thing. After some more confusion and delay the next day we went into the marina, turned in a tight space, and backed up a narrow channel to the top corner of the marina.



A long reverse to a dead end, St Helier marina.

The weather deteriorated and it blew very hard. We awoke the next morning to find a display tent in the harbour next to us. Over the next three days we had around 2500 visitors to the ship. The boat show is more of a public attraction and lots just wanted to use Medusa as a climbing frame for their children. HMS Express (P2000) was berthed ahead of us and we exchanged RPC's (Request Pleasure of Company). Her ship's company was very interested in Medusa and ours, to see the similarities in layout of the P2000.



HMS Express backing into a tight space ahead of us.

On the 6th May we set sail for St Peter Port. The wind was fresh NE so it wasn't going to be a calm passage then HMS Express who was ahead of us sent us a message to say the 18 knot forecast wind was nearer 30. Medusa rolling was a new experience for some of our crew but, surprisingly, no one succumbed.

We were all glad to arrive at St Peter Port and were guided into our berth in Victoria Marina by the harbour master. Ahead of us was Rummy 3, a 1930s gentleman motor launch that had been taken into Naval service in WW2. I had exchanged messages and telephone calls over several years, but this was the first face to face meeting with Andy Smerdon, her owner and skipper.



Rummy 3 ahead of us in St Peter Port.

On the 7th we had an open day and were overwhelmed by the gratitude and generosity of the islanders who were delighted to see us. The following day we went up to St Sampson to fuel. Guernsey Petroleum Distributors (GPD) generously gave us a fill of fuel (4500 litres) which covered the fuel cost of the trip. On return to St Peter Port we berthed outside the marina ready for the event on the 9th to mark Liberation.

On the 9th May 1945 as part of Operation Nest Egg, a landing craft came into Victoria Harbour and landed a party of soldiers to take the surrender. The exact location is a slipway in the SW corner and is marked by a plaque. We were asked to recreate the event with a party of re-enactors. The only snag is that the harbour has been turned into a marina and getting Medusa in and out of the slipway would be very tight indeed.

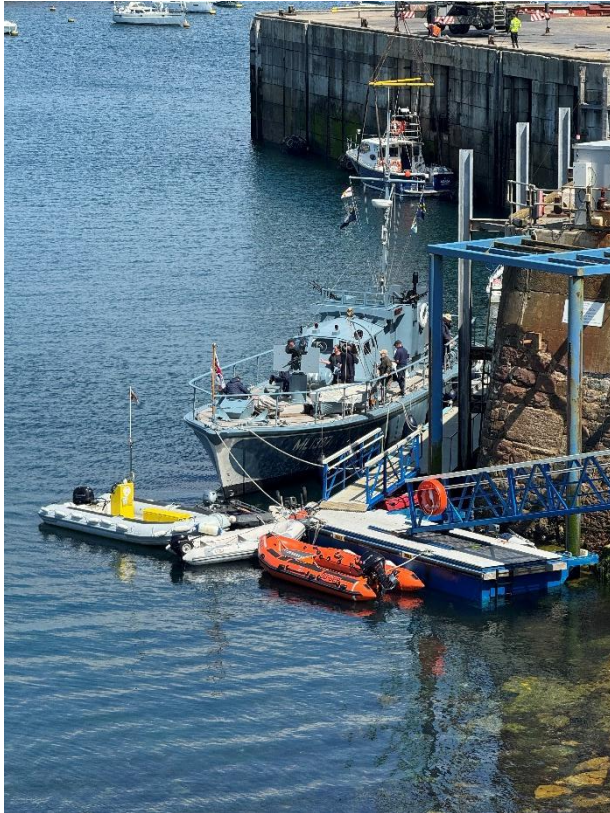
We got in to plan and landed our soldiers to applause from thousands of people all round the dock. Backing out was very tricky especially with the wind funnelling in through the dock entrance. We made it back to our berth without incident, but it was a bit heart in mouth and I was grateful to the harbour master for giving the bow a little push to help us round.



Landing the soldiers on Liberation day.

On the 10th we were to go over to the eastern side of Sark and sit close in while HRH the Princess Royal visited. From the previous NE strong winds there was a big swell into the tiny bay we were to go in, so we opted for the safe option and stayed in St Peter Port.

On the 11th we had a pleasant passage to Alderney and moored on the spare RNLI buoy very close to the inner harbour. The following day we went alongside a pontoon for the ship to be open all day. Our first visitor was His Excellency the Lt Governor of Guernsey, followed by members of the public and a group of pupils from the local school. Two ladies were keen to tell us that they had been entertained by the crew of Medusa in the 1960s. Apparently while still in naval service, she came in and the crew threw a childrens' party; we had never heard of this before.



Alongside in Alderney

Our visit had been arranged by Colin Partridge of the Henry Euler Trust and culminated with a dinner ashore for all the crew, the Euler trustees and the Lt Governor. It was a fantastic welcome and we will certainly be back.

Our return passage was as calm as outward and marked by a pod of dolphins that travelled with us riding our bow wave. We were incredibly lucky to have two calm crossings that early in the year.



2025 Channel Islands deployment crew

As I write this, we have just completed the second weekend for the Volunteer Cadet Corps. The VCC is probably the least known of the cadet organisations and is based on RoyNavy/Royal marine establishments. We have a group of 8 cadets plus two adults arrive on Saturday morning and then spend the day alongside teaching them all aspects of operating the ship. They then stay on board for the night and take great pride in properly conducting sunset and colours the next morning. The second day is preparations for sea and a passage to execute the passage plan they have prepared in advance. The first weekend was perfect weather but this last was not so good so we had to swap the schedule around a bit but still managed to achieve everything.



VCC aboard Medusa.

We now have a bit of downtime in August but a busy Autumn coming up with a further cadet weekend, our annual visit to Bucklers Hard, some crew training and Remembrance.

Medusa History.

I am always surprised that new information about Medusa still comes up and this year has been no exception. I was contacted by Julie Dixon, the daughter of Harry Andrew, one of Medusa's wartime crew. She had discovered her father's letters home and kindly extracted material that related to Medusa's movements and slotted it in to diary of this period that I had reconstructed from various sources. It adds quite a bit to what we know of this period. I have reproduced the diary that I put together from the "Red

Books” (a weekly publication of the location of minor war vessels held by the National Archive at Kew). These are very helpful but sometimes give the actual location and sometimes the accounting base the vessel is attached to rather than where she actually is. Julie’s additions are in red and blue.

Medusa, movements 1944/5

Information extracted from “Red books” held in ADM208/22 onwards.

Harry Andrew October 1943 failed eye test to become mate redeployed, joined ML1387

6th Dec 1943

6th Dec 1943 to 6th March 1944 base HMS Hornet Gosport

2 Jan 44 Poole

Cook on compassionate leave H Andrew had to cook the meals for the crew

16 Jan 44 “

23 Jan 44 “

Crew know they are going to be moving to a different base, Gladys Osborne will know they have moved by different postmarks. Weather awful snowing and raining

30 Jan 44 Portsmouth

6 Feb 44 “

13 Feb 44 Ardrishaig Feb

20 Feb 44 On passage to Falmouth

27 Feb 44 Falmouth fitting out

Stationed ashore while being fitted out new address for letters HMS Forte Mess 1 Falmouth Cornwall

5 Mar 44 “

7th March 1944 to 1st September base HMS Forte IV Falmouth

12 Mar 44 “

19 Mar 44 “

19th March 1944 have had plenty of time off work, ship refitted now living back on board

21st March 1944 getting gear back aboard that was ashore that took plenty of time. They have been working late each night, this is the first night they have finished early.

26 Mar 44 “

2 Apr 44 “ (to complete 15 April)

9 Apr 44 Falmouth

12 Apr 44 “

Due to get salvage money any time

17 Apr 44 “

17th April 1944 Crew making up a band, they have just got in from sea and going again soon, only one watch ashore in a fortnight.

20 Apr 44 On passage Portsmouth

30 Apr 44 Left Portsmouth 27 Apr for Plymouth

1st May 44 took part in the practice assault carried out by American Forces at Slapton Sands Devon (from your website)

10th May 1944 all leave cancelled, they have been so busy on trials, unable to write doesn’t know if on head or heels. Will be 3 months before any more leave will be granted

14 May 44 Plymouth with 1383, administered by SO Force O. Part of

11th ML Flotilla (118, 153, 163, 187, 189, 193, 194, 214, 230, 304, 448, 907, 1383, 1387)

Not getting letters as they are moving around a lot, expecting to go to sea again very soon

21 May 44 “

It was such a lovely day that they went swimming in the dock but the water was very cold so didn't stay in very long. For a joke one of the men got the kettle and poured hot water in the dock to see if it would warm it up!

28 May 44 Left Plymouth 27 May

4 June 44

6 June 44 Served at D Day as a Navigation leader marking the approach through minefields to Omagh Beach (from your website)

11 June 44

16 June 44 He asked her if they could afford to get married, so they can be together. They have moved around a lot not had mail since 25 May 1944. No mail and all shore leave had been cancelled over a fortnight since been ashore. Had sea time so he hasn't written either “it's a thing you can't write in letters, but you may guess what I mean”

18 June 44 Portsmouth Command 149 ML Flottilla

25 June 44 as above (MLs 1295, 1309, 1383, 1387, 1389, 1391, 1392, 1407, 1409, 1415, 1416, 1421, 1422.

2 July 44 Falmouth with 1383

Just had one shore leave in 3 weeks been very busy.

They are standby ship and might be going to sea tomorrow, just receiving letters that were written in May.

9 July 44 Portsmouth

16 July 44 “

No leave for a long time, “ we should have a good pay day one of these days because since we have been in this ship we have never had proper pay” Next time he comes home on leave they will get married

23 July 44 “ with 149th

30 July 44 “

6 Aug 44 “

13 Aug 44 “

20 Aug 44 “

25 Aug 1944 they got married

27 Aug 44 “

2nd September to 30th November Base HMS Hornet Gosport

3 Sep 44 “

10 Sep 44 “

17 Sep 44 “

24 Sep 44 “ flotilla dispersed along S Coast, several in repairs, Poole, Dover and Southend.

25 Sept 44 getting a pay rise 10/6

26 Sept 44 They know they are moving to a new base, he knows where but cant tell her but it is not out of the country, he is afraid it will be too far for her to come on 36 hour leave. It will take them 2 to 3 days to get there

1 Oct 44 Detached duty Granton (Edinburgh)

2 Oct Gale warning so cancelled sailing until next day

3 Oct 44 arrived at new base, commented how cold it is. During the trip there it was blowing and raining all the time.

New address for mail Fleet Mail Office Port Edgar South Queensferry Scotland

8 Oct 44 “

15 Oct 44 “

22 Oct 44	“
29 Oct 44	“
5 Nov 44	“
12 Nov 44	“ M/S Aux Group 185 (1387, St Olive and Windward Ho)
19 Nov 44	Group 185, Granton
26 Nov 44	“

1st December 1944 to 31st August 1945 Base HMS Wildfire Royal Naval Shore Establishment Sheerness

3 Dec 44	On passage to Sheerness
10 Dec 44	Sheerness
17 Dec 44	“
24 Dec 44	Queenborough
31 Dec 44	“
7 Jan 45	“
14 Jan 45	“
21 Jan 45	“
28 Jan 45	“
4 Feb 45	“
11 Feb 45	Operating from Sheerness

23 Feb 45 Moved to another base for 2 to 3 days “last night went to the pictures as it was his watch ashore this place we are at now for a while is a lot better than Sheerness but it is not far from there”

25 Feb 45	“
4 Mar 45	“

11 Mar 45	“ St Olive in repair
-----------	----------------------

18 Mar 45	“
-----------	---

25 Mar 45	“
-----------	---

1 April 45	Now just with Windward Ho
------------	---------------------------

8 Apr 45	In Gillingham for repairs to complete 16 Apr
----------	--

In for repairs due to engine trouble, still at this base should have gone back but repairs took longer

15 Apr	Operating Sheerness
--------	---------------------

22 Apr 45	“
-----------	---

29 Apr 45	“
-----------	---

6 May 45	“
----------	---

“We have moved again to a place called IJmuiden and it was a German garrison before the War was over and there is 17,000 German troops here you can hardly move for them we have had to keep two men on watch all the time, we were the first ship in too also the first one in Amsterdam and what a greeting we got.”

11 May 45 to Amsterdam people brought tulips for them and gave them a good welcome

13 May 45 “ 9 May 45 to 6 June 45 Operation Fireball assisting with mine clearance and making the port usable (from your website)

20 May 45 “

27 May 45 “

3 Jun 45 “

10 Jun 45 “

17 Jun 45 “

24 Jun 45 “

13 Jul 45 in Ostend “ we have been in harbour for the last three days as a certain part of the engine has broken down and they have sent to England for a new part, so another ship has taken our place and while they were at sea they put a trawl out and caught some fish, so it will be fish for supper for everyone.”

23 Jul 45 still in Ostend talks about photo of the ship and they have just arrived from the leading seaman's wife in Sheerness. They have been swimming and to the Naafi for a few beers, talks about having Spam rolls. The weather has been lovely for the last fortnight

Where they go to swim in Ostend is about 10 miles away and it is a leave centre for troops and Waafs and the beach is 7 miles long and there is a lot of bathing huts for you to change your clothes and there are dozens of people on the beach you are only allowed to swim at certain times when the tide is right in all the time people are swimming there are 4 or 5 lifeboats just outside the area. You are only allowed to swim in a certain area if you go out they blow their horn and tell you to get back. You can hire small boats that you can row for 40 francs for an hour. It costs 5 francs for a towel and 10 francs for a hut. On the pier is a big Naafi which sold English beer and the back part of the building is a dance hall called 21 Club.

12 Aug 45 We have been taking photos on the ship today and we all got dressed up as Nazis with German helmets on and you know how I got dressed when I was home with my hair just like Hitler and a bit of soot for a moustache well I had my photo taken just like that with my arms up and two of the crew each side of me with a gun apiece as if I had just been caught.



----- Taken from Harry Andrew Service record

----- From Letters

Recently Mike and Pam Boyce handed several boxes of documents to me containing the records of Medusa from 1968 onwards. I have yet to go through all this and think there will be some gems in there, but one letter came to my attention as it adds to Medusa's wartime story. It is undated and from Mr Maurice Currell who was the radio operator in ML1402. I have reproduced it below. Breskens mentioned below was liberated on 21st October 1944 and Walcheren on 6 November. Medusa in the spring of 1945 was part of an auxiliary minesweeping squadron (185) with minesweepers St Olave and Windward Ho

"On this particular patrol 1402 was en route from Terneuzen to Breskens and Walcheren area and it was quite foggy. The boats we were relieving were 1387 and 1406 who were returning to base, 1406 (callsign Stutter) following 1387, however in the fog 1406 lost touch with 1387. The next we heard of the plight of 1406 was she ran onto the underwater defences around the dykes. We found 1406 tied up alongside one of the dykes. We dropped anchor, we dragged but relocated. Everyone on 1406 was OK but sadly all their rum had been lost!

1387 arrived on the scene and discussion took place on what to do. I think it was our skipper who said he had seen one of these boats afloat with the decks awash. Towing

was decided upon and some items were transferred along with the crew. 1406 was cradled between the two boats and towing commenced.

Suddenly 1406 started to go down by the head, the outside boats unable to support her. Releasing the lines which were now under great tension was urgent. My one vivid memory of this task was the prompt action taken by the cox'n of 1387. He grabbed an axe stored on the side of the bridge and proceeded to sever the lines. A great presence of mind in an emergency.

A sad ending in reporting the situation, I was overruled in message priority. Too late instructions were received "do not attempt to tow Stutter into deep water if in danger of sinking". My reply "Stutter sank in position XXX".

They were busy times for 1402, we came across a one-man submarine on the surface. We used our 2 pounder gun for the first time in anger, don't think the deck head was ever watertight again. It sank eventually and the German taken aboard HMS Cattistok.

Later we came upon another one man sub on the surface, captured her and towed her into Breskens. We didn't realise at the time she still had a mine along one of her sides. The captain of the sub and the sub herself were transported by road to Ostend. It was my job to make the swastikas to adorn the bridge

A quick check of our records shows that 1406 survived the war, however 1417 was lost 15/2/45 recorded as "sank under tow after hitting a mine off Flushing" which fits the above story so for 1406 read 1417.

ML1402 survived the war and went out to the far east to form part of the Hong Kong flotilla renumbered as ML3514 before being sold in 1958

Again, apologies for the lateness of this newsletter but hope the content worth the wait. Medusa is looking very smart and visitors are astounded that she is 82 years old. All this is down to a wonderful team of volunteers who spend a great deal of time looking after her without which she would have gone the way of most of her sisters.

Alan