

Allson won DSM in first month at sea

Sir,

Mention of Capt. A. C. Allson in your last issue recalls that within a month of commencing his career in July 1942, when he was a cadet in *Glan Ferguson*, his ship was sunk in the Med bound for Malta. Allson was awarded the DSM for his actions at the time of the sinking, receipt of the decoration having to be delayed until he was released from his prisoner-of-war camp in 1945.

Pensioner Capt. J. J. Millar of Bishop's Stortford could confirm (he was chief officer) that the ship's decks were piled with coal, but that proved no defence against the aerial torpedo. Also, that a dummy funnel erected at Glasgow was ridiculed by the naval authorities at Gibraltar and dismantled.

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RACE TO CHERBOURG

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which we grew very much accustomed to in the following few days.

On the Wednesday we had another clean ship before we went to the prizegiving. I was informed, as I was the youngest, that it was my job to collect the prize for coming in third. We received a tankard and an ashtray, which came in handy with all those duty-free cigarettes.

Lord Burnham treated us to a French dinner at a small restaurant in town that night, then informed us we were leaving directly afterward.

We left around 23.00 hours and set course for Poole. The fact that we arrived at Portland Bill instead did not perturb us, but it kept the navigators busy. Whether they were working out the course or searching for their mistakes is anybody's guess, but we did arrive at Poole by dinner time. That evening the crew took Lord Burnham for another meal.

We set sail for Hamble at 08.00 hours, but unfortunately not for long. We were becalmed. We motored up to the Needles, IOW, then sailed from there. In the Solent we met first the *QE2*, then *Pendennis Castle*.

When we reached Gosport, Lord Burnham suggested we get rid of a few cans of beer from the bilge. We were still getting rid of cans when we reached Moodies. At Moodies we gave *Rampion* her final clean, then we returned to the school, had a long-awaited shower and hit the deck.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank A. E. Bloor and all who made this trip possible. And special thanks go to Lord Burnham, first for taking us and second for flying the Red Ensign during the race in place of the White.

CLANSMAN

G. Charlewood

An evening sail — and goodbye Reina

It wasn't the skipper's fault we grounded. He was below at the time, mashing tea. The sea sets easterly as the tide starts to flow and the easterly wind did not overcome the easterly drift.

Even a skipper has to go below some time, and if the crew are unable to hold the craft on course they don't deserve to be out, anyway. The skipper was pretty sceptical about these desk-bound landlubbers, however, and poked his nose out for a look. "Put her down!" he bawled, which I did.

"If I shout, steer due west," were the orders as he studied the depth gauge. "Ten, ten, ten . . ." Bump, as we mounted the Brambles and came to a sudden stop. Well, he didn't shout after all.

Must have been a fairly steep-sided wall of sand. With the tide rising, we should be off fairly soon; no need to throw out ballast, passengers or crew. The Old Man had other ideas. It seemed he had been in this predicament before (dare I hope by his own default, or was it his crew again?).

He started up the engine, steered into the wind so that the current flowed between the hull and the bank. We moved slowly into the wind until we were on the other tack, back the way we'd come, down wind for a few hundred yards, then back on course again. The skipper went below again to sort the tea out. A delightful brew, no other craft about, no sound save for the water

hissing soothingly from our bows. Even the graceful diving terns had gone to bed. Where do terns bed down, I wondered?

The sun was down, below a bank of cloud, and a fine sunset lit up the sky to the north-west behind Calshot Castle and the tall power station chimney. We wondered if the ship coming down Southampton Water was *Reina del Mar*, and as she approached we saw she was, indeed. Way down the Solent a small ship was coming in, and it was soon evident she was moving fast and would soon be upon us. With this press of shipping converging, the skipper calculated he could just cross the channel and run up outside the markers.

Reina del Mar came up silently, a tiny wave at her forefoot; ensign drifting lazily in the following breeze; no sign of life on board, anyone on the bridge being invisible to us. *Viking* came piling in from astern, bow-wave almost to her stem, and was momentarily hidden behind the bulk of *Reina del Mar*. Then she was away, leaving a great wash behind her that had us holding on grimly as we rocked over the furrows.

Away, *Reina*, on your last long voyage to the breakers at Taiwan, a few rust patches here and there, at slow speed to conserve fuel. We thought sadly of the happiness she had afforded many thousands of cruise passengers. And here were only three of us to wish her farewell as she started down the Channel.

■ *Reina del Mar*, in Southampton for the last time, flies a paying-off pennant. Picture: David Reid.

