

During 1955 and 1956, Brian Edmonds was a midshipman on Calchas for Voyages 24 and 25. Here, Brian describes what was, arguably, one of the least attractive jobs that apprentices had to perform during the period of their indentures – that of ‘Peggy’.

### **IT’S YOUR WEEK TO BE ‘PEGGY’**

**BY**

**BRIAN EDMONDS**

There were 22 Midshipmen on each voyage of Calchas; half would be completing their second voyage and the other half were on their first trip. The midshipmen did all deck tasks on the ship that a usual deck crew would do, including that of the lowly deck boy. His duties were mainly in the Mess Room, attending to the messing needs of the deck crew. On Calchas, the same duties had to be covered, so, for a week at a time, one of the first trippers spent his time in the Mess Room, as ‘Peggy’. The word ‘Peggy’ is the traditional name in the Merchant Navy, given to the person who looked after the Mess Room for the sailors.

His day started off slightly later than the rest who turned to at 0600; he was called at 0700, and he prepared the Mess Room for breakfast at 0800. This entailed obtaining the appropriate crockery and cutlery from the storage racks, putting out cereals, bread etc., and collecting the cooked breakfast from the galley next door. When everyone was finished, he faced the lonely task of washing it all up and stowing it away until the next meal. I seem to remember using bars of hard soap placed in a punctured old tin as the cleaning medium, as these were the days before modern washing up liquids. The Mess Room then had to be cleaned ready for Master’s rounds later in the morning, as all the accommodation was inspected by the Captain, Chief Officer, Chief Steward and Chief Engineer on most days. Did we really call it the ‘parade of the unemployed’?



Smoko on No. 4

The ‘Peggy’ also prepared the requirements for ‘smoko’ mid morning and mid afternoon. Normally this was a large pot of tea and in the afternoon, often there were ‘tabnabs’, prepared on board by the ‘second cook and baker’.

When at sea and in good weather 'smoko' always took place by number 4 hatch, which was close by the Mess Room.

So each meal followed a similar pattern for the whole week, at times quite a lot of humorous(?) verbal abuse from the rest of the crew could be thrown the 'Peggy's' way, particularly if they were under pressure of having to turn to for a 'stand-by' when a meal may be missed unless he organised it more quickly. For some it was a frustrating chore, but, for others, it was a break from the other duties, and any spare time between the various meal and smoko was the Peggy's own for study, rest or sunbathing.



Tea and Tabnabs

Each evening after the dinner things had been put away, the last job was the supper tray for the watch-keepers. After which the 'exhausted' 'Peggy' would turn in except if in port when reserves of energy were always found, and it was off ashore to visit the local hot spots, which might even include those 'Taverns and Alehouses', which our indentures stated could only be visited 'if on company business'.



A Special Event

Just in case the impression is given that the midshipmen were always covered in grime, here they are in their best whites. Midshipmen on Calchas normally only wore uniform on gangway watch in port, or as seniors if

watchkeeping on the bridge. In this photograph all are in uniform whites for a special event, a Midshipman's Farewell Dinner, as it was the last voyage of Calchas as a cadet ship. On this occasion, all 22 dined in the saloon with the Master, Captain Digby Jones, and the Officers.

The midshipmen in this photograph are as follows:

Back row from left to right:

Len Smith; Mike Gusterson; Dave Langman; George Berry; Brian Edmonds; Mike Taverner; Derek Smith; Don Worsnop; Nick Hastings; Graham Jones; Ian Thomson; Jock Clarkson; Andy Keith.

Front row from left to right:

Joe Cairns; Neil Simpson; Tony Cooper; George Wood; G M Davies; Mike Moore; Ralph Brough; George Collings; John Carter.

The special menu for this meal is shown below.

M. V. "CALCHAS." Captain Digby Jones.

Midshipmens

FAREWELL DINNER



Fruit Cocktail

Cream of Tomato. Consommé Celestine

Grilled Rainbow Trout

Fried Fillets of Sole, Citron

Lamb Cutlets - Réforme

Asparagus Melba

Chicken & Tongue Bouchées

Roast Norfolk Turkey - Chipolata

Braised York Ham, Madere

Roast Sirlion Beef - Raifort

Cauliflower Naturel. Garden Peas

Garfield & Boiled Potatoes

Plum Pudding & Hard Sauce

Wine Jelly, Strawberry Sandae

Devilleed Sardines

Dessert Coffee

