

## An Osteopath all at Sea

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An osteopath's professional life is normally confined to the world of his or her practice relieved only by trips away to conferences or perhaps to teach. We gain something of our window on the world through the wonderfully wide variety of people who walk through our doors seeking help. There are few opportunities for fun or adventure at the companies/governments expense. However, there are compensations. The *G.O.s.C.* notwithstanding, we still lead comparatively self directed lives, deciding our hours and conditions of work largely free from outside dictates. Sadly this is not something, in the twenty first century, which many can still claim.



One of the legitimate pleasures of the job, for us all, is the often strong connections and affectionate bonds that are built up over many years between some longstanding patients and the practitioner. Through the snatches of their lives that we glean or from the confidences shared, we can catch glimpses of other lives lived, as T.S Elliot put it;

"Down the passage which we did not take  
Towards the door we never opened."

I had one such experience earlier this year. Over the years I have had the pleasure of occasional visits from one such patient, Tim McClement, (normal patient anonymity has been breached, *with permission*). Between the job in hand I have gleaned snatches of his interesting life, climbing the slippery pole of navel command from submariner to Vice-Admiral, with many interesting post cards from around the world, along the way.



Clive Lindley-Jones and Admiral Tim McClement all at Sea!

I happened to see Tim in the office the day after the major Portsmouth Trafalgar 200 Review of the fleet by the Queen in June.

I remarked, in passing, how we mostly miss all these impressive events, not to mention all those lovely fireworks, working away in our offices, only hearing about them, after the event, on the news.

Thinking nothing of it, a few days later, I was surprised and touched to get an invitation to a 'VIP Sea Day' with the Royal Navy in October at Plymouth.

Cut to a misty day at sea. Your new found 'war-correspondent' for THE OSTOPATH is on the bridge of HMS Chatham, an impressive type 22 frigate, as she twists and turns, all hands ready at battle stations, watching for incoming 'enemy' jet fighters. The young woman officer running the bridge barks an order and the ship leans hard to port as we try and get ourselves in the best position to bring our own weapons to bear and remain a difficult target. There is a further flurry of activity, a young lookout, covered from head to toe in white anti-flash gear, no sooner has visual contact through his enormous binoculars with the incoming "enemy" jet, than it is streaking noisily very close overhead and away.



I am not sure who came out best in that encounter, but to get these complex ships and their crews able to work as a well-oiled team under any circumstances takes endless practice. If it's Thursday in

Plymouth for the Royal Navy, it is war day. This means that both the Royal Navy, and any of the other dozens of navy's from around the world that come to Plymouth for our superlative training skills, will be out in force putting these, mostly young people and their fearsome machines, through their paces.

If you ever wonder where it is your taxes go, and who is willing to spend long period away from their families at sea to defend you, seeing them in action

is an interesting, sobering and mostly encouraging experience. The discussion about the morality of defence forces is for somewhere else, what struck me from my day with the Navy and the Marines, was the esprit de corps that was notable throughout all ranks. Of course with visitors on board, everyone is on their best behaviour, but, even allowing for this effect, there was an impressive feeling of pride, real enthusiasm for the remarkable variety of the jobs on offer and a unity in the whole ships company. Cue new literal insights by your correspondent, of old sayings about us, all being 'in the same boat'.

Next time you bemoan the long journey to a conference think of those sailors. True they certainly have an awe inspiring amount of extraordinary kit to play with, but be glad that the occupational risks involved in Osteopathy are so minimal and we don't have to spend months away living in a bunk tucked into a tiny corner of our office as it rolls sickeningly from side to side or worse gets shot at.

As the son of a master mariner twice torpedoed in the Atlantic during the war, it was fascinating to see the modern navy in action and notice how some things stay the same and so many others, of course, have changed, largely for the better.



Back in the practice, I am still happy to do what I do. All those wonderful boys' toys apart, I am not too envious of the navy. Rather full of admiration with my abiding impression from my day with the Royal Navy and Marines focusing on their impressive cheerful enthusiasm for the job and the sheer range and variety of interesting jobs at sea and

ashore, for both sexes, the twenty-first century royal navy offers.