



Medusa Christmas 2021 Newsletter.

At the start of the year things did not look good, COVID running wild, lockdowns and limited access to Medusa did not bode well for this year. Last year was not good for us financially; we posted a loss for the first time in over two decades and had to dip into our reserves to the tune of £10K. Fortunately, the proceeds of the Dunkirk film, which were set aside for a rainy day, covered the deficit leaving us in better shape than many similar organisations. Before too many years pass, we will have to do a major overhaul on our engines and aim to boost our reserve to cover that.

Though the marina was closed to all but marina staff with no access to vessels, Medusa was treated as a special case so Chris Harman and Mick Draper, who are in walking distance, were allowed in and did a great job keeping everything in order.

Once we had access again, there were plenty of maintenance jobs to be done. Over the winter, Robin Hooper made new depth charge racks and I made a depth charges in wood from which a mould was cast and the depth charges made in glass reinforced plastic. The result is so real looking, although two thirds scale size, that we will mark them as "Inert" in case we lose one over the side.



New depth charge racks

A great team effort meant that very few jobs from our winter list were still to be done. As ever, the engineers did a great job keeping our 80 year old engines on to form.

Another task that has been in train for a while was an overhaul of Medusa's website. It became more pressing when we had a mention on CNN resulting in a huge number of people looking at our website and causing our traffic allowance to be exceeded. Under such circumstances I would have expected the company we use to host, Plusnet, to spot a commercial opportunity and offer us more capacity for more money. Instead, they took our website down and replaced it with a page saying we had been closed down to "due to abuse". A very stiff e-mail to the chief exec's personal account soon reversed that but it was time for a change. We now have a new website on a new host and the improvement is stunning. Many thanks to Cindy at Prickly Pear for a great deal of work redoing the whole site. If you have not looked recently, visit www.hmsmedusa.org.uk.

From a gloomy start, things started to improve, and we were able to take Medusa out for a leg stretch in May with two day trips. We attracted the usual level of attention from the public but, for safety, did not accept on board visits. On one of these we had the company of Shan Merritt whose father was the skipper of ML1392 in WW2. ML1392 now belongs to a couple who are restoring her on the River Dee at Heswall; you can follow their adventures on Youtube under "Ship Happens".



Shan on the helm

Normally June would have seen us crossing the Channel to Normandy for the D Day commemoration, but this was cancelled for the second year. Even if it had not, it's unlikely we would have gone as it would have put the crew at too much risk. Instead, we had a day at sea, visiting Chichester harbour before going to the heritage pontoon by HMS Warrior to join their D Day event which, in the end, was pretty low key. For the sea day we had the company of Simon and Gemma Robins, the owners of ML1392 Sarinda, who got to experience an HDML at sea.



Simon and Gemma at the business end of Medusa.

Easily the high point of the year was the trip, starting 1 July, to Plymouth to join the RN Coastal Forces Squadron for SQUADEX21. Day one was a gentle passage to Yarmouth in beautiful weather culminating in “sundowners” on deck.



A glass or two and a few dits, does not get any better.

Day two took us to Weymouth, always a favourite, where we berthed just outside the harbour master’s office. The port was surprisingly busy; the berth was tight getting in but we were soon boxed in by a raft of sailing boats. Fortunately, most sailed before we did.



Medusa in a busy Weymouth.

Next stop was Dartmouth and a berth behind the town quay as the RN berth at Sandquay is out of use. While there we had a visit, in full regalia, by the padre from the RN college. I was tempted to pass the word that it was church parade but the replies might have been embarrassing.

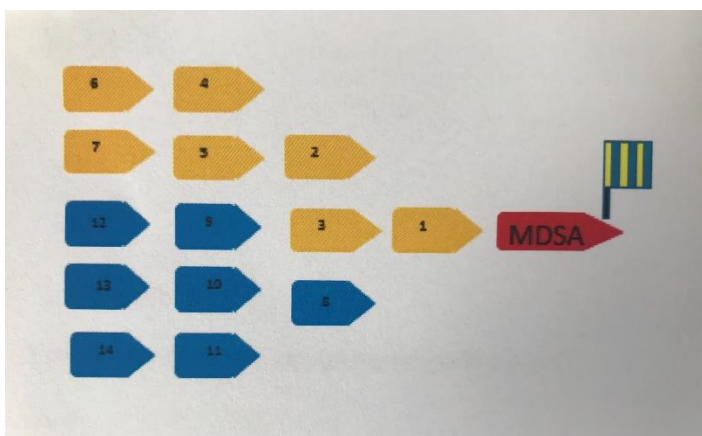


Dartmouth always makes us welcome.



Alongside in Dartmouth

From Dartmouth it was a short hop to Plymouth still in fine weather. We ran close in along Slapton Sands and remembered that Medusa was there in May 1944. The Naval Base at Plymouth was still under tight COVID restrictions so we berthed at Mayflower Marina right at the outer end of the breakwater. The weather changed and we were out in a fairly exposed position. The poor weather put SQUADDEX at risk but, on the day, the wind, though still fresh from the SW, was dropping. It was quite lumpy outside the harbour, and we were glad to reach our first waypoint where we turned to put the sea more or less astern. The motion was comfortable, but the helmsman had to work hard to keep on anything like a straight course. We had been watching the squadron of 14 vessels coming out of harbour; we raised out G flag (flown by the leader) and they formed up behind us making a great sight.



Medusa as lead vessel of the squadron.



The view astern

We steamed in formation until abeam Salcombe at which point they broke away to do some high speed manoeuvres and we continued to Dartmouth. Our involvement was a lot shorter than the usual SQUADDEX but we got a great write up in Navy News.

[Big workout for small ships as Coastal Forces flex muscles off the Devon coast \(mod.uk\)](https://www.mod.uk/newsroom/news/big-workout-for-small-ships-as-coastal-forces-flex-muscles-off-the-devon-coast)

From Dartmouth we made passage to Portland, meeting up with the new Royal navy autonomous vessel, MAD FOX for a “new and old” photo opportunity.



Mad Fox, the experimental autonomous vessel

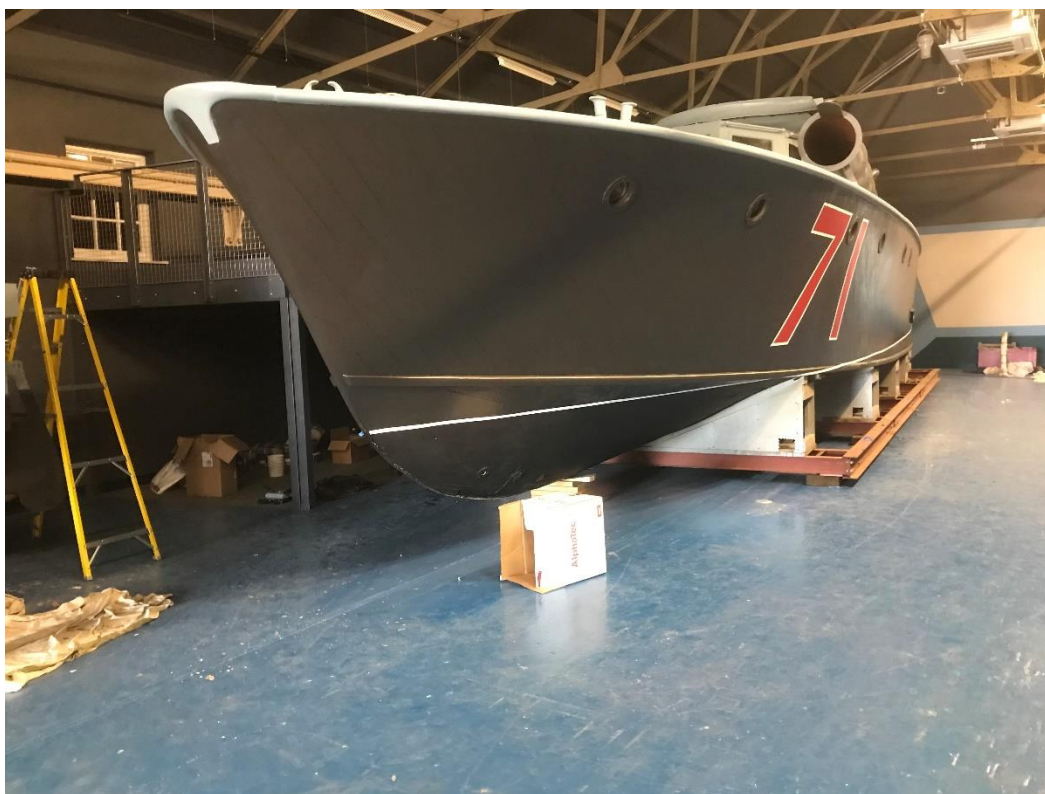
We were all made welcome for a curry supper at Mike and Pam’s home atop Portland. The final passage took us back to Haslar arriving on the 10th.

An exciting development this year, related to Medusa, has been the construction of a new Coastal forces museum at Priddy's Hard. As well as two vessels (MTB71 and CMB331) there are lots of artefacts to support the story of Coastal Forces from its inception in 1919 to the present day. Part of this is audio visual content to make the whole thing alive and interesting. Two of the audio visual programmes are the WW1 and WW2 histories while the third was planned to be the re-creation of a night attack on a German convoy by British motor torpedo boats. All the close-up shots were done on Medusa and the distant shots used MGB81. The captain of the MTB was played by Steve Fisher, a naval historian, making an acting debut with the cox'n played by Peter Scott, a Coastal Forces enthusiast from Liverpool. Much of the close-up work was done while attached to one of the big yellow buoys in Fareham Creek with the underway stuff done off Hayling Island where there was little other traffic. The only complicated bit was explaining to the Coastguard that we would be using smoke effects and would not actually be on fire. With the wonders of post-production the whole thing is very realistic and worth going to the museum to see this alone.



Our involvement with the new museum did not end there; a team from Medusa painted 71 and 331 in a record three days, somewhat better than the scheduled six weeks. The work of the Medusa team has been acknowledged on the honours board just inside the museum. By the time you get this newsletter, a new Coastal Forces Trust website should be on line complete with a video showing the making of the museum including the Medusa painters....worth a look.

Coastal Forces Heritage Trust www.coastal-forces.org.uk



[The Night Hunters: The Royal Navy's Coastal Forces at War | National Museum of the Royal Navy \(nmrn.org.uk\)](http://nmrn.org.uk)

What should have been busy and profitable open days at the Haslar Marina Festival and a long weekend at Bucklers Hard were muted as we still could not do anything but limited top deck tours. It did get us back into the art of talking to the public again.

The next trip on September 21 was to Warsash to pick up the family of Peter White (trustee of Warsash Sea Cadets) and take them and his ashes to sea to be scattered. At their request I read the service with Medusa stationary, ensign at half mast and the church pennant raised.

The following week we did our one charter day of the year taking a group to Cowes for lunch.

On 25th September, we went round to Lee on Solent in company with MGB81 and HSL102 to the Lee victory festival. The plan was that we would patrol up and down a line about 300 yards off the shore and a Spitfire would do a display and a low pass above us. Sadly, the cloud base was too low for the Spitfire to fly but the three boats put on a little impromptu show instead.



The three vessels off Lee on Solent.

Our final trip of the year was to support the opening of the Coastal Forces museum. We went over to the pontoon by Warrior and embarked a group of press and TV reporters. We then left harbour in line ahead, Medusa leading, with MGB81, PUNCHER and SCHIMITAR. Once past Spitbank fort we did a 90 degree turn to starboard, transitioning to line abeam. In turn, the others did a loop and fast pass before looping round and taking up station again. Pictures were used in the press and Meridian did a very good piece.

[The incredible story of the small wooden boats referred to as the 'Spitfires of the Sea' | ITV News Meridian](#)

After missing out last year, we were able to have our Trafalgar Night dinner on board the Mary Mouse. We were the final customers as she closed that night, with, as I write, an uncertain future.

It always amazes me that that bits of Medusa's history continue to surface. I was sent a film clip of her entering Lowestoft harbour in 1959;; I will add it to the website over the winter. Here is the link:

<https://youtu.be/o8IYuqM-iQc>

This year has seen two new trustees appointed for Medusa. The Trust is the legal owner of Medusa and is responsible for major fundraising as well as holding all the legal liabilities to ensure that none fall on support group members. The first to be appointed is Julian James who joined us in January and then Mary Montagu-Scott who joined in June.

A press article from last year describes Julian...

"Sompo International Holdings Ltd., a Bermuda-based specialty provider of property and casualty insurance and reinsurance, announced today that Mr. Julian James will soon join the organization to lead the London market and International insurance platforms. Mr. James joins Sompo International with extensive global insurance experience that spans almost four decades. Most recently, Mr. James held several leadership positions in the London market, including President of Allied World's Global

Markets, CEO of the Allied World Managing Agency at Lloyd's. Before that, he was CEO of Lockton International, where he also served as Chairman of the Board of the International Group and CEO of the UK-regulated entity. In addition, he served on the Council of Lloyd's up until January 2019. Currently he is a member of the Lloyd's Market Supervision and Review Committee. Prior to the Council of Lloyd's, Mr. James began his career in broking at Sedgwick and Marsh in 1981 before joining Lloyd's of London in 1997, where he led the market's international network. During this time, he was responsible for growing the Lloyd's presence in key global markets as well as managing high-level strategic relationships with brokers around the world."

Julian brings a wealth of experience in finance and insurance as well as extensive contacts in the City, vitally important for fundraising. He is also a keen sailor, owning a stunning Oyster yacht.

The second new trustee, Mary Montagu-Scott is already well known to us all from visits to Bucklers Hard. She also brings a wealth of knowledge in charity, business and fundraising as well as being a keen sailor and maritime enthusiast.

Wikipedia tells all....

Mary Montagu-Scott trained in Theatre Design at the [Central School of Art and Design](#), London. She set up Mary Montagu Designs, an interior design business working on many residential and commercial design projects.

She is the chairman of New Forest Ninth Centenary Trust, which runs the New Forest Heritage Centre, a trustee of the [National Motor Museum Trust](#), and a trustee of The National Museum of the Royal Navy

She is currently the director of Beaulieu Enterprises Ltd, Beaulieu.

From April 2017 until April 2018, she served as [High Sheriff of Hampshire](#).

She became a Deputy Lieutenant of Hampshire in 2018



Mary on board Medusa in September at Bucklers Hard

Usually, we take Medusa to HMS Hornet for Remembrance, but still being careful, decided not to this year and, instead a group went round and attended the service. For once the weather was kind and the service well attended. Richard Hobbs, Tim Hamlin and I laid wreaths.

A late request came from a former Coastal Forces squadron C/O, now navigating officer on HMS LANCASTER. On Dec 7 there was to be the handover from the existing captain to the new and they asked us to take off the outgoing from LANCASTER and then steam slowly by while they “cheered ship”. Unfortunately, 1000 Dec 7 was the exact moment that storm Barra hit Portsmouth with 40 knot winds from the South so the evolution was cancelled. The storm was pretty lively, and I was glad Medusa was tucked up in a sheltered berth and came to no harm.

Thursday Dec 9 saw HMS QUEEN ELIZABETH return to harbour. From our berth we had a ringside view and greeted her with the appropriate flags. A welcoming toot was tempting but the people on the quay ahead of us would not have appreciated it.



HMS Queen Elizabeth entering harbour, BZ from Medusa.

Thoughts are turning to the 2022 season. Our lift out is booked for 28 March for one week. Much after that will depend on the COVID situation but Channel Islands in early May for their liberation is possible. We have been invited to Normandy for D Day commemoration, but whether we can go is uncertain at present and it may be that there are events this side of the channel with the Platinum Jubilee from 3 to 6 June. In any event we will do something as our long deployment the first two weeks of June. We have other events to fit in including some corporate days, cadet trips and port visits so we will be busy.

Overall, we have made the best of a year that could have been like 2020 and, financially, we have broken even and not needed to dip further into our reserves.

It only remains for me to thank, on behalf of the trustees, everyone who has helped Medusa in any way this year and to wish you all a peaceful Christmas and Happy new Year.

Alan