

From The Bridge



Mystery Photo



Well, I guess we have to talk about it...COVID-19, that is. It was tempting to avoid it, as it is almost the only topic of discussion these days. A focus on ship models would be a relief. But as it is affecting our ability to carry on as usual, it must be addressed.

In my first letter from the pilothouse, I mentioned that I would soon be leaving for a family trip to Portugal and Spain. The order banning foreign nationals from entering the country would not prevent us from returning, so until just a few days before departure my family and I were contemplating forging ahead with our plans. Thankfully, we decided to cancel the trip. If the order regarding foreign nationals would not prevent us from returning, the fact that our return flight from Lisbon was ultimately cancelled would certainly have made it tricky. And just 2 days past our scheduled return, Spain barely lags Italy in total deaths from the disease, and has the highest rate of cases and deaths per capita, excluding a handful of very small countries.

I thought Spain might reach this stage, but believed it would take many more weeks before it did. The same here at home. As I write this, our area now has ~450 cases. It is best we stay apart for the time being, and the order from the governor mandates it. Email notifications have already gone out informing the membership that the April meeting has been cancelled, as was the past March meeting. It is likely that May, and perhaps even June will be the same. We are all cut off from our friends and other social outlets. This affects some more than others, but ultimately we'll all feel it to one degree or another. My sister, for instance, has already gone certifiably stir-crazy. She is a very social creature. We had an online video chat with my parents, and she wrote later that it was a great relief to her. Many of our members may be suffering from cabin fever as well, so (at the suggestion of Mr. Berger), we will attempt to have an informal online meeting of our own, at our regular meeting date and time. We have members in far-flung places such as Pennsylvania and Louisiana. Hopefully one or more of them will take the opportunity to join! I'll send out instructions via email.

This is also affecting our finances, again, to one degree or another. My dear sister, as an example once more, is particularly hard-hit. As a musician, her livelihood depends on public performances. I can easily work from home, and I've been putting in more hours than usual, rather than less. As for the rest of you, I sincerely hope you have not been significantly impacted

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Mystery Photo #405: This is not the best of times. This is not the worst of times, but it's not real good either...No meeting. No Museum. No minutes. No Mystery. Wait, no Mystery? We gotta have a Mystery! Without the Mystery, the Logbook would be the Lognote! We need the nice, lengthy Mystery Photo essay to help transport the inflamed ship modeler to a better place during these troubled times. Since the Skipper cancelled the meeting and the Editor still promised a Logbook, by gosh we'll have a Mystery. At this we shall not fail. Sheltering in place while social distancing requires a good read—something to pass the time and stoke the model making passion. You need to get your mind off the numbers, the wait times, and the media circus. Here is an opportunity to go off-line for a bit. Print the logbook and read it in the library. There you'll have an opportunity to properly prepare that precious print paper for its next mission. I hope we don't disappoint.

This month's Mystery Photo offers a glimpse into a turbulent time in the evolution of the warship. It was an era of rapid change for the seafaring community. A time when everything known about warships, ship handling, the navy, and the seaman's art of war was a changing. It was the time of the great changeovers: when wood changed to iron and steel, sail changed to steam, mechanical engines were replacing human power for routine ship's services, scientific advances were changing and improving all aspects of life at sea, and the idea of closing to board the enemy was quickly becoming passé. It was a time filled with competing naval bureaucratic priorities and bureaucratic thought. Strong wills and egos came into play. And this confusion drove ship design to some interesting places.

Let's take a hard look at the photograph. We see a monitor-ish looking vessel at rest in calm waters on a slightly overcast day—perfect for photography. Her hull is dark, probably black, and it's topped by a white painted citadel carrying the boat deck, bridge, a forest of ventilators, and two, buff colored

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MEETING NOTICE

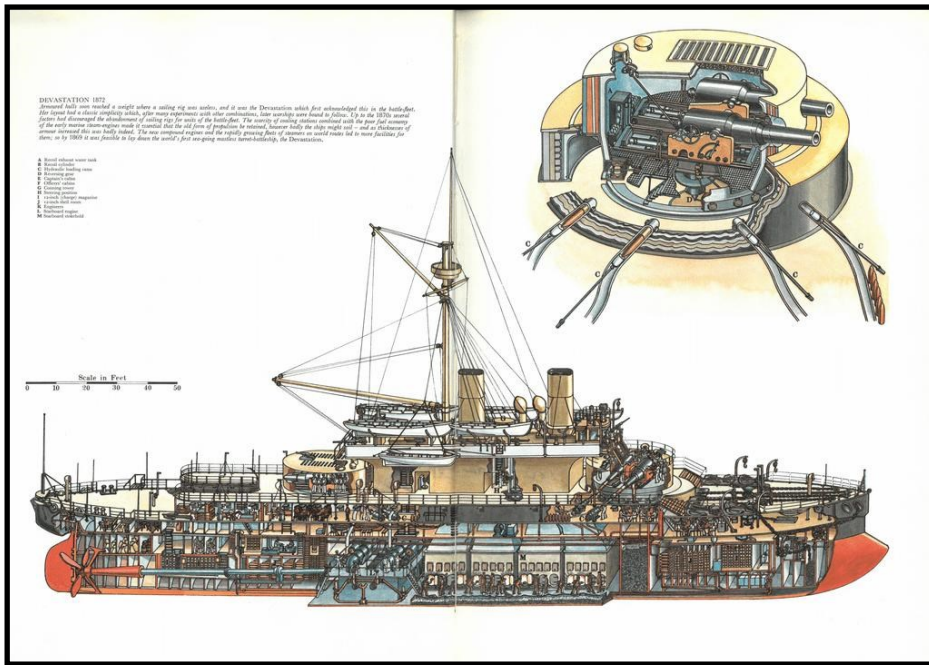
The April Meeting
Has Been Canceled



(Continued from page 1)

masts, and two black(?) stacks. The lack of defined shadows, and the brightness of the image, might put the time of day at about noon—hard to say. The citadel itself seems to sit on a semi-raised deck that is about a half deck higher than the forecastle and poop—odd arrangement, indeed! At each end of this citadel we see large, white, enclosed turrets.

The visible one carries two guns. The turrets look to be round in the plan view, very similar to the round turret of Monitor fame. Her anchors and handling gear and their arrangement are old fashioned. And she does appear to carry the poles and rigging for anti-torpedo nets.



For a monitor-ish looking vessel, she does not look like she belongs to the United States Navy. US Navy monitors perhaps held the record for low freeboard—maybe never more than two feet. This vessel seems to have no less than six feet of freeboard at the bow and stern and plenty more amidships. The ship appears to be European, or more likely, British in origin—she just has that look about her. More British or course since I don't think the anti-torpedo netting booms that the British were so fond of ever made it across to this side of the pond. So we'll go with "British" and look there for the usual suspects.

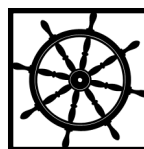
I have two good books in my library that describe the tumultuous ship design period from, say 1865 to the advent of the all big-gun Dreadnaught in 1906. In it you can read where engineers, and designers, and inventors, and scientists, and politicians were all juggling with new and old technology, norms, and mores to try and devise the next generation warships. Their impetus came from competing camps. One continent was producing "ship looking" vessels like the Warrior and the Gloire which were ironclad wooden ships arranged and intended to be fought more in the manner of the time. While on this side of the pond a battle happened in 1862 between two ironclads that forced a good look into a detour from that paradigm.

Those ironclads were the now famous Virginia and Monitor. While Virginia's armament was arranged similar to European thinking, her appearance was not "European" because she had low freeboard, sloping armored sides, and discarded all masting and sails. Monitor was revolutionary in that not only did it discard the masts and sails, she discarded the casemate arrangement of her weaponry. Monitor introduced the revolving central turret. And that revolving turret is what is key to our Mystery.

The two books I mentioned earlier are both British in origin and deal with warship development in the Royal Navy. Development that led to the familiar, modern day battleship. But designers and users of these ships had to get from the sailing frigates and ship-of-the-line mindset of 1800 to the all-big-gun concept somehow. The story is explained in Donald K. Brown's *Warrior to Dreadnaught: Warship Design and Development 1860-1905* and John F. Beeler's *Birth of the battleship*. These authors document 50 years development, trial and error, leading edge technology, and warfighting doctrine. To be kind, it would be fair to say that some

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by this. Let us know how you are doing! I trust there has been little to no impact on the high percentage of our group enjoying their retirement years.

A few parting shots:

- 1) Our April meeting was to be our auction. We will work with Tony to secure another date once the coast is clear. John and I, and perhaps others, need to clear out the items we are holding. It gives the rest of you more time to go through your things for unwanted items that someone else may desire.
- 2) My hope is that we find a new date for the banquet, rather than cancelling it. Until things settle down, that remains tabled
- 3) The votes are in for the Founders' Award, but for now you will have to wait. Unless we decide to cancel the banquet, the presentation will be made then, as it is usually done. If a decision is made to not reschedule, we will announce the recipient at the next meeting held in person.

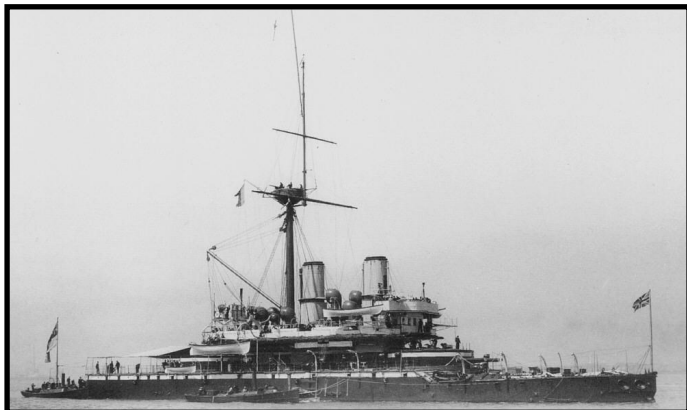
Greg

2020 Dues
are now due

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of the ship designs from that time weren't too purty. Some of what they tried will leave you with a big question mark hanging over your head. And some of what they did made sense and showed the true path forward. One of the interesting things about following this design evolution is you only really need to follow one navy. There was so much copy catting going on that all navies advanced and evolved at about the same rate with very similar equipment. And in the bigger scheme of things, they kind of all resembled each other.



HMS Devastation Circa 1896

The vessel in our Mystery Photo is a product of that gestation period. As a product of about 1870, the class she belongs to consisted of two well built, steam driven iron hulls carrying massive, for the time, muzzle loading manually operated rifles—sort of an anachronistic pairing, but normal for emerging technologies maturing at differing rates. And to reflect the unique nature of their design the Royal Navy designated them as “Turret ships”.

A fact that Dave Baker cites with his reply. “

This month's mystery ship is the Royal Navy's turret battleship HMS THUNDERER which, during her 1877 [refit] received experimental torpedo net booms.” There were two ships in the class: Devastation and Thunderer. And that's how the vote was split. Tim Wood also voted and cast his choice for HMS Devastation. Nearly identical images of these vessels can be found on line, and they are dated one year apart: Devastation in 1871 and Thunderer in 1872. These two images show ships that are very similar in appearance. But, aside from their different liveries, Thunderer carried a foremast making her the dead ringer to what we see in our Mystery. We can see from Dave's reply that the on-line photo caption for Thunderer is about five years off the mark. But more to Dave's point, it misses the mark by about 20 years. “A very similar photo of the ship dated as taken during April 1991 after the completion of a major refit begun in 1897. The photo appears on pg. 128 of Norman Friedman's recent book British Battleships of the Victorian Era.”

They were not the first British built Turret ships and they were not the last. But they show a step in the evolutionary scale for their type of warship. Being evolutionary they offered a series of “Firsts” for the Royal Navy! They were the “first class of ocean-going capital ship that did not carry sails, and the first whose entire main armament was mounted on top of the hull rather than inside it.” They also were “the first turret ship [class] built to an Admiralty design.”

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AMERICAN NAVAL HISTORY

1829

March 9: John Branch enters office as 8th secretary of the navy.

June 4: The navy's 1st steamship, the Fulton, built during the War of 1812, blows up at Brooklyn, killing 24 persons and injuring 9.

August 16: The sloop Hornet, another veteran of the War of 1812, sails from Pensacola, Florida, and disappears. She probably went down in a storm off Tampico, Mexico on September 10.

1830

December 6: The depot of Charts and Instruments, later named the Naval Observatory, is established at Washington, D.C., under the command of Louis M. Goldsborough.

1831

May 23: Levi Woodbury assumes office as 9th secretary of the navy.

August 28: The frigate Potomac sails from Sandy Hook for the East Indies to protect American commerce from the Sumatran pirates.

1831 Ends with no further actions.

Bob Moritz

“A ship is always referred to as “she” because it costs so much to keep one in paint and powder.” » Chester Nimitz

THE ANSWER
The answer to Mystery Photo 405
HMS Thunderer
Circa 1896—1897

Nautical Term
. Dodger In modern parlance, any of several devices, usually of cloth, to protect the sailor from wind and spray, in large vessels and small. The word itself comes from Scottish dodd, dodge, and was seen in the XVI century.
Tim Wood

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Their immediate predecessors were similar in design and appearance but were called breastwork monitors. This type of monitor was an improvement of the traditional low freeboard style American monitor. Low freeboard was considered a liability to European monitors due to the more weathery seas they operated in. The ever-present danger of swamping limited their usefulness. In order to make monitors more seaworthy and to reduce the risk of flooding and loss, the British designed a low, armored structure that sat on the main deck and offered ballistic as well as seakeeping protection. This was known as the armored breastwork. The ship in our Mystery has that feature and it explains the unusual sheer.

More about Thunderer and the class design from Wikipedia:

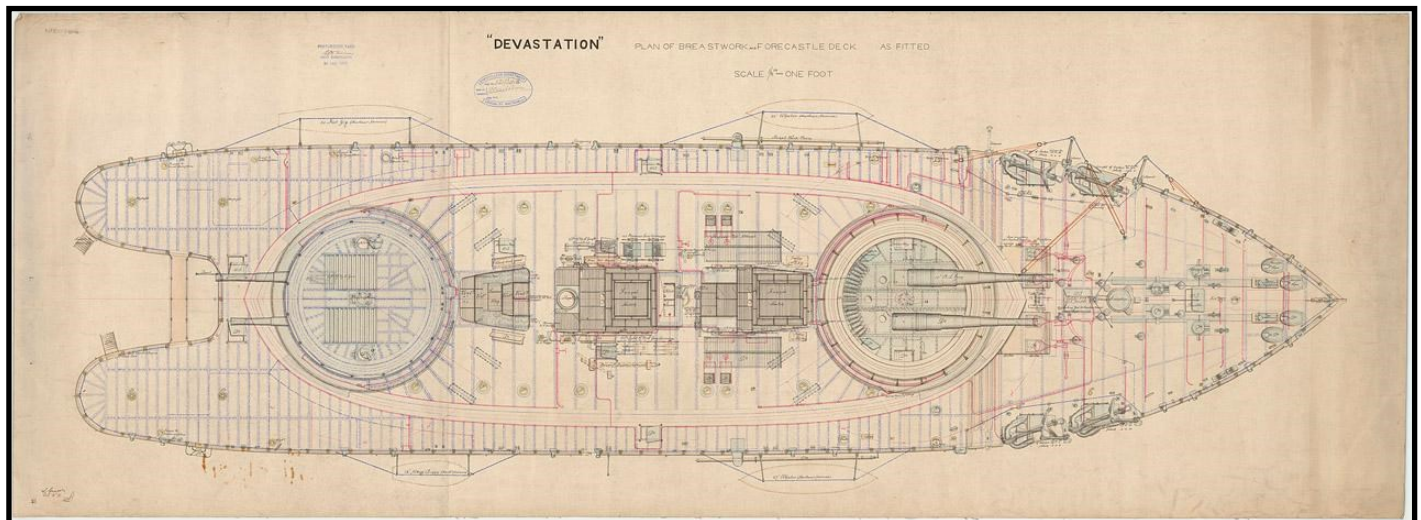
“Thunderer, the fifth ship of her name to serve in the Royal Navy, was laid down on 26 June 1869 at Pembroke Dockyard, Wales. Construction was subsequently halted for a time in 1871 to modify the ship to improve her stability and buoyancy by extending the breastwork to cover the full width of the hull which increased the ship's freeboard amidships and pro-

vided additional accommodation for the crew. The ship was launched on 25 March 1872 by Mrs. Mary Meyrick, wife of Thomas Meyrick, MP. Two years later she was transferred to Portsmouth Dockyard to finish fitting out.

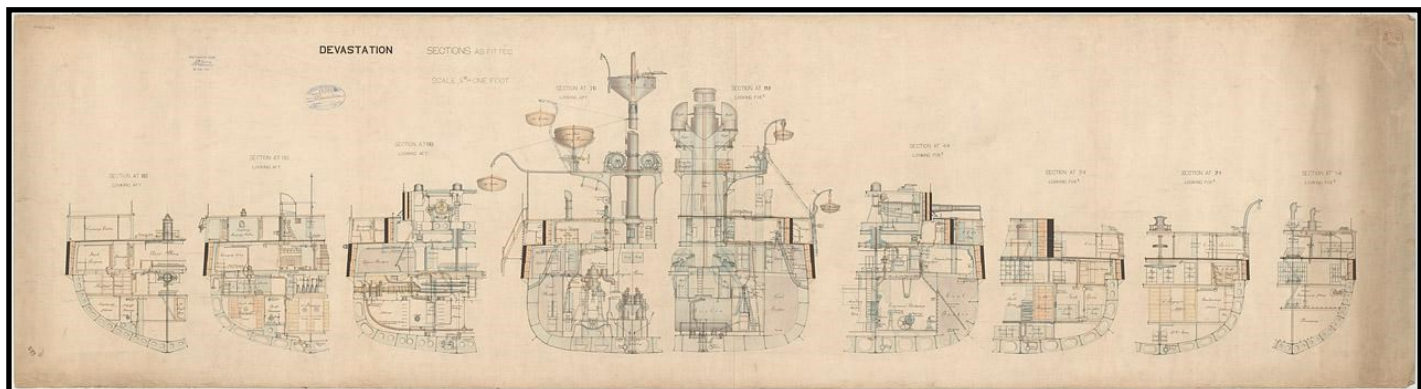
The Devastation class was designed as an enlarged, ocean-going, version of the earlier Cerberus-class breastwork monitor. The ships had a length between perpendiculars of 285 feet (86.9 m) and were 307 feet (93.6 m) long overall. They had a beam of 62 feet 3 inches (19.0 m), and a draught of 26 feet 8 inches (8.1 m). The Devastation-class ships displaced 9,330 long tons (9,480 t). Their crew consisted of 358 officers and ratings. They proved to be steady gun platforms and good sea-boats, albeit quite wet forward. Their low forecastle caused them problems with head seas and limited their speed in such conditions.

The Devastation class was armed with four RML 12-inch (305 mm) rifled muzzle-loading guns, one pair in each of the gun turrets positioned fore and aft of the superstructure. Shortly after completion, Thunderer's forward turret's weapons were replaced by more powerful RML 12.5-inch (318 mm) guns.

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HMS Devastation, Plan of Breastwork and Forecastle Deck



HMS Devastation, Sections

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While both gun turrets were rotated by steam power, the new forward guns were loaded by hydraulic power, unlike the original guns which were hand worked. Thunderer was the first ship to have hydraulic loading gear. From 1874, the forward turret alone was converted to hydraulic power operation for training (turret traverse), elevation and ramming. This allowed the turret crew to be reduced from 48 to 28; the aft turret remaining hand-worked as a comparison. Power operation was considered successful, although it was later implicated in the 1879 explosion.

The Devastation-class ships had a complete wrought iron waterline armour belt that was 12 inches thick amidships and tapered to 9 inches (229 mm) outside the armoured citadel towards the ends of the ship. The armour plates were tapered to

Thunderer was not a lucky ship, she had two terrible accidents during her career. In "July 1876, [she] suffered a disastrous boiler explosion which killed 45 people." Followed "in January 1879, when the left 12-inch 38 ton gun in the forward turret exploded during gunnery practice in the Sea of Marmora, killing 11 and injuring a further 35. The muzzle-loading gun had been double-loaded following a misfire." Two serious accidents within her first decade gained her the "reputation as an unlucky ship."

Following repairs she was in and out of service to allow for upgrades and overhaul. While in service she often served in the Mediterranean Fleet. She finally returned to Chatham in September 1892 due to persistent boiler problems. There, "she was reduced to the Chatham reserve. Thunderer became the guard ship at Pembroke Dock in May 1895 and remained there until she returned to the Chatham reserve in December 1900. The ship was refitted there as an emergency ship in 1902, but

was taken out of service five years later. Thunderer was sold for scrap for £19,500 on 13 September 1909."

From the time of her build until her demise the Royal Navy built and additional 40 ships along this same concept. Each succeeding class being larger and more capable. They were designated in various ways, beginning with Ironclad and ending with First Class Battleship. With the advent of the all-big-gun Dreadnaught, they became collectively known as pre-dreadnaughts.

In today's world we might see them as oddities and not very capable. In their day they were the shining stars of the fleet and represented the best that money, brawn, and brains could produce in their environment. As for Thunderer? "Rear-Admiral John Wilson, a former captain of the ship, stated in a meet-

ing of the Royal United Services Institute discussing the most acceptable types of battleship in 1884, "I also agree with my friend Captain Colomb that we have no type of ship to my fancy equal to the Dreadnought or the good old Thunderer. Give me the Thunderer, the hull of the Thunderer; she had bad engines, she was not arranged as I would like inside, she was badly gunned as we all know, and she had not enough light gun or sufficient armaments; but she carried 1,750 long tons (1,780 t) of coal, could steam at 10 knots from here to the Cape, and could fight any ship of her class on the salt water."

John Cheevers



John Hollis launching his 1:48th Victorian battleship HMS Devastation

a thickness of 10–8.5 inches (254–216 mm) at their bottom edges respectively and they extended from the upper deck to 5 feet 9 inches (1.8 m) below the waterline. The armoured citadel protected the bases of the gun turrets, the funnel uptakes and the crew's quarters. The sides of the citadel were 12 inches thick around the bases of the turrets and 10 inches thick elsewhere. The turrets were protected by two 7–6-inch (178–152 mm) plates, separated by a layer of teak with the turret face having the thicker armour. The magazine were protected by a 6-inch forward bulkhead and a 5-inch (127 mm) one aft. The conning tower ranged in thickness from 9 to 6 inches in thickness. The ships had a complete 3-inch (76 mm) upper deck that was reinforced by another 2-inch (51 mm) thick inside the citadel."



Mystery Photo

Contact John Cheevers by mail or e-mail if you know what it is. jfcheevers@verizon.net

NOTABLE EVENTS

APRIL

- 11 HRSMS Monthly Meeting: Cancelled

MAY

- 9 HRSMS Monthly Meeting: Mariners' Museum

JUNE

- 13 HRSMS Monthly Meeting: Mariners' Museum

JULY

- 11 HRSMS Monthly Meeting: Mariners' Museum
Presentation: TBA

AUGUST

- 8 HRSMS Monthly Meeting: Mariners' Museum
Presentation, TBA

SEPTEMBER

- 12 HRSMS Monthly Meeting
Picnic, Newport News Park
19 Talk Like a Pirate Day

OCTOBER

- 10 HRSMS Monthly Meeting: Mariners' Museum
Presentation, TBA

NOVEMBER

- 14 HRSMS Monthly Meeting: Mariners' Museum
Presentation,

DECEMBER

- 9 HRSMS Monthly Meeting: Mariners' Museum
Presentation:

JANUARY

- 9 HRSMS Monthly Meeting: Mariners' Museum
Nomination of officers

FEBRUARY

- 13 HRSMS Monthly Meeting: Mariners' Museum

MARCH

- 13 HRSMS Monthly Meeting;

MINUTES



The March HRSMS meeting was cancelled.

**Send photos of your current project
to the Logbook editor for inclusion in
the May Logbook.**

tesaunders@verizon.net



Photo shows the six masted schooner
Eleanor A. Percy at the
N. & W. coal piers, Norfolk, Va., circa 1905.

WATCH, QUARTER AND STATION BILL



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Presenters Needed

If you are willing to give a presentation at a meeting,
contact Tony Clayton.