

## From The Bridge



## Mystery Photo



I loathed research when I was a student. The main issue was how hard it was to judge the contents of a book from the sparse notes in the card catalog (hey kids, know what those were?). After gathering tentative leads, half of the books would be checked out, on the wrong shelf, or AWOL. A large fraction of what was on hand turned out to be dead ends. I found it extremely tiresome. So imagine how surprised I am to be enjoying my current research project so much! Of course it is a lot less tiresome in the digital age. A web search summary contains much more detail than would fit on a catalog's 3"x5" card (meaning fewer dead ends) and nothing is checked out, on the wrong shelf, etc. Best of all, I can do it all without moving my lazy "gat" from my chair.

Part of my research is translating a paper from Danish to English, with a huge assist from Google Translate, Google Images, and three Danish online dictionaries (modern, period 1700-1950, and nautical). It may sound tedious, but I've found it quite mentally stimulating. Google Translate does the heavy lifting, but there is a lot that needs correcting. Image searches help with nouns. I can use Google Translate for a dictionary's definition instead of for the word directly. It feels like I'm "sleuthing" or doing a puzzle. I'm still in the middle of it, but so far I've learned that if I build my model as authentically as possible, I get to eat pancakes and drink rum punch, but the final result might be deadly. I also learned that sailors are foul-mouthed and love claiming 'right of way'... but I guess that's not news. Intrigued? Read on.

The boat I am researching is De 13 Søsken (The 13 Siblings), an åledrivråser (eel drifter), which is a Danish sailing trawler with a fish well. She had a jib boom and a drift

*(Continued on page 2)*

Mystery Photo # 416: Here in the South we like a good turn of phrase. We like to say "it's raining on the road" when it's raining. We like to say "cash money" when we have money—must have something to do with bartering. And we'll politely ask if "you can't run with the big dogs, stay under the porch." It is here in the South where you find that a "Carolina boxing glove" is a good old pocket knife. And it's only in the South where something can be "cut half in two." Someone once told me that "she didn't take me to raise." I was disappointed, I thought I'd missed out on a trip to Ray's—it was a local oyster bar. All of these phrases, and more, are nice to know and using them will help you fit in. But when it comes to ugly and a chance you might not fit in, you could hear: "if my dog was that ugly, I'd shave its butt and teach it to walk backwards." Apparently you cannot "put lipstick on a pig" and hope for a better outcome.

So before you think "that dog won't hunt", perhaps an explanation of how this relates to the Mystery Photo is in order. We had two replies: one with all the technical and Wikipedia data on the vessel, and one that concluded its first paragraph with the phrase: "What a hideous object!" While not a very good "southern" turn of phrase, it is one that certainly fits this Mystery Photo. If you're like me, my first impression of this month's offering was we were seeing a bit of burned out wreck. Once I realized that there was some "way on" I knew that a closer look was necessary. So let's see if "hanging a pork chop around its neck so at least the dog would play with him" is in order.

The photograph, dark and shadowy and not of very good quality, shows a pitch decked barge of some sort barely making headway. With the shadows coming toward the photographer, you can see why the subject is so dark. In the center of the barge we see a large, twin rifle turret sitting atop a flare-

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## Dues

2021 dues are now payable.

Remit to:

HRMS  
 c/o Ryland Craze  
 5708 Oak Knoll Lane  
 Midlothian, VA 23112-2405

## MEETING NOTICE

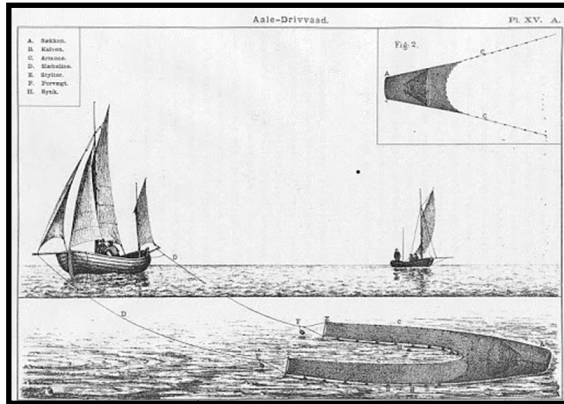
**The March meeting will take place online.**

**1000 Hours**

**March 13, 2021**

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boom (a spar sticking out her “gat”). She would heave-to, pull up her centerboard, and drift sideways, dragging a seine net attached to the ends of the fore and aft spars. The net would be set to starboard so that while dragging they would be on the starboard tack and not have to give way (note the illustrator made a mistake, as it is set to port).



Danish eel drifter

The boats were built with lapstrake hulls, and it was apparently a tradition to celebrate with “lifted” pancakes (yeast pancakes made from apple slice dough), when the fastening had been completed. So to be true to form, when I finish the planking and simulated clinch nails on my model, I will be celebrating with apple yeast pancakes as well. The proper recipe will take a bit more research. The recipe for another milestone feast is given in my source material. It is a mixture of rum, red wine, sugar, cinnamon, and water. This was served along with coffee, tea, and æbleskiver (sort of a pancake/donut hybrid). This feast occurred when the boat was launched, prior to rigging. I think I’ll wait until I’ve completed the rigging. After all the wine and rum I may lose motivation to finish.

Twice previously I mentioned “gat”. I suppose it’s now time to divulge what that means, though no doubt you’ve got it from context. In my research material I found the eel drifter described as “rundgattet”. Looking that word up, I see it defined as “a sailor’s expression for a vessel whose stern is curved, round ended”. As I said, I’m digging the sleuth aspect of this, and I’m intrigued by languages, even if I’m no good at learning them, even less speaking them properly. So diving into the composition of the word, “rund” = “round”. I’ve learned that the indefinite article is moved to the end of a noun to make it definite, and that if it ends in a consonant immediately preceded by a short vowel, the consonant is doubled. Further, that

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### Nautical Term

Figurehead: A statue-like symbolic ornament at the stem of the ship. Bow ornamentation has been a custom in many areas and for many centuries. Generally, those under this definition came into fashion in about the XVI century, and, sadly, began disappearing in the early XX.

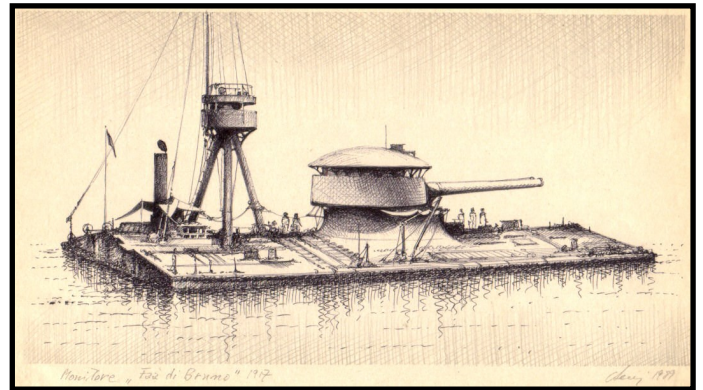
Tim Wood

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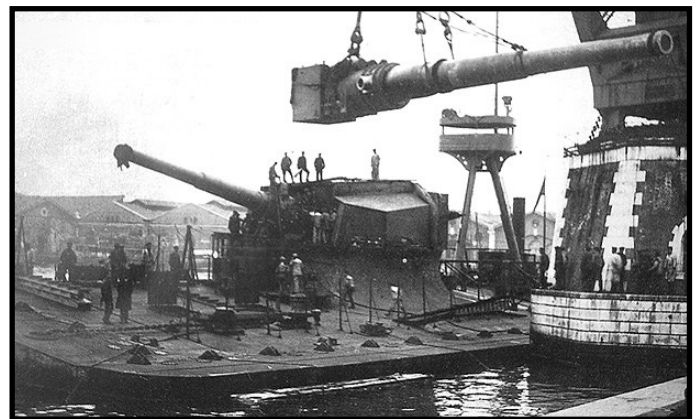


based barrette and topped with a domed plate of some sort. Behind the turret—if it is behind, we’ll call it aft—is a tripod mast topped by a one-level spotting station. Aft of that we see a smoke stack and another small mast. On the starboard side forward are signs of another mast, stack, and bridge that belong to a tugboat. With that hull shape, one has to wonder if this tugboat is effectively acting as the rudder. There are several people out and about on the deck. It would seem that we either have a monitor type vessel or a floating battery of some sort.

We have two replies; Dave Baker and Tim Wood weighed in. Let’s see what they have to say.



Had he been capable—read a true southern boy—you might have expected Dave to begin his reply with “Lawd.almighty! It’s so ugly, it’d make a freight train take a dirt road.” Instead we got the more succinct “what a hideous object.” A comment a bit too genteel for the raucous South, but his point is well made. He then offers an identification of the vessel. “The latest mystery ship is the Italian Navy Mobile Battery FAA’ DI BRUNO, which was completed in 1917 at the Venice Dockyard and served during World War I in the northern waters of the Adriatic Sea.”



He continues: “The ship (if you can stretch the definition of “ship” a bit in its favor) displaced 2,500 tons and was 220-ft. overall by 65-ft. 6-in. beam and 6-ft. draft. Her armament was one twin 14-in. 40-cal. gun turret amidships, two 14-pounder anti-aircraft guns (visible in the photo on the humped main deck abeam the turret), and two 1.5-pounder AA guns. The propulsion plant generated all of 100 horsepower and pro-

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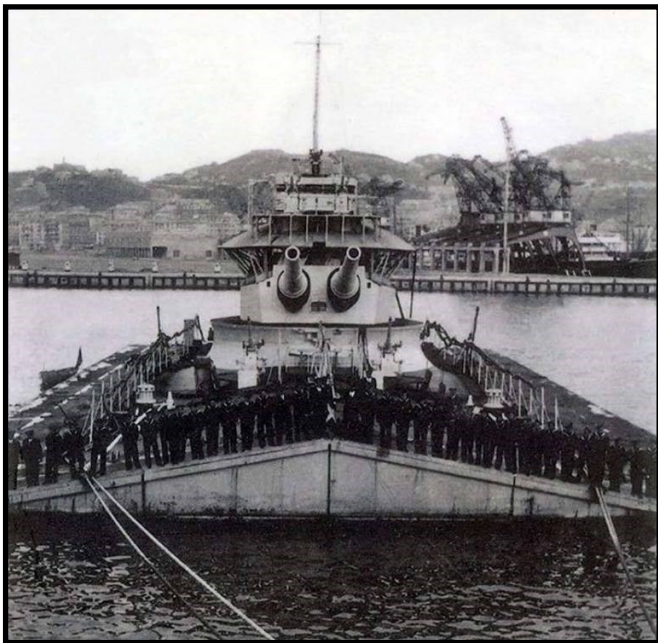
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vided a maximum speed of 4 knots.”

By that description, I would say that this is well and truly a monitor, but not in the American sense. In the European definition, a monitor is more of a flexible floating breastwork. A Breastwork being a low temporary fortification used to provide protective fire. This vessel was intended to provide shore bombardment for Italian operations during The Great War. As such most of the “shippy” elements of the hull were discarded. Dave says “Both the bow and stern of the hull were squared off, and she was extremely difficult to maneuver.” Tim’s information adds to this: “*Faà di Bruno's* hull was surrounded by a concrete cofferdam 2.9 meters (9 ft 6 in) thick that was strapped to her hull.”

Tim’s data also reveals that “*Faà di Bruno's* deck armor had a thickness of 40 millimeters (1.6 in). It sloped down from the center and had a peak of 7 feet (2.1 m). Her guns were mounted in an open-topped turret covered by an armored dome. The turret sides had a total thickness of 110 millimeters (4.3 in) in three layers and its barbette had armor 60 millimeters (2.4 in) thick.” To which Dave adds, “The shield over the turret was supposed to protect the turret from aerial bombs and artillery bombardment, and note that the barbette base flared outward all the way around for the same purpose.” You can see why Dave calls it “a hideous object.”

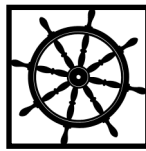


Faà di Bruno at Genoa Italy spring 1944

Here is a bit more about her engineering plant: “*Faà di Bruno* was powered by two surplus Thornycroft vertical triple-expansion steam engines from discarded torpedo boats. One Kess boiler provided enough steam to provide a total of 465 indicated horsepower (347 kW) between them. On her sea trials the ship reached a maximum speed of 3.31 knots (6.1 km/h; 3.8 mph), but her maximum speed in service was about 2.5 knots (4.6 km/h; 2.9 mph).” And the data offers a clarification about that tripod tower: “The ship’s navigation bridge was

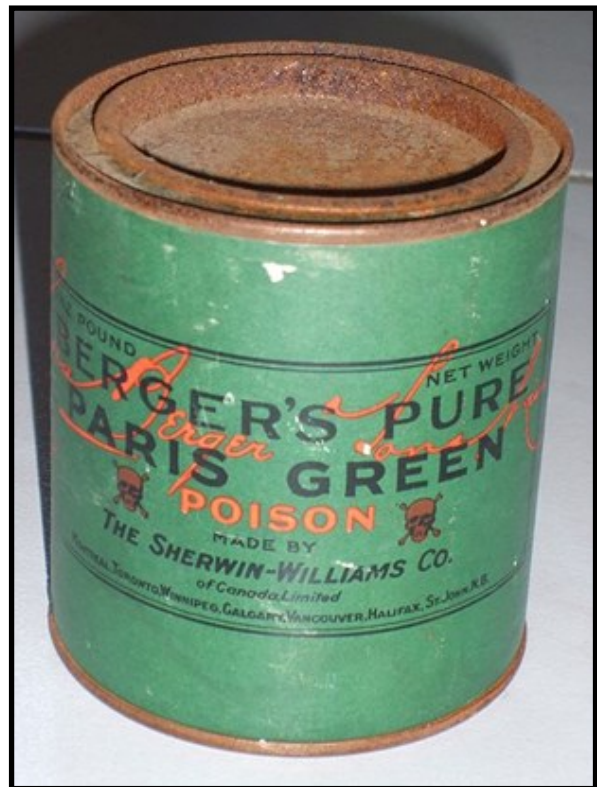
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‘et’ is the indefinite article for a gender-neutral noun. So it would be “et gat” (a “gat”) or “gatten” (the “gat”). So we need to look up “gat” in the dictionary. There are multiple definitions given for “gat”. Definition 2.1 is “anus”. Definition 2.2 is “buttocks”. We’ll go with 2.2. Either way, the vessel is “round-assed”. Not enough to make mom faint, just enough to make the little boy in us giggle.

Most of these drifters were painted grey above the waterline. But my sources say that some, including De 13 Søskende, were painted Schweinfurt Green. I had to search the internet to find the proper hue, and when I did so I learned that it is also known as Paris Green, Emerald Green, and Vienna Green. Schweinfurt is the name of the town in which two German chemists formulated this compound of arsenic. Yes, arsenic. And horrifically, the new pigment was soon a favorite of painters, cloth dyers, wall paper designers, and more. I have some Emerald Green paint from Ronan. I trust they derive the color from something other than arsenic. To hell with authenticity – I want to live to enjoy my pancakes, donuts, and rum punch.



Our 1st mate is dealing poison

I’ve learned much more than this, much of it helpful for the model, but nothing as interesting to write about. If you want to learn more, I am keeping my notes on our website (<https://www.hrsms.org/Content/model/de-13-soskende/>). The paper being translated is on a separate page (<https://www.hrsms.org/Content/boatbuilding-on-fejo-and-the-danish-eel-drifters-by-christian-nielsen-a-very-poor-translation/>). Now that this article has been written, I will stay seated on my “gat” and get back to translating. No mañana. -

Greg

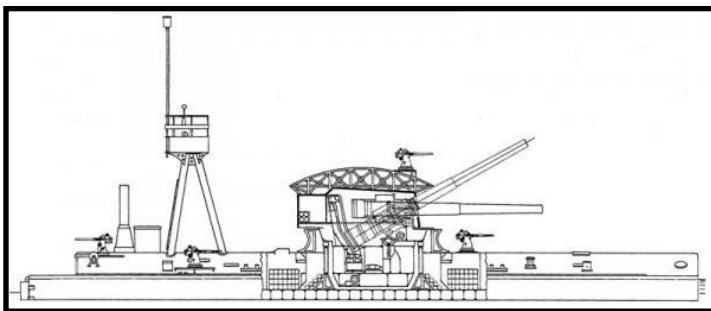
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placed on a prominent tripod mast abaft the gun turret.”

Described as “essentially that of a self-propelled barge as she lacked a bow”, the vessel was not what you would consider a success. “Her first action came during the 11th Battle of the Isonzo in August 1917. Together with the Italian monitor *Alfredo Cappellini* and the British monitors *Earl of Peterborough* and *Sir Thomas Picton*, she bombarded Austro-Hungarian positions with little noticeable effect. She was driven ashore in a storm in November, but was not salvaged for almost a full year.”

Tim’s on-line data drop also provides what little we know about her service life past what Dave already provides. “She was decommissioned in 1924, but returned to service as the floating battery *GM 194* at the beginning of World War II and was towed to Genoa and where she spent the rest of the war. The ship had her guns disabled when the Royal Navy bombarded Genoa in 1941. *GM 194* was captured by the Germans after the Italian Armistice in 1943 and was turned over to the puppet *Repubblica Sociale Italiana* (Italian Social Republic) that they installed afterward. She was scuttled at the end of the war and subsequently scrapped.”



Today with the value of hindsight, it would seem that to design a platform that essentially has to be towed into position in order to marginally perform her intended roll “makes about as much sense as tits on a bull.” If you put yourself into the time, place, and political situation where this vessel was created you may find answers as to why all this came about—reading chapter one of Ian Buxton’s book, *Big Gun Monitors*, helps in this regard. In the end, though, it seems clear that you would waste your pork chop on this one. Armed with this new found knowledge, you are now free to go about your business. Just remember that in this frequently changing climate, if you go outside to “wear your coat on.”

John Cheevers



# AMERICAN NAVAL HISTORY

1847

January 2: Action near the Mission Santa Clara.

January 8: Battle of San Gabriel. On this date, Colonel Steven W. Kearny defeats the Californian army of 450 men and two guns under Captain Jose M. Flores.

January 9: Battle of La Mesa.

March 9: Landing at Veracruz. This is the first major amphibious operation by the U.S. Navy and a model of its kind.

March 22: The Nasval Battery at Veracruz.

March 23: Tattnall and the Spitfire. A flotilla consisting of the steamers Spitfire, Vixen towing the schooners Petrel, Tampico, Bonita and Reefer to a position only 600 yards from the Mexican fortifications.

March 27: Veracruz surrenders.

March 31: Capture of Alvarado.

April 18: Tuxpan expedition. A force consisting of the steamers *Source*, *Spitfire*, *Vixen*, schooners *Bonita*, *Petrel* and *Reefer* and 30 barges carrying a landing force of 1,519 men under Captain Samuel L. Breece. The forts of La Pena and La Palmasola are captured and the city of Tuxpan is occupied. Perry withdraws from the river having destroyed its fortifications on April 22.

May 12: Coatzacoalcos expedition.

June 14: Second Tabasco expedition.

July 16: To the halls of Montezuma.

September 13: Storming of Chapultepec.

November 11: Capture of Mazatlan. Mexico's most important Pacific port is occupied and garrisoned by a landing party of 730 men from the frigates *Congress* and *Independence* and the sloop *Cyane* under Captain Elie A. F. La Vallette of the *Congress*.

November 11: Revolt in Baja California.

1847 Ends with no further actions.

## THE ANSWER

The Answer to Mystery Photo 416  
Italian Monitor *Faà di Bruno* in undated Photo

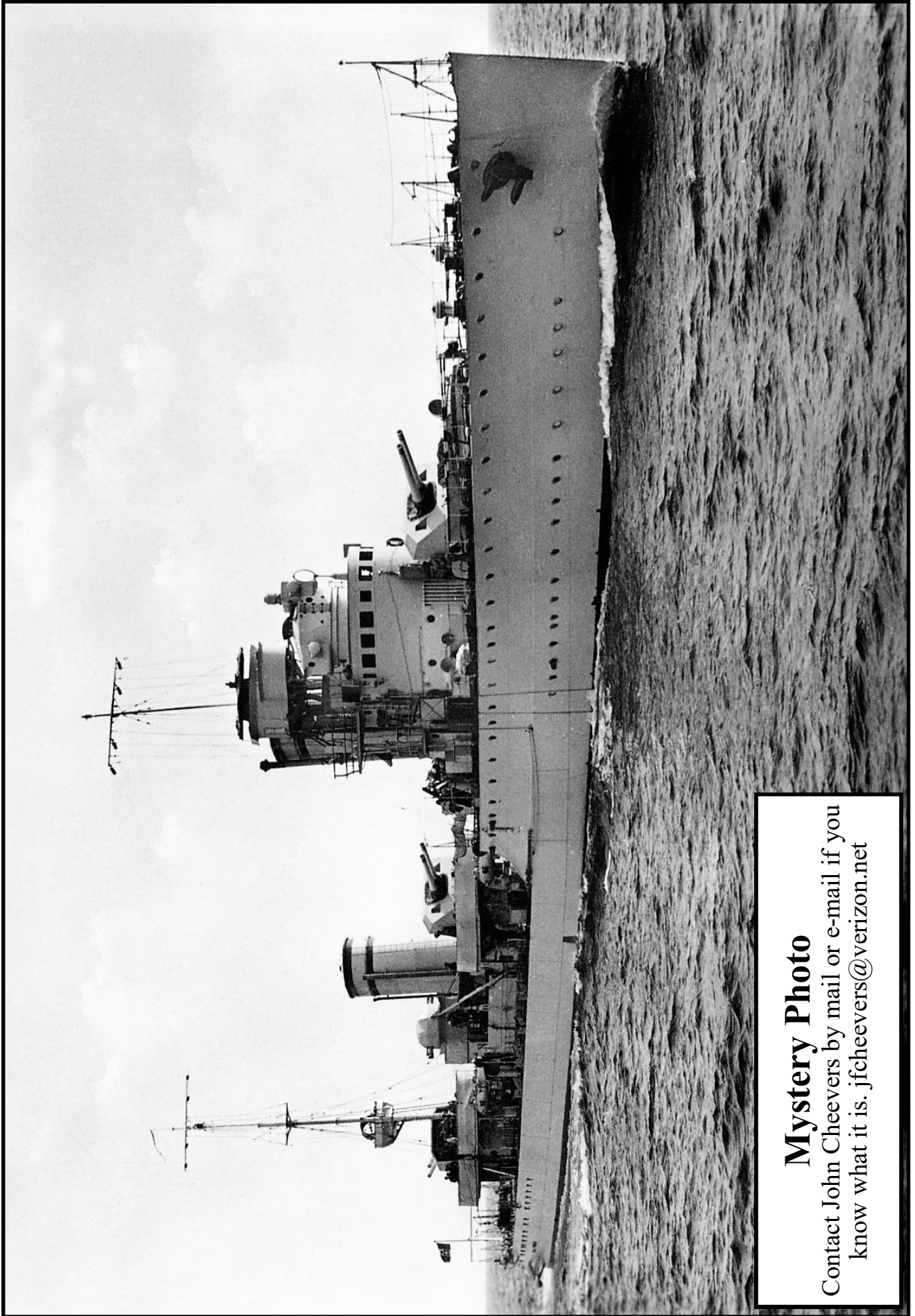
Stern of the *Cutty Sark* Sheathed in Muntz Metal



Several views of Butch Watkins' latest project a 39 ft workboat.



Hank Ghittino's Beagle



## **Mystery Photo**

Contact John Cheevers by mail or e-mail if you know what it is. [jfcheevers@verizon.net](mailto:jfcheevers@verizon.net)

# NOTABLE EVENTS

# MINUTES



## MARCH

13 HRSMS Monthly Meeting;

## APRIL

10 HRSMS Monthly Meeting;

## MAY

8 HRSMS Monthly Meeting;

## JUNE

12 HRSMS Monthly Meeting;

## JULY

10 HRSMS Monthly Meeting: Mariners' Museum  
Presentation: TBA

## AUGUST

14 HRSMS Monthly Meeting:  
Presentation, TBA

## SEPTEMBER

12 HRSMS Monthly Meeting, Presentation: TBA  
19 Talk Like a Pirate Day

## OCTOBER

9 HRSMS Monthly Meeting:  
Presentation, TBA

## NOVEMBER

13 HRSMS Monthly Meeting: Zoom  
Presentation, TBA

## DECEMBER

8 HRSMS Monthly Meeting:  
Presentation: TBA

## JANUARY

8 HRSMS Monthly Meeting: Online Zoom  
Nomination of officers

## FEBRUARY

12 HRSMS Monthly Meeting: Mariners' Museum  
Election of officers

Hampton Roads Ship Model Society  
Monthly Meeting  
Zoom Video Meeting  
February 13, 2021

The meeting was called to order by Skipper, Greg Harrington at 1006 hours. There was no correction to the minutes as published. Ryland Craze gave the Purser's report. Ryland noted that 2021 dues are now due. Greg Harrington gave the Web Master's report. Greg showed several photos of members models that have been added to the web site. Greg said he asked for information on the joint club meeting in October. Greg said that online auctions was currently having a trial run with several items that he posted.

Old Business: The Skipper directed the Clerk to cast a single ballot for the unopposed slate of officers. Officers for 2021 are as follows Skipper, Greg Harrington; Mate, Gene Burger; Purser, Ryland Craze and Clerk, Tom Saunders. Greg asked for details of the joint club meeting to be held in October. Tom Ruggiero said the meeting would be at the Port N Starboard Banquet & Conference Center in New London, Connecticut on October 2nd. Other details have not been finalized. Tom also said that the NRG has not made a decision concerning the October NRG Conference in California. Joshua Fichmann said that ModelCon 2021 will take place in August and that details would be forthcoming.

New Business: John Cheevers was asked to form a committee to consider a Founders Award for 2021. Any suggestions for a nominee are to be sent to John. Bill Brown was noted the audio and video difficulties of conducting an in-person meeting with virtual attendees. Ryland Craze noted an online NRG workshop March 13 at 1100 hours.

Presentation on "Making Sails from Silkspan" was given by Tom Ruggiero.

Show & Tell: Gene Berger showed the progress on parts for his DE. Sean Maloon said he is changing the name of his model from Siren to Syren to reflect the period that he is modeling and showed the planking progress on the model. Charles Landrum showed a 1/200 scale, 3D printed Smith Class destroyer model purchased on eBay. He said the kit includes turned metal masting, gun barrels and shafting. Don Good noted the anniversaries of the sinking of the USS Dorchester and the SS Marine Electric. Ron Lewis talked about muntz metal a 60/40 mixture of copper and zinc for sheathing ship hull and a micro lathe from Wish that costs about \$40.00. Bill Brown showed progress on his Chris Craft runabout. Bill thanked Ron Lewis for the information that the Mariners' Museum is the archive for Chris Craft Records. Hank Ghittino showed the progress on his Beagle showing addition of anchors, oars and sounding reel.

The meeting was adjourned.

## WATCH, QUARTER AND STATION BILL



Skipper: Greg Harrington (757) 218-5368  
Mate: Gene Berger (757) 850-4407  
Purser: Ryland Craze (804) 739-8804  
Clerk: Tom Saunders (757) 850-0580  
Historian: Tim Wood (757) 481-6018  
Editors: John Cheevers (757) 591-8955  
Tom Saunders (757) 850-0580  
Webmaster: Greg Harrington (757) 218-5368  
Photographer: Marty Gromovsky