

HMS Flying Fox (1918 to 1946 only)

Construction

As part of the Emergency War Programme for the Royal Navy, between December 1916 and April 1917 a total of 24 fleet mine-sweeping sloops were ordered, but only ten were completed before the Armistice was signed on 11 November 1918. Consequently, two were cancelled on 3 December, before completion. The remaining 22 were all named after famous racehorses of the time, but since there was already a Racehorse Class of ship, instead they became known as the 24 Class after the number originally ordered.

Of the 22 ships completed, 7 were built by Swan Hunter; 6 by Barclay Curle & Co.; 4 by the Greenock & Grangemouth Dockyard Co.; 3 by Osbourne Graham & Co.; and 2 by Blyth Shipbuilding. On 28 March 1918 the first to be launched was the Flying Fox, while the last was Minoru, on 6 June 1919, both having been built by Swan Hunter at Wallsend on the River Tyne.

They all had a 'double-ended' decoy appearance with straight stem and stern and symmetrical superstructure, and although four of the vessels had the mast abaft the funnel the others, including Flying Fox, had it positioned ahead of the funnel.

Specifications

Displacement: 1320 long tons (1341 tons) standard.

Length: 258 feet between perpendiculars, with 267 feet 6 inches being the maximum length of a vessel's hull measured parallel to the waterline.

Beam: 35 feet.

Draught: 10 feet 6 inches.

Propulsion: A four cylinder triple expansion engine, producing 2500 indicated horse-power. Two cylindrical boilers provided the steam, and the vessel was propelled by a single screw.

Speed: 17 knots.

Range: 260 tons of coal.

Complement: 82.

Armament (as designed): Two 4 inch guns and 39 depth charges.

Active Service in 1918

It was intended that, along with the Class 24 ships already completed, Flying Fox was to serve in a Sloop Flotilla, and her first officer commanding, Acting

Lieutenant-Commander, Andrew Tregenna Mott, RNR (*see 1 below*), was appointed on 27 April 1918. Finally, in June 1918, the Flying Fox was allocated the Pendant Number T.00, and Devonport as her port of manning. She was soon on her war station, and the Royal Navy's 'Pink List' dated 30 June 1918 revealed that by then she was based at Queenstown, near Cork on the south coast of Ireland, and was one of the seven ships serving with the First Sloop Flotilla.

Bere Island was the base of the Royal Navy's Atlantic Fleet, and in support of anti U-Boat activities the RAF had established a kite balloon station at Castletownbere, West Cork, on a 67 acre site on the Beara Peninsula by Berehaven Harbour. It was later used to provide gunnery control balloons for the U.S. Navy battleships based there, but also to support the Queenstown anti-submarine destroyer patrols.

On 29 April 1918 the RAF kite balloon station was turned over to the United States and commissioned as United States Naval Air Station Castletownbere. Its temporary commander was Ensign Carl E. Shumway, a native of Melrose, Massachusetts, who had attended Dartmouth College and trained on kite balloons at Akron in 1917. Although for a short period in May and June command passed to Lieutenant Commander J.H. Dessez, by July Ensign Shumway was back in charge at Castletownbere, the only United States Navy Kite Balloon station in Ireland.

By then it had been agreed with the Royal Navy that as part of an experiment a single balloon was to operate in conjunction with HMS Flying Fox which, on 14 July, sailed into Bantry Bay to begin the tests. Ratings placed a balloon aboard on 17 July, along with nine officers and men. The following morning they took a short trip down Bantry Bay, with a second flight the day after. Flying Fox cruised to Queenstown on 27 July, with Ensigns Shumway and Charles Reed alternating as pilots. During the voyage a few enlisted men also ascended as observers. The patrol lasted all of one day and most of the next, while Ensigns Reed and Harry McIntyre participated in further patrols on 29 and 30 July. Exercises with the Flying Fox continued until a mission that ended tragically, and consequently the experiments ended on 14 August. It appears that three ensigns had reported aboard 11 August, and the following day the ship set out at dawn with Reed riding aloft as pilot. As the crew hauled the gas bag down on the 13th, it took a sudden nosedive over the port quarter, causing Reed to be thrown from the basket while wearing his harness and parachute. The balloon and gear then slipped under the stern and, as the vessel could not reverse, Reed was subsequently drowned. Sadly, the body of Ensign Charles Edward Reed (*see 3 below*), was never recovered.

The Flying Fox was to remain working out of Queenstown for the rest of the war, as the 'Pink List' records that on 11 November 1918 it was one of the eight vessels then making up the First Sloop Flotilla. However, she was not immediately paid off as on 25 October 1919 Lieutenant-Commander Richard James Rodney Scott RN (*see 2 below*) took over as the officer commanding. That allowed Mott to be demobilized on 1 November, during which month HMS Flying Fox was one of the sloops listed as a "Vessel on Miscellaneous

Service'. Finally, on 24 March 1920, she was transferred to Care & Maintenance at Devonport, and placed under the supervision of Commissioned Engineer John Lamond.

Officers Commanding HMS Flying Fox - 1918 to 1920

(1) Andrew Tregenna Mott

Commander, HMS Flying Fox - 27 April 1918 to 25 October 1919

Andrew Tregenna Mott was born on 25 March 1884 in Birkenhead, the son of Andrew Ellison Fairfax Mott and Frances Rebekah Rundle. He subsequently embarked on a career and joined the Cunard Company in 1907 as fourth officer of the *Lucania*. From August 1914, as an officer RNR, he served on active service in the Royal Navy until November 1919, and while so employed married Edith Ethel Burtenshaw at Halifax, Nova Scotia, in 1915.

RNR Commissions:-

Midshipman: 1 January 1903.
Sub-Lieutenant: 19 February 1909.
Acting Lieutenant 17 October 1909.
Lieutenant: 16 August 1913.
Mobilized from *Aquitania*: August 1914.
Acting Lieutenant-Commander: 24 April 1918.
Lieutenant-Commander: 16 August 1918.
Demobilized: 1 November 1919.

Commander: 31 December 1925.
Retired List as Captain: 25 March 1934.

Important life events:-

After the war Mott was appointed Chief Officer of the *Mauritania*, and in 1924 was transferred to the *Samaria*. In due course he served as Staff-Captain in the *Mauritania*, *Aquitania* and *Berengaria*. Given command of the *Ausonia*, he was once again employed in the Plymouth service until appointed to the *Antonia* on the Liverpool run in 1934.

9 February 1936 - Andrew Tregenna Mott of 35 Westbourne Grove, West Kirby, Cheshire, passed away after a short illness at the Brookfield Nursing home, Grange Road, West Kirby in Cheshire, aged 51, before being cremated at Birkenhead's Landican Cemetery on 12 February.

(2) Richard James Rodney Scott

Commander, HMS Flying Fox - 26 October 1919 to 24 March 1920

Richard James Rodney Scott was born on 21 April 1887 at Bath in Somerset, the son of the Reverend James Herbert Scott FRCS and Alice Marian Trask. He subsequently embarked on a career in the Royal Navy joining the training ship *Britannia* as a Cadet on 13 September 1902.

Naval Commissions:-

Midshipman: 15 February 1904.
Sub-Lieutenant: 15 April 1907.
Lieutenant: 15 July 1909.
Lieutenant-Commander: 15 July 1917.

Commander: 30 June 1932.

Captain: 31 December 1929.
Retired with rank of Rear-Admiral: 26 June 1940.

Important life events:-

15 July 1919 - Awarded the Albert Medal for gallantry, which was gazetted on 12 March 1920. The citation read:- "On the 15 July, 1919, during minesweeping operations in the Baltic, four mines were swept up which HMS Myrtle, commanded by Lieutenant-Commander Scott, and another vessel were ordered to sink. During the operations the two vessels were mined, and HMS Myrtle immediately began to sink. So great was the force of the explosion that all hands in the engine room and after boiler room of the ship were killed with one exception, and many others of the crew were wounded. After the wounded had been successfully transferred to another vessel, the forepart of HMS Myrtle broke away and sank. Lieutenant-Commander Scott, hearing that the fate of one of the crew of the Myrtle had not been definitely ascertained, gallantly returned alone to what was left of the ship, which was drifting through the minefield, rolling heavily and burning fiercely, and regardless of the extreme risk which he ran, made a thorough search for the missing man, unfortunately without success".

Late February 1924 - Scott married Dorothy May Sturdy at Burton Bradstock in Dorset, but sadly she died at Blackheath on 19 February 1926.

December 1933 - Scott was appointed to the command of the battleship HMS Barham.

12 July 1939 - At Paddington, Scott married his second wife, Ruth Margaret Macintyre Evans.

31 July 1939 to 8 February 1940 - Commanded the light cruiser HMS Columbo.

11 July 1940 - Mentioned in Despatches.

8 June 1944 - became a Companion of the Bath.

1947- Became a Justice of the Peace for Somerset.

1950 - Became a Deputy Lieutenant for Somerset.

28 November 1967 - Rear-Admiral Richard James Rodney Scott AM, CB, passed away at 'Wimyatts' at Freshford in Bath, aged 80.

(3) Charles Edward Reed

Charles Edward Reed was born on 16 April 1888 in South Middleboro, Massachusetts, the son of Edward Clayton Reed and Georgianna Gault of Wareham. Of 97 South Main Street, South Middleboro, he married Annie Delle Alden at Boston on 16 June 1914, and was reported to have been employed by the Edison Electric Illuminating Company of Boston for seven years before, on 16 July 1917, being enrolled as a Seaman Second Class in the U.S. Navy at the Boston Navy Yard.

On 6 October Reed was assigned to the U.S. Naval Bureau of Aviation as an Ensign, and on 30 January 1918 was stationed at the Naval Training Camp in Akron, Ohio. Then, while serving at the Navy Yard in New York, he received orders posting him for kite balloon instruction duty in Ireland as a member of the 1st Naval Kite Balloon Unit.

At the time of his death on 13 August 1918, aged 29, his home address was given as 718 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, Massachusetts. His name is commemorated on the World War One Honor Roll plaques in the front lobby of Middleboro Town Hall front lobby, on the Central Casualty stone in the Middleboro Veterans Memorial Park, and on a family grave in South Middleboro Cemetery. In England the name of Ensign Charles Edward Reed, U.S. Navy Reserve Force (class 5), also appears on the Tablets of the Missing in the Brookwood American Cemetery at Woking in Surrey.

HMS Flying Fox as a Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve Training Ship

Bristol Division RNVR

On 22 March 1921 it was reported that the Admiralty had set HMS Flying Fox aside as a training ship for the Bristol Division of the RNVR that was to begin reforming in May. It was also revealed that following her arrival she was to be moored at the Mardyke Wharf, in the position that up until 1911 had been occupied by the old Daedalus training ship.

The Flying Fox finally arrived in the Bristol City Docks on the evening tide on 14 July 1921, and although still able to steam, for reasons of economy she had been towed up from Devonport. The ship had in fact been handed over to the RNVR exactly as she was when she had retired from active service, except that all the stores &c. had been removed, and consequently extensive conversion work would need to be carried out before the Flying Fox became a fully functional training ship enabling the Bristol Division's headquarters to be transferred from the Drill Hall in Jamaica Street.

On the morning tide on 17 November 1922 HMS Flying Fox, the RNVR training ship, left the Bristol City Docks en-route for Milford Haven where, at Pembroke Dock, she was to be converted to enable her to serve as the Bristol Division's headquarters. It took some time to complete the work, and after being brought across from Milford Haven in the charge of two Admiralty tugs, the Flying Fox successfully navigated the River Avon on the morning tide, arriving back at her Mardyke Wharf berth shortly after 10 a.m. on 1 November 1923. The fact that she was to be permanently stationed in Bristol ensured that in future the local RNVR members would be able to carry on their instruction under something like service conditions, while she also became the responsibility of the commander of the Bristol Division RNVR.

Then, on the evening of 12 May 1924, a large crowd assembled on Mardyke Wharf when HMS Flying Fox was formally opened for use. The vessel, which had attracted much attention during the previous few months on account of its unusual shape and fitting, had for some time been in the hands of the ship yard workers who added, among other necessary departments, a wireless cabin and a signal school. During the evening the men of the RNVR under the command of Lieutenant-Commander Leonard Bampfyde Cogan, and headed by their bugle band, marched down to the vessel from their old Headquarters at 37 Jamaica Street, while their assembly on the deck of the Flying Fox constituted the official opening.

Finally, at 3.30 p.m. on 10 August 1924 the Dean of Bristol, who was also the Honorary Chaplain of the Bristol Division, RNVR, conducted a dedication service on board HMS Flying Fox at Hotwells, thereby completing the task of taking possession the new headquarters of the corps. The service was attended by members in uniform, while the musical arrangements were undertaken by Hubert Hunt, the Cathedral organist, assisted by some of the choristers.

In the following years there was considerable activity aboard the Flying Fox, especially during the evenings, while many social functions were also promoted by both the officers and the men. Although the ship was permanently moored at the Mardyke Wharf, it was still important that the Flying Fox was regularly maintained, and her first major overhaul began on the morning of 8 April 1927 when she was towed from her berth to the nearby Stothard's shipyard where she was safely dry docked prior to the work being undertaken.

Unfortunately, for a series of dances held aboard the Flying Fox in January 1928, the ship had been covered in with sail cloth and tarpaulin, while bunting and flags had been freely distributed about her structure, and this almost led to a disaster. It appears that by some means or other during the early afternoon of 6 January the after part of the ship caught fire as the materials there were particularly flammable. Fanned by a stiff breeze, the flames quickly got hold, and at one time it looked as if the outbreak would assume serious proportions. However, the Fire Brigade was quickly on the scene and made such light work of their task that the children's party and dance due to be given by the Petty Officers was able to take place as planned later in the afternoon.

Severn Division RNVR

In late June 1930 Admiralty Fleet Orders announced that approval has been given for the Bristol Division, Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve, to be renamed the Severn Division, Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve, and this came into effect on 1 July. Then, on 4 October, the 'Western Daily Press' newspaper carried a feature on the Flying Fox, accompanied by five photographs. That gives a good overview of her facilities at that time, when the strength of the Division was about 200 ratings under the command of Captain Cavendish, who was assisted by eight RN instructors, all permanent members of staff. The tour of the ship, under the guidance of Lieutenant-Commander Harvey, a Bristolian, commenced in the spacious Parade Room, built on the top deck amidships. Here there are drills on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, while Fridays is recreation day. At the after end of the Parade Room is a brass memorial tablet to the men of the Division who fell in the Great War.

The training consists of instruction in general seamanship, boat work, boxing the compass, the making of hitches, knots and splices, and the use of sounding machines. Each year every officer and rating takes 14 days training in the Navy, either aboard ship or in naval barracks. Radio broadcasting for the BBC's western regional station at Cardiff takes place from the Parade Room, the next programme 'A Naval Affair', part of the Bristol Radio Week special broadcasts, being fixed for Monday, October 27. The room is also utilized for the popular dances and social functions.

The next point of interest was the Seamanship Deck, well equipped for this important branch of training. Here is rigged a steering wheel, ship's telegraph and a navigating bridge; and a large revolving compass. There is an effective

home made model with a boat hanging from the davits which, when operated, gives a very realistic demonstration of the rolling of a ship in a seaway.

On the Gun Deck is a six inch breach loader gun; two four inch semi-automatic guns; one four inch breach loading gun; two models of breach loading mechanisms and a light director, simple equipment for training in this important branch of naval instruction. Each year there is musketry and Lewis gun practice at Clevedon.

The Torpedo Lecture Room shows another interesting phase of the complete training given aboard the Flying Fox. In this department are two of the deadliest engines of destruction, with their machines driven by compressed air; while on the occasion of the visit yesterday, one of the permanent staff was fitting a gyroscope to one of the torpedoes, the device which keeps it on its course after it had been fired from the torpedo tube.

Right down below, on the Lower Deck is a well equipped miniature rifle range, while there is a cosy mess for the petty officers and a canteen for the crew. The officers' quarters are comfortably fitted out, and here there is a most interesting model of HMS Royal George, one of the old wooden walls of England. This was constructed of bone by French prisoners during the Napoleonic Wars, and is of considerable value, being insured for £350. There is one member of the ship's company which must not be forgotten. That is Mike, the 'Shipkeeper', a knowing terrier, popular alike to both officers and men.

On 20 July 1931 the Flying Fox was towed into Jefferies dry dock for her overhaul, cleaning and painting, and following day the 'Western Daily Press' published a photograph of her entering the dock, along with a second showing workmen already at work cleaning her hull. Then, on 5 July 1935, the newspaper thought it worthwhile to carry another photograph of the ship, and this was accompanied by the caption "The Flying Fox going into dry dock for her annual overhaul, yesterday." However, on 4 July 1938, it was reported that she was undergoing her annual refit at her moorings at Mardyke, this being in readiness for Bristol Navy Week, which was to begin on 29 August.

DEMS Training aboard the Flying Fox - 1939 to 1946

In early 1939 an Admiralty Trade Division programme was established with the object of arming British merchant ships with an adequate defence against enemy submarines and aircraft. Known as Defensively Equipped Merchant Ships (DEMS), training courses for the unemployed seamen required to man the guns to be fitted to them were designed to give them instruction in manning both high and low angle guns. The low angle guns could deal effectively with submarines and the high angle guns would deter enemy aircraft from flying low, thus reducing their chances doing any damage. Courses had also been arranged at six ports in different parts of Great Britain and 8000 seamen will be trained each year. At Bristol they were to be held on HMS Flying Fox, where the first began training with the 6 inch bow mounted

gun on 20 March 1939, and for about a year these continued to be carried out alongside the RNVR activities.

In mid-April it was announced that the Severn Division of the RNVR was to specialise in anti-aircraft work, and consequently the Flying Fox needed to be specially strengthened and fitted with two additional high angle guns and their associated instrumentation.

Aboard H.M.S. Flying Fox, at Hotwells in Bristol on 27 April, the Lord Mayor, Alderman William Albert Winchester, had a vivid illustration of how volunteer merchant seamen from a radius of 50 miles from the city were being trained as gunners for merchant vessels should occasion arise. On boarding HMS Flying Fox, he was welcomed by Captain Harold Geoffrey Leech Harvey, in command of the Severn Division, RNVR, and Commander Reginald Wilfred Lawrence, DSO, RN, the Merchant Navy Defence Instructional Officer in Bristol.

The Lord Mayor first inspected crew of 10 men handling a 3 inch high-angle anti-aircraft gun on the quarter deck. In spite only having three-and-a-half days' training, the men, under an instructor, smartly carried out all the operations, firing at the rate of 20 rounds minute. Three aeroplanes passing over the ship at the moment of the exercise gave them an excellent opportunity of demonstrating their skill in following the flight of the machines, an opportunity which they took practical advantage.

On the gun deck below the party afterwards watched a gun's crew using a 12-pounder breech-loader, and here again, after the same short period of training, the efficiency exhibited was remarkable, the rate of firing being 12 rounds a minute, without any orders from the instructor, who simply stood aside and watched the drill.

The last test was with another crew using a 6 inch breech-loader, with shells weighing 100 lbs., and in this instance the rate firing was 10 rounds per minute, each man doing his allotted task with smartness and precision. With regard to the Bristol Division RNVR, Captain Harvey stated that its strength then stood at 100 men over strength, which was normally 300. The recruits, he said, were the very best type, and although the unit were not yet closed down, they would be compelled to shortly.

The time for the Flying Fox to begin assuming her Anti-Aircraft role arrived on the afternoon of 24 July when, with her decks strewn with wire hawsers and tools and her lifeboats gone, she was towed from its berth at the Mardyke Wharf to Canon's Marsh to have her two masts removed, prior to being taken to Charles Hill's Albion Dockyard for her periodic overhaul and a refit, from which she was expected to return in early September. In late July it was also announced that in addition to the DEMS courses for seamen, facilities for instruction in the Merchant Navy Masters' and Officers' Defence Courses were to be extended to the Merchant Navy Defence Centre at Bristol, where it was planned that they would begin aboard the Flying Fox on 4 September.

As the year progressed, the Merchant Navy Seaman Gunner's Defence Courses continued apace, with the 18th commencing at 8.45 hrs on 4 December 1939, and lasting until 17.00 hrs on 15 December. Eligible were serving members of the deck and catering department, and also those ratings who, having left the sea, had registered to return to the Merchant Navy during wartime, and whose names were on the Merchant Navy War List. After the RNVR had been mobilized, HMS Flying Fox closed as a Royal Naval Reserve Drill Ship on 9 April 1940, and for the rest of the war served as a dedicated DEMS Training Centre under Commander Reginald Wilfred Lawrence (see *No.1 below*).

The training of gunners then commenced in earnest, and in addition to Royal Navy ratings, contingents from most of Britain's European allies, the US Forces, the Army, the RAF, and the Home Guard passed through the instructor's hands. A training dome was established ashore, and a large field at Severn Beach taken over and rapidly converted to fill the role of a naval range. However, so short was the country of guns at that time that for training cannons designed for use in the Boer War were pressed into service.

One trainee recollected that HMS Flying Fox passed out gun-layers after an intensive course on 6 inch, 4 inch, and 12 Pounder guns, along with 20mm Anti-Aircraft Oerlikon Cannons and various machine guns which included Lewis, Browning 0.5 inch, Hodgkiss and old Marlins. The camp belonging to the Flying Fox at Severn Beach contained a battery of guns for practice, and there they fired 4 inch and 12 pounder guns towards the Denny islet and at aircraft towed drogues.

On the afternoon of 2 October 1945 the Lord Mayor, William Frederick Cottrell, accompanied the Lady Mayoress, Miss Kathleen Cottrell, along with a number of members of the Savings Committee, paid a visit to HMS Flying Fox, where, after being piped on board, they were conducted over the ship and attached shore establishments by Commander Lawrence.

A feature of the visit was an inspection of 'dome anti-aircraft instructor,' where anti-aircraft gunners receive much of their target practice. This individual turret, set up just over three and half years ago has turned out many thousands of gunners of all nationalities for service on Royal Navy and Merchant Navy ships. The Lord Mayor controlled the gun for a time, and had the satisfaction of recording two 'kills' against Japanese dive bombers projected on to a screen. For the pleasure of handling the gun the Lord Mayor purchased five shilling savings stamp from a member of the WVS on duty in the turret, that being the cost at which members of the public may pay to operate the gun.

By January 1946, when the final course of gunners had been completed, some 29,349 gunners had passed through the Flying Fox's training facilities, and at the height of her wartime career so numerous were the men undergoing training that they had to be billeted with residents in the area. Although for the time being the training dome would remain, but the firing

range, where 1,000,000 rounds of ammunition had been expended without causing a single serious casualty, had already been decommissioned.

During the war 41 Wrens had served on HMS Flying Fox at various times, but on 28 February, seven of them marched down the gangway for the last time, leaving just two, and even they were awaiting their turn to depart. Throughout the war the Wrens had been part of the ship's complement, helping not only in the administrative work but in the actual training of men for gunnery duties. Commander Lawrence recalled the difficulties he encountered when he first introduced a woman as a member of his crew. The Admiralty at first refused to acknowledge her presence, but finally gave way and thus HMS Flying Fox created naval history.

As time went on the value of the WRNS became more fully appreciated, others were posted to the ship and took up duties including that of telephonists, cinema projectionists, or in the administrative office, while three of them became the first women to learn the art of maintaining a naval gun. They worked long hours, often leaving the ship late at night in the height of air raids on Bristol to make their way to their sleeping quarters at Redland Hall, although they were of course fed on the ship.

Finally, on 4 March 1946 HMS Flying Fox completed its period of change over from war to peace, as on that day Commander Lawrence, who had been in charge throughout the major part of the war was replaced by the 43 year old Commander Frank Tavender Pollinger, VRD, RNVR (*see No.2 below*), who joined the Bristol Division RNVR as it was then known back in 1924, and had been an executive officer of the Division before the war.

On 1 October 1946 a re-constituted Severn Division, RNVR, opened with its headquarters on HMS Flying Fox in Bristol, as the Admiral Commanding Reserves was by then taking steps to rebuild the permanent RNVR divisions authorized before the outbreak of war up to their pre-war establishment. However, at the time it was reported that it was unlikely that the training with the Fleet would be possible before the Spring of 1947, nor training at the Headquarters until mid-1947, when the equipment for them had been modernized.

(1) Reginald Wilfred Lawrence

Merchant Navy Defence Instructional Officer, HMS Flying Fox
10 April 1940 to 4 March 1946

Reginald Wilfred Lawrence was born at Bethnal Green in London on 27 May 1890, the son of Richard Eli Lawrence (1866 to 1929), and his wife Julia Groves (1868 to 1932). In London on 16 January 1908 he was apprenticed for three years to the ship owners Crawford & Rowat, who operated the Port Line. On 3 March 1911 he was awarded a Board of Trade Certificate of Competency as Second Mate on a Foreign Going Ship. That was followed on 10 January 1913 by that of Mate, and finally Master on 14 August 1914.

Lawrence was also a member of the Royal Naval Reserve, and on 1 September 1914 he had been commissioned, while for his actions while serving aboard the submarine E 14 in the Sea of Marmara on 27 April 1915, he was awarded the DSC. He was transferred into the Royal Navy for meritorious service on 12 June 1916, and remained in the service after the end of

World War One. However, on 22 January 1926, he lost some ammunition from HMS Wrestler and failed to notice the discrepancy, while in December 1926 he received a negative evaluation from Admiral Osmond de Beauvoir Brock, and in 1928, a Court of Enquiry into a collision between the minesweeper HMS Dundalk, under Lawrence's command, and HMS Dunoon, concluded that it was entirely Lawrence's fault. Then, on 28 September 1928, he was posted ashore to HMS Excellent for a photographic course, and was so successful in the Photographic Branch that he rose to supervise the RN Photographic School before finally retiring at own request in 1934.

On 19 February 1939 Lawrence returned to the Royal Navy for war service and was ordered to HMS Excellent, an Accounting Base at Portsmouth before, on the 26th, being posted to HMS President II at Chatham to take part in a Merchant Navy Defence course. That lasted until 5 March, after which he remained on the books of HMS President II but, accompanied by two gunners' mates, was then directed to commence training Merchant Navy gunner volunteers at Bristol. Consequently, in September 1939 he, his wife and daughter were listed as living at 2 Downfield Road, Clifton in Bristol.

As the number of volunteers increased nationally, an Accounting Base named HMS President III had been established on 28 August 1939 in the Clark's College school building at 15 Whiteladies Road in Bristol. Set up for all those allocated to training for service on the Defensively Equipped Merchant Ships, Lawrence, as the Merchant Navy Defence Instructional Officer in Bristol, was also placed on its books on 1 March 1940.

However, although on 1 May 1941 HMS President III was moved to the Windsor area, Lawrence remained in charge at HMS Flying Fox until he took up a seagoing appointment after the Merchant Navy Defence Centre at Bristol closed on 4 March 1946. Finally, Lawrence served as the officer overseeing the run-down of the defences on Steep Holm in the Bristol Channel, before finally reverting to the Retired List on 30 April 1948.

Naval commissions:-

Sub-Lieutenant: 1 September 1914.

Lieutenant: 19 December 1914.

Lieutenant-Commander: 19 December 1922.

To Retired List with rank of Commander: 16 June 1934.

Important life events:-

Autumn 1918 - Lawrence married Theresa Phylis Eglington (born 27 December 1899 at Barnes). Marriage registered at Bromley in Kent.

24 November 1945 - Theresa Phylis Lawrence, of 'Wych Elm', Stoke Hill, Stoke Bishop, Bristol 9, died at the Burden Neurological Institute, Stoke Gifford in Gloucestershire, aged 46.

8 November 1947 - At the Register Office, 182 Burnt Oak Broadway, Edgware, Lawrence married Marjorie Joan O'Malley.

25 January 1963 - Reginald Wilfred Lawrence of 'Auchencairn', 16 South Walk, West Wickham in Kent died at Farnborough Hospital, Farnborough in Kent, aged 72.

(2) Frank Tavender Pollinger

Commander of Flying Fox and the Severn Division - 4 March 1946 to 31 December 1956

Frank Tavender Pollinger was born in Bristol on 5 June 1902, the son of Thomas Joseph Pollinger (1872 to 1954), a plasterer, later a building contractor, and his wife Matilda Adelaide Merchant (1902 to 1977). In 1911 the family was living at 20 Milk Street, in St Paul's, while in 1924 Pollinger joined the RNVR after four years service in the 21st Royal Gloucester Hussars. Then, at St Mary Redcliffe on 3 June 1930 and described as a clerk of 16 Somerset Square, Redcliffe, Bristol, he married Helen Joy Seccombe Wills (1902 to 1977), the daughter

of Henry William Seccombe Wills, a gentleman of 17 Percival Road, Clifton. Pollinger was listed as living at 10 All Saints Road, Clifton, in September 1939, at which time he was working as an advertising office manager, while when his mother's died in 1954 he was described as a transport manager.

RNVR Commissions:-

Sub-Lieutenant (Probationary Paymaster): 19 October 1925
Lieutenant: 4 July 1930.
Lieutenant-Commander: 4 July 1938.
Commander: 31 December 1944:
Captain: 30 June 1948.
Commodore 2nd Class: 8 July 1953.

Important life events:-

12 May 1937: Presented with the King George VI Coronation Medal.

13 March 1942: Awarded Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve Officers' Decoration.

10 July 1953: Various newspapers reported:- "Captain Frank Tavender Pollinger, commanding officer of the Severn Division of the Royal Naval Volunteer at Bristol, has been appointed to the rank of Commodore the Admiralty announced today. He is the second officer to attain this rank in the RNVR since the end of the war and his promotion brings the volunteer reserve up to its full authorised establishment of two Commodores. Commodore Pollinger was appointed a Deputy Lieutenant of the County of Gloucester early this year."

15 September 1953 to 14 September 1955: Served as RNVR Aide-de-Camp to HM the Queen.

2 January 1956: Commodore Frank Tavender Pollinger, VRD, RNVR, appointed a Commander (CBE) Military Division.

31 December 1956: Relinquished command of Severn Division.

1 January 1957: Appointed Commodore of the RNVR.

14 November 1958: Retired.

17 September 1973: Frank Tavender Pollinger CBE, VRD, DL, of 22 Bramble Drive, Stoke Bishop, Bristol, died aged 71, and was subsequently buried at Stoke Bishop on the 20th, leaving effects valued at £16,984.

Postscript

HMS Flying Fox remained at the Mardyke Wharf at Hotwells until being decommissioned in 1972, after which Severn Reserve moved ashore into a former TA Centre at Winterstoke Road in Bristol, where the new Headquarters was opened on 18 November 1972 by Rear Admiral J. Klaver, Royal Netherlands Navy, Chief of Staff to the Royal Navy's Commander-in-Chief Naval Home Command (CINCNAVHOME or CHN). The old Flying Fox was then towed across the Bristol Channel on Sunday 18 March 1973, to be broken up at Cardiff by Birds (Swansea) Ltd.

