

"Cook's Dead, Skip!"

PART II - by Peter Harrison



After the demise of poor old Norman the Cook on the Rock Dodger "Stevonia", and my meteoric rise to the rating of AB/Cook/Steward, things had settled into a routine once again. I was sharing the Cook's wage with George the Skipper, but it didn't seem that anything was being done about finding a permanent replacement, and I was beginning to get really pissed off with it all.



I was on the four to eight watch and my watch partner was no other than George, the Captain himself. He seemed content with my culinary efforts, and had congratulated me on my meat pie. I would strap up the galley for about 18.00 hrs then gallop up to the bridge to take over the wheel from

George for the next couple of hours. During one watch, he showed me an old Discharge Book of his, dating back through the war years when he had been signed on as Cook on the S.S. Hodder. I suggested that he should take a trick in the galley every now and again, but he declined!

One time unusually, we left Newcastle-on-Tyne for Ghent (wow! deep sea at last). We had no shortage of food as Hookey Walker the Chief Engineer was knocking off the wife of a butcher and we were "down by the head" with meat. We entered the canal on the River Schelde at Terneuzen, for Ghent in a jovial mood as George had opened the Bond Store and dished out ciggies galore plus a bottle each.

Arriving in Ghent, we tied up and topped the derricks, before the call went out, "All ashore that's going ashore - Cafe Geneva for orders". Hookey said it was the best bar in Ghent, so off we went, following Hookey's lead. When we arrived, the barmaid said, "I hope you boys are all good Catholics, please kiss this statue of the Madona," which of course, we all duly did, all that is except Hookey (I think he must have been here before!). After all had kissed the Madona, the Barmaid turned the statue around, to show us that we had all kissed the biggest dildo in the world!

Taffy Hughes, the Mate says, "I love Holland," but I enlightened him, saying that we had left Holland at Terneuzen Lock, and that we were now in Belgium! This was shattering news to Taffy, as he told us that there was an arrest warrant out for him in Belgium. Oh no said I, wondering if old George might be "promoting" me again on the trip back home. Anyway we settled down for a good bevy and everyone was getting really pissed. Hookey started chatting up the barmaid,

asking her if she fancied a trip to England, while I seized on the potential of the conversation and asked if she could cook?

As the evening wore on, it was obvious that Captain George was well and truly pissed as a newt. We all staggered back to the ship lauding the benefits of being on a ship that was so well off for food, "The best feeder afloat."

The following morning, while nursing a sore head myself, I took the Captain's early morning cup of tea to his cabin, and discovered that George had spewed his ring in the alleyway outside his cabin door. Sitting proudly in the middle of the contents of George's stomach, were his only set of false teeth! As I entered George's cabin with his tea, I found him awake, and sitting up in his bunk, and looking like Old Man Steptoe. "Shanksh for the tea," he said as I turned to leave. I closed George's door behind me, and "souvenired his teeth from the pile of spew outside the cabin door. After swilling off the crap on George's teeth, I hid them in an old ciggy tin, and went about my business.

We loaded fertiliser for Goole, all 500 ton of it and toddled back across the North Sea. I hadn't told George that I had his teeth, and he was assuming that they must now be in residence at the bottom of the canal, and without the ability to chew, was surviving on soup, while the rest of us were chewing down on lovely steaks, supplied by Hookey's Paramour.

George was a local from Goole and every time the ship came in to port, his wife was always there to meet him. Our Intrepid Master Mariner knew that he would be in deep shit from his wife if he came home without his teeth, and he wasn't looking forward to her welcome. I was on the wheel as we came into port. George trained his binoculars on a buxom woman on the quayside, "She's going to kill me," he moaned quietly.

I knew that I was in the box seat now, and that I could force the issue about getting a replacement Cook, so pulling them out of my pocket, innocently asked, "Are these your gnashers George? I found them lying out on deck!" His reply was unprintable as he grabbed his choppers and shoved them back into his cake-hole, but I knew that my days as AB/Cook/Steward were just about over.

Shortly after this event, I decided that I'd had enough of coasting and got myself a job on the "Lumen," a Moss tanker heading from Falmouth to the Gulf. I figured that putting up with a Skipper suffering the ABBADAN blues, would be child's play after this little lot!