



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

(For official use only) PUBLIC PETITION NO.	PE1312
--	---------------

1. Name of petitioner
William Leitch
2. Petition title
Investigation into the 1949 Yangtze campaign medal awards system
3. Petition text
Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to make representations to the UK Government asking it to investigate the circumstances into the process for awarding medals to those involved in the 1949 Yangtze campaign and, in particular, whether this process was corrupted as a result of the exclusion of relevant and important documents relating to the role of HMS Concord in the Yangtze Campaign on 30 and 31 July 1949.
4. Action taken to resolve issues of concern before submitting the petition
<p>Via my MP, Mr Jim Devine, I initiated correspondence with the Ministry of Defence. In acknowledgement to that correspondence my claims were rejected upon a wrongful and erroneous pretext by the then Minister For Armed Forces, Bob Ainsworth MP, in his letter to Jim Devine of 18 November 2007 (ref: D/Min(AF)/BA MC05786/2007) states: "By the time HMS Amethyst reached HMS Concord's position at the mouth of the river Yangtze on the morning of 31 July 1949 she had succeeded in making her escape".</p> <p>On 3 November 2008 I presented to Jim Devine MP a petition to be presented to the House of Commons. As of this date, that petition has not been presented or placed in the sack at the Speakers Chair.</p> <p>On 21 June 2009 I initiated correspondence with Her Majesty The Queen. As a result of that correspondence I was informed by the Defence Service Secretary that my letter had been referred to the MoD. On 17 July 2009 the letter was answered by Mr S J Spear, Naval Secretary (Honours and Awards) SO1. Within that letter it is stated: "There is no avenue now available for consideration to be given to amending the qualifying criteria that the appropriate authorities deemed appropriate for the NGSM 'Yangtze1949' clasp at the time this medal was instituted in 1949.</p>
5. Petition background information
Via this link - www.thehmsconsort.co.uk/index.htm - there is in abundance of background information to support why I consider an investigation is necessary.

In December 1948, and due to the Chinese Civil War, a British warship was stationed at Nanking (Nanjing) to act as guard ship to the British Embassy and to evacuate staff and other British nationals if it became necessary.

On 20 April 1949 at 0830, HMS Amethyst (Lt Commander B.M. Skinner RN) en-route to Nanking up the River Yangtze to relieve the guard ship HMS Consort, came under very heavy fire from the north bank. Due to serious damage she went aground at Rose Island (she signaled she was under heavy fire, aground, and had suffered casualties). The Captain was mortally wounded, the first Lieutenant though wounded assumed command. During the forenoon the Communist continued to fire at HMS Amethyst. To save further loss of life, about 60 lightly wounded and uninjured were evacuated ashore, further evacuation stopped when those in the water came under fire. Those put ashore eventually arrived in Shanghai. Lt Cdr Skinner's wife and two sons were staying in Hong Kong as guests of Ann Rodney wife of Lt Cdr Nigel Rodney the Captain of Concord and Admiral Brind asked Ann Rodney to break the news of Lt Cdr Skinner's death to Mrs. Skinner.

The signal was heard by HMS Consort (Cdr I.G. Robertson, DSO DSC RM), she immediately prepared to get under way, leaving Nanking and proceeding at 30 knots towards HMS Amethyst, reaching her at 1400. As she approached HMS Amethyst, she came under very heavy fire. She made three attempts to assist HMS Amethyst, but having sustained many casualties and serious damage she abandoned the rescue and proceeded down river. The signal was also picked up by the frigate HMS Black Swan Captain A.D.H. Jay DSO DSC RN) in Shanghai, and the cruiser HMS London (Captain P.G.L. Gazalet DSO,DSC, RN) en-route to Shanghai from Hong Kong. At dusk, both ships met HMS Consort off Kiang-yin on the Yangtze. Because of the need to get the wounded to hospital and the damage sustained, HMS Consort took no further part in the action and sailed for Shanghai.

21st April at 0030. HMS Amethyst was re-floated and anchored in the river. At 0600 H.M.S. London and HMS Black Swan went 12miles up the Yangtze to about 30 miles from HMS Amethyst and waited for further information, none came. At 1030 both sailed up river, with White Ensigns, and large white flags hoisted, (white flags meant neutral ships on a peaceful mission) hung on each side of both ships were large Union Flags. Almost immediately both ships came under heavy point blank fire from the north bank, each receiving direct hits. Both ships proceeded as fast as possible in the narrow river, returning fire. At about 15 miles from HMS Amethyst and having sustained many casualties and a great deal of damage, it was decided that to proceed further would be disastrous for both ships and their crews, the order was given to return to Shanghai. This meant running the gauntlet again with both ships incurring further casualties and damage during the next 50 minutes of almost continuous fire. Both ships arrived at in Shanghai at 1930.

At 1630 an RAF Sunderland Flying Boat (Flt Lt K. Letford DSO 7 Bar DFC RAF) landed near HMS Amethyst bringing a doctor and medical supplies, as the doctor got into a junk to take him to the ship, firing from the North Bank

was directed at the aircraft and it had to take off immediately.

22nd April. Lt Cdr J.S. Kearns RN arrived from Nanking. After assessing the situation he took command of HMS Amethyst. She remained a prisoner for 100 days. When it was obvious negotiations for safe passage down river were leading nowhere Lt Cdr Kearns planned the escape of HMS Amethyst.

30th July, at 2209 with the Yangtze at its highest, HMS Amethyst started her famous escape. She was fired on and hit once immediately. Though the firing continued there were no further hits from the large guns. During the confusion the shore batteries sank a civilian ferry.

31st July. At 0500 HMS Amethyst met the destroyer H.M.S. Concord (Lt Cdr N.R.H. Rodney RN) at the mouth of the River and sent her famous signal: "Have rejoined the fleet south of Woosung, no damage or casualties, God Save The King".

As a result of the incident, 3 DSO's, 4 DSC's, 1 DFC, 7DSM's, 1 BEM and many Mentioned in Dispatches" were awarded. The human cost in the four ships was 46 dead and 68 wounded

That was what the official report amounted to, however the true events which took place after 2209 on the 30th July 1949 have not been recorded properly so therefore in order that they may be recognized in this day and age the true events which took place after 2209 on the 30th July 1949 are as follows.

When Lt Cdr Kearns informed Admiral Brind in a coded signal that he intended to break out at 2200, Admiral Brind without reference to the Admiralty or the Foreign Office signalled HMS Concord to assist HMS Amethyst and should the Woosung Forts open fire they (Concord) were to return fire in support of Amethyst.

In the late evening of 30th July Concord proceeded up river where she was challenged by a Nationalist Gun Boat. Concord subsequently anchored and then at 0145 under cover of darkness she weighed anchor and proceeded up river at 20 knots.

At 0220 she spoke briefly with a Chinese Nationalist warship in the vicinity of the Tungshan banks buoy. 0255 Came to starboard anchor Kiutan LV 289 degrees 1.8 miles.

At 0345 weighed anchor and proceeded course 285degrees speed 20 knots. At 0415 altered course to 301 degrees then altered course to 290 degrees 0445 passed S.2 Knoll Buoy. 0450 altered course 300degrees speed 16 knots. 0510 slow speed in vicinity of Blockhouse buoy. 0512 Amethyst contacted on radar Bearing 286 7miles.

0525 Amethyst in sight 3 miles. (Due to bends in the river it appeared as if she was coming across land to meet them) Concord signal Amethyst "Fancy Meeting You Again" Amethyst reply's "Never Repeat Never Has a Ship Been More Welcome" Kearns then signalled Admiral Brind copy to Admiralty "Have

rejoined the fleet, no damage or casualties God Save The King”

0535 Concord on station 2 cables with Amethyst on starboard quarter. Course 120 speed 19 knots. 064 Kituan L.V. abeam to Port. Altered course to 115. 0710 speed 10 knots. 0715 Secured from Action Stations. 0740 passed Yangtze L.V. abeam to Starboard 1 mile. 0915 Set course 140 degrees speed 11 knots. Amethyst in station astern. 1158 engines slow ahead together. Course as required to attend to Amethyst. 1200 Concord proceeded alongside Amethyst. 1212 rang off main engines. 2 hours notice for steam. Transferred stores and discharged 147 tons of fuel oil to Amethyst. (when she hove to alongside Concord she only had 7 tons of fuel oil left)

1800 Lt T.J.D. Grant was drafted to Amethyst on temporary loan, also 1 signalman and 1 telegraphist. 2000 slipped from Amethyst. And in company set course for Hong Kong. A short while later met Cossack (Captain (D) who ordered Concord to proceed on patrol leaving Cossack to escort Amethyst back to Hong Kong. Concord's log book was taken out of service and replaced.

Admiral Brind, it appeared, had exceeded his authority by ordering Concord to assist Amethyst and it looked set for condemnation by both the Admiralty and the Government. Amethyst's escape had been kept secret up to this point. Then the story was leaked to the press. King George VI on hearing of Amethyst's escape, entered the arena by congratulating all concerned including Admiral Brind.

Until now, very little was known of Concord's true involvement it had always been 'understood' that Concord had waited at the mouth of the Yangtze for Amethyst when in fact she had gone up river trained her guns on the Woosung Forts as she and Amethyst passed below.

Here I feel I should add that at the time of the "Amethyst Incident" 30th and 31st July 1949 the Commander –in Chief, Far East Station, Admiral Sir Patrick Brind had as his Flag Officer, a Lieutenant Scott, and Flag-Lieutenant Scott's contribution was to devise and signal to Amethyst a "one time pad" encryption system based on her nominal crew list.

On the following three occasions July 1992, September 2002 and June 2003. Rear Admiral, Sir David Scott, KBE, and CB, deposited within the Churchill College Archives Centre, Cambridge, along with other writings naval signals and a telegram covering the "Amethyst Incident" 30th and 31st July 1949.

For further information see the link being provided below, as in depositing this material evidence such as it is covering the events that occurred on the River Yangtze 30th and 31st July 1949. Rear Admiral Sir David Scott. KBE CB has in fact Blown The Whistle once again.

<http://janus.lib.cam.ac.uk/db/node.xsp?id=EAD%2F0014%2FDKNS>

(2) YANGTSE OPERATIONS (MEDAL) (Hansard, 1 November 1949, Oral questions)

Commander Noble asked the Prime Minister whether approval has been given for the issue of a General Service Medal for service in operations on the River Yangtse earlier this year.

The Prime Minister (Mr. Attlee) Yes, Sir. His Majesty has approved proposals for the grant of the Naval General Service Medal for specified service on the River Yangtse between 20th April and 31st July, 1949.

A short White Paper on the subject was published.

(3) The White Paper: -

1948-49 [Cmd. 7813] Committee on the Grant of Honours Decorations and Medals. The Naval General Service Medal, service on the River Yangtze between 20th April and 31st July, 1949

1.—(i) The Committee on the grant of Honours, Decorations and Medals have had under consideration the need for the general recognition of certain service in the Forces on the River Yangtze in the period between 20th April and 31st July, 1949, with special regard to the exceptionally trying and dangerous conditions in which duty there was carried out.

(ii) The recommendations have been duly submitted to The King, who has been advised by the Prime Minister on matters likely to give rise to difference of opinion. His Majesty has now graciously approved the recommendations set out below.

(2) (2) Approval has been given for the award of the current Naval general Service Medal, with an appropriate Clasp, for specified service on the River Yangtze between 20th April and 31st July, 1949, both dates inclusive, as described below.

Royal Navy

3.__(i) Service in the following of His Majesty's ships on the dates or within the period shown: -

H.M.S. Consort 20th April, 1949.

H.M.S. London 21st April, 1949.

H.M.S. Black Swan 21st April, 1949.

H.M.S. Amethyst 20th April, 1949, to 31st July.
1949, both inclusive.

6. Do you wish your petition to be hosted on the Parliament's website as an e-petition?

YES

7. Closing date for e-petition

21 February 2010

8. Comments to stimulate on-line discussion

As a reward for their valour and heroic actions covering the dates 30 and 31 July, in the 1949 Yangtze Campaign, the ships-compliment of H.M.S. Concord, were betrayed, and wrongfully excluded from the 1949 Yangtze Campaign Awards System.