

## CORK INCIDENT - 1964

HMS RELENTLESS visited Cork in Ireland in November 1964, and whilst the visit itself passed without problems, apart from some serious hangovers following visits to the local RNA Club and Cork Brewery, a surprise awaited RELENTLESS on departing Cork.

I was an RO3 and at this time had not specialised and so was 'serving my time' as a Bunting. Lined up as Special Sea Duty men on the starboard side of the Flag Deck with the killick bunting Dolly Gray and another RO3, Jake Kilkelly, we were swapping stories about the runs ashore when we heard a loud ping, followed quickly by another one, very close at hand. I have to say that we didn't think too much about it at the time but it transpired that a couple of disgruntled Irishmen had taken it upon themselves to open fire on RELENTLESS with a rifle or 2. One round certainly hit the funnel (the first 'ping' we heard) and a second round somehow passed THROUGH the ship's side and was found lodged in the fan trunking in the 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant's cabin. This was the second shot we heard and it was only when we found out about this that the 3 of us realised these guys must have been shooting AT US because the Jimmy's cabin was directly under the Flag Deck. In fact, the hole made by the second round was only about 18 inches below Jake's feet.

It transpired that 10 or 12 shots had been fired at us and besides making newspaper headlines, there were Questions in Parliament as the following extract from Hansard confirms....

***"H.M.S. "Relentless" (Incident ) - HC Deb 30 November 1964 vol 703 cc24-524***

Captain Orr asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the circumstances in which H.M.S. "Relentless" was fired upon in Cork Harbour on Saturday 21st November.

Mr. Mayhew H.M.S. "Relentless" was leaving Cork Harbour and was one mile upstream from Passage West when, at 8.35 a.m., at least two men opened fire on her from a range of about 400 yards using 0.303 or similar calibre rifles. About 10 rounds were fired but, I am glad to say, there were no casualties. The damage sustained amounted to one bullet hole and one dent.

Captain Orr What have the Eire Government to say about this? Who were the men?

Mr. Mayhew We have mentioned this to the Eire Government but I think that it is too minor an incident to expect a protest. [HON. MEMBERS: "oh."] A police cordon was set up to try to capture the two men but failed to do so, and we therefore do not know their names. Nevertheless, we should keep this in perspective. The action was outrageous but the Navy has faced more difficult engagements than this.

Mr. Hay Can the hon. Gentleman confirm or deny that there is no connection between this act and the 15 per cent. surcharge?

[Mr. Shinwel](#) Has my hon. Friend considered that it might be useful to have a declaration of war on Eire in order to satisfy Ulster?

[Mr. Mayhew](#) We must hope that the shooting would be better than missing a ship at 400 yards eight times out of ten. “

**As I remember it - The Cork incident - CY Ken Read.**

*“I was on the bridge going down river. We had an Irish pilot. A shot rang out from the rushes to Stbd. The Captain remarked to the Pilot “Maybe someone shooting ducks” Just then another bullet whined over the bridge, and another struck the superstructure of the Ops room. The captain ordered an increase in speed and we were soon clear. I believe one of the bullets struck a 'waveguide' and disabled our surface radar for a while. It was on the TV news in UK that night, and my wife was a bit alarmed.”*