



FOREIGN CORRESPONDENCE

TUNNEY IN THE BAY

I had the morning watch the other day as we were steaming North for home after three weeks at sea. I was pretty bored, for in that time we had seen only two ships and three or four aircraft, so I viewed, with pleased surprise, odd clusters of lights away ahead.

By day-break, an hour later, we were up to them and they turned out to be the Southern edge of a fleet of French Tunney Fishers.

As the grey light of dawn spread round the horizon with the promise of a good day to come, the sails began to stand out in silhouettes and their flares paled and disappeared with the stars. I counted nineteen of them, Yawls and Ketches under full sail, spread over twenty odd miles.

By seven o'clock we were well through them and only a few lay ahead, so I called the Captain and he came up to relieve me while I made preparations for what was in store.

I don't suppose you have ever tried tunney steaks. When they are fresh they are as tasty and satisfying as salmon, and after three weeks at sea they are a veritable ambrosia of the Gods and a most welcome change from the inevitable sameness of seafood.

We picked our ship and steamed up on the same course and abeam him about fifty yards away. I bellowed at him over the loud hailer in execrable French - "*Nous voulons de poisson, - nous vous donnerons en change de cafe, de la savon, des cigarettes*".

At first they had all tumbled out on deck and viewed us with evident fear and distrust as we closed them, but when we waved they became all grins and gesticulations, and after my shouting, they produced fish and held them up to O.K. the agreement.

We steamed ahead. I left the bridge, went off down to the whaler I had ordered to be ready. We manned it and stood by -

The Captain stopped the ship half a mile ahead and we were lowered to within a foot of the wave crests and then slipped on to the next wave with a splash. I did coxwain myself and with a crew of five, we soon rowed to the Yawl which was "hove to" in the choppy sea.

It is no fun handling a small boat in a seaway, but we got alongside and managed to hold on all right, at times level with her deck and at others she was seven or eight feet below us. She rolled and we rode the seas.

To carry on a conversation under these conditions in English is no easy matter, but with my school-boy French, it was worse.

They had a fairly villainous looking crew, bearded and unshaven, dressed in a weird assortment of clothing with the occasional smock and loose beret of the trade.

They seemed very cheerful and they too were pleased with the bargain. They had been out of Lorient for 21 days and wanted supplied with the following - News, their position, cigarettes,

soap, coffee, fresh water, coal. We gave them the first two free since they had no wireless or sextant. These were invaluable and provided goodwill for the remaining transactions.

I managed to drive a fairly good bargain though - six fish for a three pound tin of coffee, two for four bars of coarse soap, so many for cigarettes etc.

We got 25 in all at an overall cost of 1/2 per head, and as they were as big as salmon, we were quite pleased.

At the end we pushed off, glad to be clear again from her side, with many shouts of Bonne Chance, Au Revoir etc., and then lay head to wind to await being picked up again.

As she drew clear, our ship ran across wind to pick us up, and on the top of a wave presented a most frightening appearance to a small boat. However she ran alongside us and we rowed strongly then to get hold of the heaving line and falls and ten minutes later, we were safely on board again and rather pleased with ourselves notwithstanding the inevitable soaking from spray.

To my pleasure I found it was after eight o'clock and therefore I was off watch, so down below for a good wash and then to breakfast with an appetite of a wolf.

R. MCC. MCMULLAN.

McSQUACHLE DOES IT AGAIN! - by Hoodunit.

Detective Inspector McSquachle's knuckles were showing white against the mahogany tan of his hands as they gripped the wheel of his speedlaunch.

McSquachle was on the trail again. His grim, set face showed no emotion, except that of the steely determination which, so many times before, had carried him through to the bitter end. The craft purred beneath his feet, sending up vibrations through the lithe, lean, frame of the man, telling him that the motors were doing their utmost to aid him in his quest to get his man. He was heading down the sun-path now. The glare would have practically blinded any normal person, but McSquachle's eagle eyes retired behind two mask-like slits and rendered them impervious to the reflected solar rays beating up from the water. The serene, red-tinted sky and the sparkling reflection of it would have made a peaceful scene, but McSquachle had no eyes for anything except the task in hand.

Suddenly, his chin jutted out a shade further, and his mouth narrowed into one tight line as he spied his enemy, speeding over the water ahead, doing his best to get away from the pride of the Criminal Investigation Department. Gradually McSquachle gained, foot by foot, he crept up, until he was hitting the other's wake. Then something inexplicable happened, the craft in front suddenly shot round suicidally, across his bows, heeling outwards at an alarming angle. His ice-cold brain explored every possibility of escape in a split second, but he could do nothing. The bows of his boat hit the other, dead amidships, reared into the air, poised for an instant, and then, smacked down again.

The engines were still running but the water was surging round McSquachle's feet, and rising fast, as it poured in through the hole, rent in the bows. With a calm air of resignation he awaited his fate. He could not help himself. There was nothing he could do, except watch his proud craft sink beneath his feet.

When it had touched the bottom he stepped out and waded to the side of the pond. As he was wringing out his trousers he was heard to remark something about having had enough of - - Fun Fare - Speedboats!

It is generally the fellow who doesn't know any better who does the thing that can't be done. You see the poor fool doesn't know it can't be done, so he goes ahead and does it.