


THE TIMES
[HOME](#) [BRITISH NEWS](#)
[BACK TO MAIN INDEX](#)
[E-MAIL THIS PAGE TO A FRIEND](#)
[E-MAIL THE SECTION EDITOR](#)
[WORLD NEWS](#) [SPORT](#) [BUSINESS](#) [COMMENT](#) [FEATURES](#) [SPECIALS](#)

THURSDAY OCTOBER 26 2000

The Times Diary

GILES COREN

Tireless John

AFTER the recall of our nuclear submarines because of problems aboard *HMS Tireless*, currently stranded in Gibraltar, it is time to say yah, boo sucks to Antonio Banderas — who called for its repatriation — and bring in the heavy guns. Such as Sir John Mills (star of 114 films, not just a poxy remake of *Zorro*), who has been out to *Tireless* on a morale-boosting trip. In an interview with Celebrity Jack yesterday, Sir John said: "I'm adopting the submarine. They made me an honorary member of the ship's company, which hasn't happened since Lord Mountbatten made me a member of *HMS Kelly*."

Nor has time dimmed the Forces' love for Sir John: "They've got my films in the mess, apparently, like *Dive at Dawn*, *Monty's Double* and *Above Us The Waves*. When I left, all the men lined up and saluted me — a moment moving to the point of tears."

There was excitement, too, as the picture below testifies, with our 92-year-old hero given the chance to belt a patrol boat over the briny at 21 knots. But he couldn't be too silly with it, he told CJ, because there was lots of other shipping about.

So delighted were our subwrecked sailors that they have invited Sir John back to do a one-man show in January, as well as one with Jim Davidson on *HMS Ocean* in Malaga. "They're flying me in by helicopter," he says. "I hope I don't have to use a rope ladder. It all happens in your nineties. Just you wait."

THE new head of the Lottery Commission, Lord Burns, has been widely described as "a semi-professional snooker player". He isn't.

After a press conference at the Royal Horticultural Hall yesterday, the former Permanent Secretary to the Treasury made a personal statement to hacks: "I am not, repeat not, a semi-professional snooker player. I once played at Chevening but that's all. Please stop. I'm embarrassed about it."

But this completely wrong “fact” has been appearing in pieces about Burns for years. It’s in John Major and Norman Lamont’s memoirs — where can it have come from? Where else, but *The Times* Diary? “I got it from Norman Lamont’s special adviser, David Cameron,” says the deputy diary editor of that time, who has gone on to far, far better things in journalism since (if better things than working for this diary can be imagined). “I think it’s a lovely story, and I’m going to carry on writing it, anyway.”

A source at No 11 tells me that Alex “Hurricane” Higgins was once Governor of the Bank of England.

Big story: the Alan Clark diaries are to hit the stage. Big question: who will play Bad Al? With his famously tolerant and liberal views, he would no doubt have endorsed the sort of colour-blind casting that has seen a black actor cast as Henry VI by the RSC. And who better to play the philandering warmonger than gangsta-rap king Puff Daddy? His girlfriend Jennifer Lopez might then be persuaded to play Margaret Thatcher — lending a bit of credibility to the idea that Clark Vader fancied her.

Copyright 2000 **Times Newspapers Ltd.** This service is provided on Times Newspapers' **standard terms and conditions**. To inquire about a licence to reproduce material from The Times, visit the **Syndication website**.

HELP

CROSSWORD

SEARCH

CONTACT US

TERMS & CONDITIONS

