

# **PADDY'S POTENT POTION**

## **By John Redfern**

I was cleaning the bar pumps in the 'Slipstream Club' on morning when Paddy came in to ask me if I had a spare key to one of the old concrete de-contamination blocks at the rear of the club. There were two, one that I used to store stock for the club the other as a general beer store which, conveniently had a door leading to the club and which I used in lieu of a cellar. There was a third store which was empty. Tossing him the key I asked him what he wanted to use it for. Paddy had a couple of mates on the Base who played 'Skiffle' in the NAAFI. He explained that they wanted some privacy to rehearse and as the group were very good, having progressed from the 'Tea Chest Bass' stage I thought it was a good idea particularly as they played at the Club occasionally. I thought no more about it for several weeks as Paddy and his group had been playing in the NAAFI in the evenings and had become quite popular.

Just before Christmas I was busy in the Club when Paddy came in with a carrier bag which he placed on the Bar top. "Give us a couple of glasses"? He ordered. Handing him two spirit glasses Paddy produced a brown stone jar similar to the ones that the older folk used as 'water bottles'. He proceeded to slowly pour some of the contents of the jar into the glasses. The liquid was clear and had no smell. "Go on then, taste it"? Paddy encouraged. I took a gulp from the glass and swallowed. I gasped and grabbed my throat as the fire coursed down my gullet and into my stomach. "What the bloody hell is that"? I demanded in a voice that was barely a whisper. Paddy chortled gleefully "It's a creation from a recipe from the Old Country we call it 'Pochine'. He said proudly "Well, it certainly hits the spot" I agreed. Paddy went on to explain the it was made from potatoes and sugar, fermented and distilled and they had used the store as a 'still' to brew the concoction.

He led me to the store at the rear of the club which I had let him use as a music room and I simply could not believe my eyes. There were glass chemistry pipes and copper tubes, glass demijohns and beakers. There was even a Bunsen burner. The entire paraphernalia looked a bit 'Heath Robinson' but was still very ingenious. Nearby under some Hessian sacks there were about half a dozen gallon demijohns full of the clear liquid which presumably I had just sampled. Paddy explained that a couple of his countrymen on the Base had combined their talents. A Chef providing the sugar and potatoes another, an Electrician had rigged up the science lab equipment and Paddy and nature had done the rest. He then dropped another bombshell by explaining that his 'Brew' had been 'fortified' by the pure alcohol drained from the navigation compasses in the old derelict war time aircraft stored in the airfield hangars and awaiting collection by one of the civilian contractors.

My shocked reaction was "Get the bloody stuff out of here pronto before some bugger sees it or we'll both be right in the shit"? Paddy promised me that it would be gone by Christmas and it was merely an experiment. Christmas leave soon came and I completely forgot about Paddy's Brew. The First Leave had already gone and as we were Second Leave we decided to have a bit of a dance at the Club. We invited the 'Yanks' and their extremely popular 'Discotheque' and a few of the local girls together with Edna's girls from the GPO Telephone Exchange. The Commanding Officer had already approved the Dance arrangements which had gone like clockwork in the past. Extra beer had been ordered and 'Big Eats' too. The 'Yanks' had brought some Bourbon and American beer to supplement our already well stocked Club.

The week end before the Christmas Dance, unbeknown to me, Paddy had decided to 'Test His Rocket Fuel Brew' on Saturday lunch time in the NAAFI. Saturday lunch times were rather quiet as most of the personnel were either RA or in Married Quarters or generally on Week-End Leave. The NAAFI 'Scrumpy Bar' was open as usual as most of the Buffer's Party and Fire Station lads preferred this as a lunch time livener after 'Tot' time and it gave everyone the chance to simply 'Wind Down'. There were around 30 lads in the Scrumpy Bar and the 'Skiffle Group' were providing the entertainment. As the NAAFI closed the bar at 2pm. we were in the habit of ordering a few pints extra so that we could continue with a 'Sod's Opera' The piano was going full blast but no one minded at all when Paddy decided to 'top up' everyone's glass with his 'Rocket Fuel'.

The effect was almost devastating and within half an hour everyone was completely and totally 'wrecked'. By 3pm. the NAAFI was in an almost uproar with the 'Sod's Opera' getting more raucous by the second. Even a member of the Regulating Staff called in to investigate and whom everyone in the bar decided unanimously, was a 'bloody good hand' and simply had to have a drink with them, returned to the Reg Office much the worse for wear which prompted the Duty RPO to investigate himself. Fortunately, he was spotted and the NAAFI bar emptied like magic with all the participants escaping to the empty Mess Hut behind the Fire Station where the revelry continued this time with 'Water Sports' before the now quite exhausted 'athletes' made their weary way back to their respective domiciles. The Duty Fire Station Crew Mess was no exception as many of the 'Handlers' were rendered 'temporarily blind' for a few hours. Fortunately, there were no call outs or further incidents. As for Paddy's Rocket Fuel, the very thought of it makes me shudder. I did however feel that we had not exactly seen the last of 'The Potent Potion' and I was soon to be made very aware of it too.

**THE SONGS ARE ENDED BUT THE HANGOVER LINGERS ON**