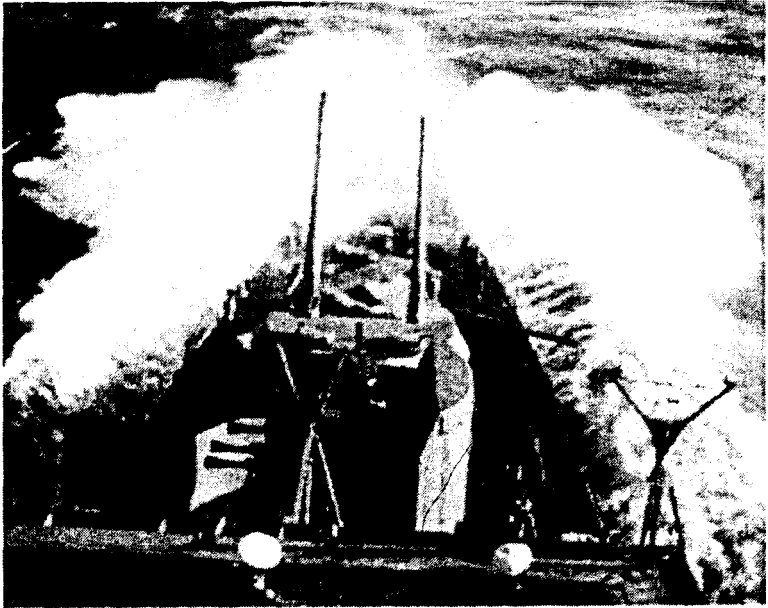


HMS Phoebe Association

Newsletter
April 2005



"Get ready with the deck scrubbers No 1"

Hello everyone, its not long since the last newsletter was sent out, just about two weeks ago, I thought I would start on this one just to keep me busy, (its too cold to sit outside and watch Lil weeding)!

We'll Meet Again - Commemorating the 60th Anniversary of VE Day.

We'll Meet Again will be transmitted on BBC 1 on 8th May 2005 and will be a 1 hour pre-recorded studio special for the BBC 1 to celebrate the 60th Anniversary of VE Day, it is the intention to reunite old comrades, friends, sweethearts and war babies who have carried the memory of each other since the war.

“We are looking for people who have lost touch with friends and service colleagues since 1945 and also people who would like to fill in the gaps in their family history.”

If anyone is interested in being involved please contact the production team on:- Tel:- 08705 12 22 30, or E-Mail wma@bbc.co.uk

In the last newsletter I said that the funding application for the reunion had been sent in, and I had asked for £7,000. A short time after the newsletter went out I had a phone call from the Funding officer re our application. (This will be old news to members who have reserved the hotel as a special note was sent to them). The fund officer asked why I had only asked for £7,000, when I knowingly knew the reunion would cost probably more that £11,000, why did I not ask for the whole amount. I said that as only about half our members there would be ex WWII veterans, theirs was the funding I was asking for, but apparently that is wrong, it is for every man, woman and child irrespective of age or being civilian, or Forces. So I now have to submit a report to the funding officer stating the full cost of the hotel plus any extras the hotel are charging and whatever extras we require, including the coach hire to RNAS, and also claim for individual reimbursement of Train and/or Coach fares that members make to attend the reunion. For my part, obtaining the Hotel costs overall and the Coach trips is the easiest part, and extras I can allow for, it is your Train/Coach travel expenses which will cause a bit of a headache, every claim I make must have an accompanying receipt, **so if you are**

travelling to the reunion by train or coach I must have a receipt of the payments made by you. These may not be obtainable until after you have completed your journey, don't worry, there is no set time, but I must have them. Although I must have receipts for all the money we spend, and they must cover the whole of the grant, with nothing left over (??) The Funding Officer may never call upon these receipts, about one in ten applications are asked to produce their receipts. Considering that at the moment the Hotel accommodation bill for members is £9,990. I am now setting the new figure to ask for at £16,000. (Hoping to get £13-14,000). **I am sorry but travel expenses for private cars do not come under funding.** If the application is successful, the payments you have been making will, if you wish, be returned to you ASAP or you can leave the payments in the Association bank account until required; it is quite safe there. A phone call requesting repayment will be answered with the sending of an association cheque. Maybe you would like to leave your payments in the account ready for next year's reunion.

We know there are some members who will be attending the reunion but not stopping at the hotel. **Do you wish to attend the hotel for Evening Dinner?** - if so, you must let me know on what nights and how many in your party. I was hoping to have a price now, but as there has been no replies to my request I had nothing to bargain with so the hotel price for a dinner is what you will have to pay. However, if the funding application is granted this will come under Hotel extras! (Price set at £14 pp)

Welfare

S/m Roy Fisher decided to go for an amputation rather than the touch and go operation on his leg, he is now out of hospital but wheelchair bound. Roy was one of the first to reserve his hotel room and is adamant that he is coming to the reunion, however, although the hotel is wheelchair friendly once inside, there are three wide steps to negotiate at the front door, a bit of volunteer manpower will be required.

Just after the February newsletter was posted Josie White phoned to say S/m George White had been taken back into intensive care after a

blood clot had developed. He underwent surgery to relieve the condition but was still in much pain; George was also given 3 bags of blood. Feb 15th, I spoke to Josie today; George is out of intensive care and is a little better, but no news of when he will be home.

I had a set back with my proposed knee operation, attending the pre-admit clinic I was found to have diabetes? This would interfere with the anaesthetic, but once stable the op will go ahead, at the moment that is on hold, so it looks like I may still be waiting to go into hospital after the reunion. Much the same as last year with the other knee. (It never rains but it pours).

S/m John Fuller, although living in Weymouth, will, he hopes, be joining us at the hotel for the weekend, that is providing a limb operation due about May does not fall on the reunion weekend.

Would you believe that just after I wrote the above the phone rang, it was the Hospital asking if I would like to take up a cancellation.

I went in on Thursday 24th Feb, operation on Friday, back home again on Thursday 3rd. This time it was a full knee joint replacement and has been very painful, especially at night. I woke up one morning with an Angina attack, instead of using my spray, which would have cleared it, I called the nurse, not a very good idea, I had heart checks and oxygen for days afterwards, but never got a pain again, it did however hold me back in getting home.

It is with sadness and regret I report the passing of Ethel Browne, wife of S/m Maurice Brown. After a long illness and much suffering, Ethel 'crossed the bar' on March 17th. Our sympathy and condolence to Maurice and family at this sad time has been sent. The funeral will take place on

Reunion Weekend:

Three Battery driven Mobility Scooters will be available from 9 am Friday 13th to 9am Monday 16th. They will be found at the rear of the hotel, where battery-charging facilities are available. There will be nothing to pay for their use. The keys will be available from reception? Please make sure you lock them up after use, and hand keys back to reception. You may be asked to sign for keys so we know who has one out. There is no time limit for their use, but remember there may be another shipmate waiting.

60th Wedding Anniversaries, i.e. Diamond Wedding:-

You can now receive a certificate from Buckingham Palace to celebrate this marvellous milestone. You must apply to:- The Anniversary Office, Buckingham Palace, London SW18 IAA asking for a 60th Anniversary application form, return the form with a copy of your Marriage Certificate to arrive three (3) weeks before anniversary date. (I suggest you apply for the form at least five weeks before the anniversary date)

Fleece Jackets

We will have a few Large and Medium size Fleece's for sale at the reunion. Medium size = £ 12.50. Large Size = £ 13.50. You can order them now by phoning 01235 211501 (pay and collect at the reunion) Each fleece will have the Phoebe Crest and HMS Phoebe Association embroidered top left. If posting is required add £3.10 to your order.

All cheques to be made payable to the HMS Phoebe Association.

Little known Ship Disasters:-

Many believe the Titanic was the greatest sea disaster with the loss of 1,523 people, and some think the Lusitania was with 1,198 lost. But the Bismarck sank with the loss of some 2,200 men. These losses are dwarfed by the sinking of three German ships, the Wilhelm Gustloff, the General Steuben and the Goya crowded with evacuated refugees and wounded soldiers that were sunk by Soviet submarines during the final months of the Second World War. The first of these German ships to go

down was the Wilhelm Gustloff, a 25,000 ton converted luxury liner that had been serving as a hospital ship. When it left the Baltic harbour of Gdynia on Jan 30th 1945, it was jammed with nearly 5,000 refugees, mostly women and children, and 1,600 military servicemen. Shortly after 2100 it was struck by three torpedoes from the Soviet submarine S-13. Accompanying vessels were able to rescue only about 900 from the freezing Baltic waters, at least 5,400 perished.

Eleven days later, shortly after midnight on February 10th, the General Steuben sank with the loss of 3,500 lives. The same submarine that had attacked the Gustloff, and in almost the same location, sank the Steuben with two torpedoes. Crammed with as many as 5,000 wounded soldiers and refugees, the converted passenger liner sank in just seven minutes. The Goya was sunk on April 16th 1945, just weeks before the end of the war in Europe, and is acknowledged as almost certainly the greatest maritime disaster in terms of lives lost. The converted 5,230 ton transport ship had set out from Hela near Danzig (Gdansk) with its human cargo of some 7,000 refugees and wounded soldiers. Just a few minutes before midnight, the Soviet submarine L-3 fired two torpedoes at the Goya. which found their marks amidships and in the stem. Almost immediately the ship broke in half, her masts came crashing down on passengers crowding the decks. Before anyone could escape from the holds, the on-rushing sea quickly drowned out the anguished screams of the refugees below decks. The vessel sank in just four minutes, resulting in the loss of nearly 7,000 lives. There were just 183 survivors. The sinking of these ships with the combined loss of more than 12,000 lives remains the greatest maritime catastrophes of all time. Moreover, the deliberate and unnecessary killing of innocent civilian refugees and helpless wounded men aboard the three ships and many other smaller and lesser know vessels is unquestionably one of the greatest maritime atrocities of the Second World War. Even more tragic is the case of the Cap Arcona a 27,650 ton converted passenger ship packed with evacuated concentration inmates.

Most of us know the first verse of this poem by John Masefield, but how about the rest of it. It was one of my favourites along with: I wandered lonely as a cloud, etc.

The Sea

I must go down to the sea again, to
the lonely sea and the sky,
And all I ask is a tall ship
and a star to steer her by,

And the wheel's kick
and the wind's song
and the white sail's shaking,
And a grey mist on the sea's face,
and a grey dawn breaking.

I must go down to the seas again, for
the call of the running tide
is a wild call and a clear call
that may not be denied;

And all I ask is a windy day with the

white clouds flying,
and the flung spray
and the blown spume,
and the sea-gulls crying

I must go down to the sea again, to
the vagrant gypsy life,
To the gull's way
and the whale's way
where the wind's like a whetted
knife;

And all I ask is a merry yarn
from a laughing fellow-rover,
And a quiet sleep
and a sweet dream when the long
trick's over.

Reunion:-

By now every one going to the reunion should have paid their hotel accommodation bill to the HMS Phoebe Association treasurer, if you have not, please do so immediately. 1st April was the cut-off date after which full payment should be paid direct to the Prince Regent Hotel. Cancellation after this date will be subject to Hotel rules and conditions

Matelot Speak

(Vic Chanter)

As you look back at the good times in the Andrew, spare a thought for the victims of our present day politically correct services.

Before I go any further, that first sentence starts bells ringing. As a sprog, and a typical male, I accepted, without questioning the derivations of certain navalisms, that is, such terms as 'oggin'. They just crept into one's normal conversation like any seasoned matelot. Therefore, it was sometime before I discovered a theory why we referred to the Navy as 'the andrew'. (Of course, that should be 'the Andrew'). It was reputedly named after Lieutenant Andrew Miller, the press gang officer – or was it? Where was I? We once had licence to refer to other nationalities with affectionate nicknames; on a few occasions the references would be a trifle defamatory, but on the whole the message was clear. We even picked out our friends from the West Country, Yorkshire, Scotland, Wales and anywhere to which we could pin a tag, be it: Nit, Git, Get or even Bastard. We took it and we dished it out. We had our: 'Chalky' Whites, 'Nobby' Clarks, 'Pincher' Martins, 'Blood' Reids and woe betide you if you had a well-known female's surname. I remember we had a shipmate called Hitchcock - aka 'Scratchit'. Now *he* did object. We also had our own rich Naval phrases uttered in times of stress, or just for the hell of it. The Royal Naval Communications Association has long aired some of these sayings under the heading of 'Jack's Not So Concise Dictionary', with the added warning not to view if easily shocked. In 2004, the MOD considered them as crude, rude and jolly vulgar, and not fitting for today's Navy. (The association was at least glad to know that someone in high places was actually visiting the RNCA website). The offending phrases are now under a more secure heading.

I do like the way they have been indexed under alphabetical flags.

Some less offensive examples are:

Double-breasted Matelots: WRNS. Naval Orifice: Naval Officer.

Petrol Budgie: Helicopter. Irish Lager: Guinness. Jock Frock: Kilt

Musical Veg: Beans etc. Bulkhead Bouncing: Staggering aboard after a skin full.

Foxtrot Oscar: Kindly, shove off.

March 29th.

Latest news of S/m George White: He has responded well to his treatment and went home for a week end, after a few more days in hospital the latest news was that George should be home again this coming weekend, hopefully for good. We wish you well George and look forward to seeing you at the reunion which I know you are looking forward too. A word for Josie, it was nice to hear you being so happy & cheerful on the phone, it has been along time since the last time. Roy.

Lest We Forget

I have just been reading about Gibraltar as a 'Graveyard for Ships'.

Perhaps the best known to us is the wreck of the aircraft carrier HMS Ark Royal sunk by U-81 in WW2. There is an old wreck from 1888, a schooner, SS Excellent, in the vicinity, and SS Roslyn, a steamship, sank in 1916.

The First World War casualties included the P & O passenger ship Namur, torpedoed by U-boat U-35 in 1917. This was followed by TB90, a Royal Navy torpedo boat, which capsized. WW2 casualties were: the corvette HMS Fleur De Lys, sunk by U-206 in 1941, the passenger steamer Leedstown sunk during Operation Torch in 1942, and the Canadian corvette HMCS Weyburn, mined in 1943. Of course this list comes nowhere near the number of vessels that I remember compiling of the other ocean graveyard, in the Eastern Mediterranean, where for years HM Ships passing in the vicinity of Crete, dipped their ensigns and laid wreaths.

A Funny Thing Happened On The Way To Turkey

Have you heard the story of the submarine that sunk with no loss of life?

Well it just disappeared in November 2004! The 44-year-old HM submarine Oracle was on its way from Pounds' yard, Tipner, Portsmouth, to a breaker's yard in Turkey. Turkey always paid top price for scrap metal. I remember escorting an old obsolete destroyer – 'Sultan' comes to mind – up to the international limit, to be handed over to awaiting tugs off

Turkey. I don't think she ever saw much active service from that moment on. Anyway, the submarine Oracle was being towed by a German tug called Fairplay that had already lost a vessel, a redundant cruise liner, which was under tow whilst on its way to India. The liner was not actually lost; she lies 2,500 metres down off the Dominican Republic. The Turkish scrap metal dealer is in a wrangle with the German towage company for not delivering the submarine Oracle – quite right too! No excuses, you said you could do the job! The Fairplay was seen by radar travelling eastwards through the Straits of Gibraltar, too fast to have anything in tow. She stayed for three days in Morocco then set off for Portugal. This set people wondering what had happened to the submarine she should have had trailing along behind.

The towing vessel was deemed to be 'overqualified for the job'. The result was compared to a juggernaut pulling a Mini. It's assumed that the towing vessel was travelling too fast and lost its tow somewhere off Gibraltar. Therefore, that's another wreck lying off there somewhere.

Vic Chanter

More Political Correctness Gone Mad (Remembering Trafalgar)

Nelson: 'Order the signal, Hardy.'

Hardy: 'Aye, aye, sir.'

Nelson: 'Hold on, that's not what I dictated to the Signal Officer. What's the meaning of this?'

Hardy: 'Sorry sir?'

Nelson (reading aloud): 'England expects every person to do his duty, regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, religious persuasion or disability. What gobbledey-gook is this?'

Hardy: 'Admiralty policy, I'm afraid, sir. We're an equal opportunities employer now. We had the devil's own job getting "England" past the censors, lest it be considered racist.'

Nelson: 'Gadzooks, Hardy. Hand me my pipe and tobacco.'

Hardy: 'Sorry sir. All naval vessels have been designed smoke-free working environments.'

Nelson: 'In that case, break open the rum ration. Let us splice the main-brace to steel the men before battle.'

Hardy: 'The rum ration has been abolished, Admiral. It's part of the Government's policy on binge drinking.'

Nelson: 'Good heavens, Hardy. I suppose we'd better get on with it. Full speed ahead.'

Hardy: 'I think you'll find that there's a four knot speed limit in this stretch of water.'

Nelson: 'Damn it man! We are on the eve of the greatest sea battle in history. We must advance with all dispatch. Report from the crow's nest, please.'

Hardy: 'That won't be possible, sir.'

Nelson: 'What?'

Hardy: 'Health and Safety have closed the crow's nest, sir. No harness, and they said that rope ladder doesn't meet regulations. They won't let anyone up there until a proper scaffolding can be erected.'

Nelson: 'Then get me the ship's carpenter without delay, Hardy.'

Hardy: 'He's busy knocking up a wheelchair access to the fo'c'sle, Admiral.'

Nelson: 'Wheelchair access? I've never heard anything so absurd.'

Hardy: 'Health and Safety again, sir. We have to provide a barrier-free environment for the differently abled.'

Nelson: 'Differently abled? I've only one arm and one eye and I refuse even to hear mention of the word. I didn't rise to the rank of admiral by playing the disability card.'

Hardy: 'Actually, sir, you did. The Royal Navy is under-represented in the areas of visually impairment and limb deficiency.'

Nelson: 'Whatever next? Give me full sail. The salt spray beckons.'

Hardy: 'A couple of problems there too, sir. Health and safety won't let the crew up the rigging without crash helmets. And they don't want anyone breathing in too much salt – haven't you seen the adverts?'

Nelson: 'I've never heard such infamy. Break out the cannon and tell the men to stand by to engage the enemy.'

Hardy: 'The men are a bit worried about shooting at anyone, Admiral.'

Nelson: 'What? This is mutiny.'

Hardy: 'It's not that, sir. It's just that they're afraid of being charged with murder if they actually kill someone. There's a couple of legal-aid lawyers onboard, watching everyone like hawks.'

Nelson: 'Then how are we to sink the Frenchies and the Spanish?'

Hardy: 'Actually, sir, we're not.'

Nelson: 'We're not?'

Hardy: 'No, sir. The Frenchies and the Spanish are our European partners now. According to the Common Fisheries Policy, we shouldn't even be in this stretch of water. We could get hit with a claim for compensation.'

Nelson: 'But you must hate a Frenchman as you hate the devil.'

Hardy: 'I wouldn't let the ship's diversity co-ordinator hear you say that, sir. You'll be up on disciplinary.'

Nelson: 'You must consider every man an enemy who speaks ill of your King.'

Hardy: 'Not any more, sir. We must be inclusive in this multicultural age. Now put on your Kevlar vest; it's the rules.'

Nelson: 'Don't tell me – health and safety. Whatever happened to rum, sodomy and the lash?'

Hardy: 'As I explained, sir, rum is off the menu! And there's a ban on corporal punishment.'

Nelson: 'What about sodomy?'

Hardy: 'I believe it's to be encouraged, sir.'

Nelson: 'In that case ...kiss me, Hardy!'

The above has been 'borrowed' from another source.

Is it true that serving at sea today a matelot has to include in his kit: slippers, to prevent spreading infections from his/her feet, and a dressing-gown, to prevent embarrassment to anyone *of any sex*?

I can understand the ban on smoking below decks.

Does anyone have a link with the modern Royal Navy to enlighten us?

Vic Chanter

There is quite a lot happening during 2005, as well as being the 60th Anniversary of VE & VJ Day it is also the 200th Anniversary of the Battle of Trafalgar, and the death of Nelson.

Street parties and other events are being held all over the UK to celebrate VE & VJ Day. These events can be funded by the Home Front Recall scheme, and up to £20,000 can be granted, (this is the funding that I have applied for and am awaiting the outcome). If you have an idea for a celebration that could be funded go for it, but be aware! There are one or two clauses to the funding that can be difficult to overcome; all of it must be used, (nothing can be returned). But when applying for the grant each item must be priced, you can't just say it will cost £15,000, and hand in a receipt for that amount, for instance I know that at this moment the hotel accommodation will cost £9,990, but by May 13th it could be nearer £11,000. The same goes for other items, at the moment I know what the costs are, but by the time the award is given they could have gone up or down, I hope they either remain the same or go up a bit, some items I have overpriced, so going down in price would not be a help, it would mean we have money left over, the worry then is what do you do with it officially and legally. The rule is to have nothing left over, if there is then you hand the whole amount of the grant back. A Catch 22 situation.

The TS Phoebe hold a Trafalgar Night Dinner each year, I have not heard from them about this year yet, but perhaps they may be putting on a parade or something that we can join in? Although we do show a small presence each year at their Trafalgar Night Dinner, perhaps something special may induce more of our members to attend

Take Care all of you, and we hope to
See you on the 13th May.
Roy & Lil.