

HMS Phoebe Association



Newsletter

December 2002

Secretary's Report.

Greetings everyone. The year 2002 is almost at a close, and what a year it has been with all the rain, floods and gales. I sincerely hope that no one was flooded or had any gale damage.

The AGM/Reunion at Coventry went very well, the hotel, being a four star one, was great, not as many there as we had hoped there would be, choosing a central place would, we thought, enable lots more to attend, we were wrong of course, we can only hope now that next May we will see a few more. The hotel has been booked, and we recommend you reserve a room ASAP using the enclosed Hotel Booking Form. I say ASAP because this time instead of booking a 100 plus bedroom hotel as normal, (which we do not half fill), we have booked a smaller 58 roomed one, also prices of reserving a larger hotel in Bournemouth are far greater, we would also have to state the number of rooms we would want, which is, as we have learnt, impossible to do. The Russell Court Hotel is situated just a short walk from the Pier and Town Centre. There is, I think, ample parking on the forecourt, but please keep to the marked bays. We shall be looking into the Grove hotel next door to the Russell Court in case we have need of it for any overspill. During the past year we have been represented at the TS Phoebe venues, of course most of these happen during the week, making it difficult for members to attend, also letting us know about the venues too late makes it difficult to inform members in time, but I do not think we have missed any out, except for the Memorial Day Parade, but as the TS had our Standard on loan for a Standard Bearers Competition it may well have been paraded with theirs.

Our visits to Bournemouth during the past year for the organising of the Commemorative Seats and Memorial Stone and a Hotel proceeded well, the actual ceremony of unveiling the seats and stone have yet to be organised, but it will come to fruition with the help we are getting from Mike Fox and TS Phoebe. Mike Fox, bringing his persuasiveness to bear, has had the gravestone donated by a stonemason. A plaque for the stone is next; we think a brass one, suitably inscribed, would be best, we shall have to bear the cost of this unless we can find a benefactor, the cost is in the region of £200. We are also very pleased to report a rather large donation for the purchase of the seats has been received, as the donor wished to remain anonymous. I took it upon myself to thank the donor on behalf of the Association. I will now arrange for the purchase of the seats.

At the AGM I issued all attending members with a Financial Report from the Treasurer. I am sorry to say that I made a bit of a bxxxx up in the copying of it by accidentally hitting a couple of wrong keys, although the end totals were correct, our minute secretary, Sylvia Kent, pointed out a couple of mistakes. However the mistakes have now been rectified, and another copy is enclosed. The treasurer (smacking me round the ear), points out that the books can be inspected at any time. My abject apologies to you all.

Staying with the AGM/Reunion it was another successful one, with most attending asking if we can go there again, no reason not to at the moment, it will be discussed at the next committee meeting. The buffet went well on the Friday night, plenty of food and a good variety, a couple of shipmates arriving later after the buffet was cleared away were also able to get a meal. Most went shopping or sightseeing on Saturday, I found a Mobility shop and was able to hire a scooter, (free) so I got around really well and visited the Car Museum and Market. We did not quite make it to the Cathedral. I understand you had to pay to take photos in there?? We had called the AGM for 1630, everyone attending was seated by 1645 and the meeting commenced, all went swimmingly until it came time for my report, then Rosemary Quantrel came forward, she presented a bouquet to Lil, then a big box to me, in it was a Cut Crystal Jug from the association members and guests present at the reunion, a truly magnificent present for our Golden Anniversary which was the week before, also a lovely engraved photo-frame, with a picture of me from many years ago in it. Then other presents arrived from so many members. I was so overcome the tears flowed, the report I had written out went overboard, as did the welfare one too. Lil and I could not get over the accolade we were receiving.

We thank every one of you very much for your congratulations, the many cards and the wonderful presents. Sunday was a quiet day, 41 were staying over to Monday, we moved into another room on the Sunday evening, a nice relaxing time spent drinking and talking. Monday found us saying our

goodbyes. Lil and I came with a full car-load, expecting to go home with just our case and box, instead of which we ended up with more than we brought, but what a lovely weekend we had.

S/m Neil Avery has set up a web site for the association on the Internet, at the moment it is only set up, nothing has been added to it yet. I sent Neil some photos and pictures of the crests, which he had asked for, no doubt he is looking for other items as well, so if you have anything that you would like to be seen on the site, send it to Neil, he will do the sorting and editing. It is something that I have wanted to do for a long time, when Neil asked me if he could do it. I jumped in with both feet with a "Yes", I never seemed to get further than the front page, even that got a bit muddled.

Our shipmates who returned to Malta for the re-enactment of 'Operation Pedestal' had a wonderful time, although one or two returned with 'Gippo Tummy'. I expect many of you saw the centre page picture in the Sun picturing the group of veterans who attended. (I have obtained a coloured copy from the Sun), in the foreground and to the right stands S/m Jim Hutchinson. (he looks to be the shortest one there), I am not sure but it may be shipmates Maurice Brown and Bruce Walker standing near him as well? I'm sorry to say that since Jim returned home he has been for a stay in hospital. I have a short account of the celebration by S/m Vic Chanter who was there, see page 7/8. That is all for the moment. Roy

Welfare:

At the time of writing Jim Hutchinson has been taken into hospital again, when I spoke to him earlier he said he was going in to Guys Hospital for a series of tests, I think he went in earlier than expected, unfortunately a tumour on a lung had been diagnosed, and the tests were to do with that. Jim said he has finished with diving, although he will be assisting the divers at Chatham Navy Days. I have not heard any other news regarding 'Rattler' Morgan, who is now in a residential home, because of the care he needs. S/m Fred Silk is off to hospital for tests, and S/m Sid Hall is coming along fine. For myself I am not too bad, just from the waist down needs a overhaul, I have had X-rays taken of both knees, so may find out what is wrong with them this week. Sorry if I lead you into believing my hands were too bad to write, hence the letter from Lil, although I do write with a pen at times, no one but Lil can decipher it, (not even me), that is why everything is done on the computer. We shall be away for Christmas and New Year, in Cornwall, we hope to pay a visit on Ron Gill to see how he is doing while we are there. Doris Sharpe from Maidstone is not too well, we hope she soon gets better. Our friend Silvester McDonald in New Jersey is not at all well, stomach complaints have meant undergoing operations, we do hope these have been successful, although I know he is in a lot of pain. To keep him a little bit informed, Lil sends him a batch of the Navy News now and again, his family out there like that and avidly read them. It was great to see Margaret Burnet getting about at the reunion after her leg operation. we hope things are improving for you Margaret. Bob Harvey says he is not too well at the moment, but had a great 80th Birthday Party, which made up for it.

The reunion at the Leofric Hotel, Coventry, saw the Welfare Fund grow in size thanks to the marvellous injection from the Raffles, a big thank you shipmates and friends for the many prizes you donated on both Friday and Saturday, and also a winner once again was the auction of our last 1 Litre bottle of Pusser's Rum, it was sold to a consortium of members from Plymouth, who, I think, were a bit surprised to find their last bid of £40 no one could better, but it went down well with them, and I mean that literally? (not strictly legal by licensing R&R).

Des Myers continues to improve, we may even see him at the next reunion, keep it up Des. Some shipmates could not make the last reunion because of hospital appointments, I hope all went well with them, and they are on the road to recovery. I have not had any more reports of ill health, so let us hope it carries on like that, and every one can enjoy the festive spirits soon to be upon us. One thing I was very pleased to receive at the reunion was some information given to me by S/m Bob Phillpott, which I have since acted upon with great success. We keep reading that people, especially the aged and infirm, are not claiming what they are entitled to, consequently there are millions of pounds waiting to be paid out, but you do not get told what you can claim for. Using Bob's advice I went to the local DHSS Office and asked for an Attendance Allowance Form, and was given one straight away, also some advice on filling it in You must be over 65 to receive it, (if you are under 65 it is called Car-

ers Allowance, but is almost the same form) the allowance you receive is TAX-FREE. If, like me, you are in receipt of Poll Tax and Rent rebates you do not lose any of that, or any other allowances, you do not have to declare the Attendance Allowance to any one, it is solely for your use, that point is quite clearly stated in the booklet that comes with the form. It does not matter how much you have in savings, or how much you have coming in, you still get it, there is no question that asks you what you have regarding income or property.

The form is dated when you get it, you then have six weeks to return it in the enclosed envelope, once your allowance has been set, it is back dated to this date, my one took three weeks to go through, the money is paid monthly, my first payment will be on Monday (£225) and that is being paid into a Building Society acc', you can have it paid in different ways, the form tells you what, and how. The least amount payable is £36 a week. There are other claims as well, I have mentioned the Carers Allowance, there is also the Disability Living Allowance, I have not gone into this one, but it is something that you could be entitled to **if you are under 65**. Another one is the Low Income Allowance, but you have to be aware that this one may not be tax-free. **This is not a charity hand-out, it is what you have been paying for all these years, and what you are entitled to.** Give me a ring, talking is easier to explain what I did, and what I got.

Just How Green Are You? (Vic Chanter)

Is your garden plagued with cats, snails, slugs and grubs? Hellooo! Through the years I've fought a fairly successful battle against everything that nature threw at my garden with an armoury of insecticides (systemic and otherwise), slug pellets and traps, and trowel and plastic bags for the cats' doo-doo. Even if you're only an occasional TV viewer, you can't have missed the odd gardening programme.

I didn't realise how much time and money I was wasting on the battle I was waging. 'Let nature take care of it for you,' they said. I did! This year I waited for the ladybirds to gobble up the usual crop of aphids, greenfly, and blackfly (they were a little late this year), and for the birds to help themselves to the caterpillars and grubs. I stopped putting down slug pellets because of the dear little pussycats; besides I had a pool full of frogs to do the work.

After a short spell away I returned to find that nature had really taken over. But no one had told the predators there was a feast waiting on every plant. What wasn't infested with insects had been eaten away by snails and slugs. I began to think that someone else was feeding my frogs. I wasn't going to wait any longer for the word to get around. After I'd sprayed the plants and cleared the dead foliage. I placed what was left in the compost bin. Now I had always covered that with a thin layer of soil, but Alan Titchmarsh, in one of his programmes, assured me that this wasn't necessary. You know me, I like to experiment - I never learn! Come Spring, I usually have a fine load of workable compost.

By now it's July and Marjorie, my wife, says, "Have you seen your compost heap?" I had to confess I hadn't. "I thought not," she said. "You haven't got one!" And sure enough when I opened the lid all I had was a crop of bloated slugs and snails - some of them were even mating - and my frogs were no match for them. So I've replenished my armoury. Organic gardening? They must think I'm green.

"Whispers from the Fleet" (Vic Chanter)

We, as members of the HMS Phoebe Association, have survived to see our respective ships - cruiser and frigate - being 'pensioned off and scrapped.

Like me, there must be many who have served on other ships that were lost by enemy action and have become war graves. We can then perhaps appreciate the feeling of the members of the HMS Prince of Wales and HMS Repulse Survivors' Association, as the mission for the recovery of the ships' bells takes place in the waters off the coast of Malaya. Navy divers from Hornsea, Port Solent, are attempting to thwart the efforts of salvage hunters who have already stripped the stricken warships of important artefacts and the propellers.

Some years ago, the nameplate of HMS Repulse was found in a flea market in the Far East, recovered and donated to the RN Submarine Museum at Gosport in deference to the nuclear submarine Repulse. The good news to date is

that, after over 60 years, the bell of HMS Prince of Wales has been recovered and resurfaced, ready to be returned to Portsmouth. Navy divers, however, are still trying to beat the salvage pirates to the recovery of the Repulse's bell, thought to be lying nearby.

How I stayed one 'ship' ahead: (What do they say about a moving target?)

<u>Ship etc.</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Service</u>	<u>Outcome of ship etc.</u>	
Southampton	Cruiser	28.04.39-16.12.39	sunk air	10.01.41
Edinburgh	Cruiser	17.12.39-02.03.40	sunk Uboat	30.04.42
Galatea	Cruiser	03.03.40-20.05.40	sunk Uboat	15.12.41
Dunkirk	Beaches	27.05.40 - 04.06.40	captured	05.06.40
Phoebe	Cruiser	09.09.40-09.10.41	survived	
Eridge	Destroyer	10.02.42-30.03.42	Sunk MTB	29.08.42
Aetos	Destroyer	31.03.42-31.12.42	(?) Greek	
Kingsmill		06.06.44 Gold Beach	survived	
Calpe	Destroyer	13.05.45-10.10.45	survived	
Sussex	Cruiser	21.10.45-16.12.45	survived	

Joining Ship by S/m Derek West.

On a cold February morning in 1947, my boys training finished, I left HMS Ganges heading for Chatham RNB, from there I was sent on Embarkation Leave and on my return to barracks a draft chit to HMS Concord, a newly built destroyer, pennant number R63. If I remember correctly, I considered myself then to be a fully paid up member of the 'Jack me Hearty*brigade*.

I was to join "Concord" at Portland early in March, it is a bit hazy trying to remember what happened fifty odd years ago, but one thing I do remember well is looking back to the shore late in the Afternoon, after the ship had sailed out of harbour, and thinking, "Blimey" (or words to that effect), "I'm off to the China Station for two and a half years, I won't see these shores for a very long time".

We took part in exercises en-route for Gibraltar, the Bay of Biscay was at its notorious best during this part of the voyage, and I had my first taste of 'roughers' and a bout of seasickness. I had the pleasure of being on Morning at Watch as the ship neared Gib, I was one of the bridge lookouts and was thrilled to sight the Rock just as dawn was breaking. We went alongside the dock where we spent a few days. I had my first run ashore in Gib (Boys were only allowed shore leave till 1900) to the Fleet Canteen cinema, I took in with me a big bunch of Bananas, not having seen a banana since 1939 I 'scoffed' the lot, I have not been overly fond of them since then?

The next part of the voyage was to Malta and more work-ups and evolutions, but it was much warmer and except for the swell, much calmer than our trip down to Gib. Then one day the boys were all mustered together to be told that HMS Phoebe was short of a few boys, and some of us would be drafted to her, volunteers were asked for, but as not enough volunteered others were detailed off, me being one of them. I was rather disappointed about that, I had been hoping that getting to China I could check on what I had heard about Chinese girls, I did find out later in life, but that's another story, and the stories were wrong anyway!

About ten of us boys were drafted to HMS Phoebe, and after some sort of joining routine we were allotted our 'parts of ship'. I ended up in the Quarterdeck Division under P/O Bungy Williams and L'Sea 'Dinger' Bell, we spent what was left of the day unpacking our gear, not enough lockers to go round, nothing unusual about that as I was to find out in future drafts. Although there were already boys on board, I think they were signal boys, we spent some time finding our way about the ship, and making new 'oppos' and in the morning after divisions I reported for duty with the quarter deck division, we were met by P/O Williams who told us that, as we were Ex Ganges boys we would know all about climbing masts so he had a nice job for us, we drew buckets cloths scrubbers and a dollop of soft gooey soap 'Teepol' from the store, and under the direction of L/Sea Bell taken to the Mainmast and told to get aloft and start scrubbing it down, and so we had joined our beloved Phoebe, and a new phase in our lives had begun. **Derek West.**

(Note from Secretary) Thanks for that tale Derek. I followed you onto Phoebe in '48, also straight from Ganges, and my divisional P/O was a Bungy Williams, but we were Topmans division, I remember him to be a great bloke, very kind to the boys, you could always get a 'tickler' from him. Our Divisional Officer was Lt De Pass, we nicknamed him 'Daphne' he knew less than what the boys did, and was always in trouble with the Commander, I actually saw him get a kick up the backside from the Cdr one day on the bridge when he gave a wrong helm order.

Here is another episode of S/m Vic Chanter's '**Travels with my Wife**'

Those of you who remember my visit to St Moritz (**Travels with my Camera**), will no doubt be interested to know how we travelled there - Well, maybe not.

My wife and I had decided that we were still young enough to take in a European coach trip, this was many years ago, you understand. As the coach pick-up point was local, it was going to be a sea-crossing to Vlissingen a Dutch port via the ferry from Sheerness. Oh good! I would be going by the site of my old training ship, HMS Wildfire. Now Marjorie, my wife, who as a girl had worked as a clerk in the RN Dockyard at Portsmouth during the blitz of the harbour in WWII, eventually joined the WRNS and hoped to be assigned to boat's crew-either locally or overseas. The Royal Navy, in keeping with methods of other services, obligingly made her a pay-writer and drafted her to Chatham-where we met for the first time. Apart from her trips to the Isle-of-Wight, she had no experience of ocean sailing.

On the way to Sheerness I tried to prepare Marjorie for the violence of the North Sea, recalling pictures of vessels shipping white and green ones. I then began to doubt the fortitude of my own stomach-I'd been a landlubber for many a year - so perhaps, in a way, I was trying to excuse my own forthcoming weakness. I need not have worried. Only once had I ever seen the North Sea so flat and as calm.

During the early part of WWII a film crew was sent aboard my ship, HMS Galatea, to shoot scenes of action for a black and white film called 'Convoy': guns blazing, panic on the flag deck, flags being hoisted. 10 inch lamp flashing with us taking in lots of 'oggin'. Oh, we all did our bit, but the weather and the North Sea weren't in the Union. The on-location scenes had to be shot with dark grey filters, and I think the studio shots had buckets of water thrown around in the background. (Very Jim Davidson). Marjorie was very impressed with our crossing, and I was quite relieved.

The tour of Holland, Germany, Austria, Liechtenstein, Italy, Switzerland, Luxembourg and back was a great success, made the more interesting at the borders by the amazing aptitude of the checkout personnel with special gizmos juggling the different currencies. No wonder the Euro is now popular in Europe. After settling into our small cabin for the return crossing, we had a meal and strolled into the lounge to enjoy a drink or three and listen to the small band. They were so

good we decided to dance, but soon the drinks started to 'kick in. We had danced together for years and had developed a perfect rapport, but somehow, somewhere we had lost our timing; close together we would lurch, but once apart we drifted further apart. At one point we seemed to be running across the floor, then suddenly it was uphill all the way. It was at this point we noticed the band, the front row were leaning to the left then slowly swayed to the right. They kept this up with exaggerated and ever-increasing motions until it was obvious that dancing was no longer advisable. It was the ship doing the Rock & Roll and not us.

We were at last in the North Sea that I'd come to know and love (?).

We staggered to our cabin, battened down everything moveable and 'lashed' ourselves into our bunks for the journey home.

Vic.