

HMS Phoebe Association Newsletter

December 2007



Here we are almost at the end of another year, I expect the year has passed all too quickly for some but not others, I am among the others. Probably because of the health thing, but hopefully that is in the past now, I still get the odd twinge now and again but taking the tablets helps a lot.

My thanks to everyone who sent cards and well wishes and thanks to Shipmate Ian Gough who stepped in when I felt I could not carry on with the reunions anymore, it helped me quite a lot. Talking about reunions, I felt very ill-at-ease springing on you the rush to get your reservations in, and was most surprised to have some arrive in a couple of days. Hotels normally ask for deposits at least six months in advance of arrival, there was nothing different here, it was the shortage of time I could give you that made it look different, but I am pleased to say that Lil and I spent last weekend at the hotel and were able to obtain some changes. Deposits are now put back to the end of December, a good date for all reservations to be in would be a week before Christmas day about the 23rd, this would give us a few days to sort them out enter them into the ledger and sent off to the hotel. I don't expect everyone can reserve by that date but I do request everyone who can to help us out by doing so. We will be having our own function rooms as normal, but we share with other guests the dining room and main bar. This made very little impact last weekend at the Sheffield reunion, we saw no more than a dozen guests using the hotel, most waiting for their flights. The changes made to our visit are as follows:

Arrive Friday, keys available from 1200. Bar open for drinks and snacks. I advise you to get your welcome pack before using the bar as attached to the pack will be a discount bar ticket for drinks and snacks, show this ticket whenever you order it will enable you to have a discount. (Happy Hour is now from 1200 to 2300 or later all the weekend).

Fri Dinner from 1900 will be Carvery. As you enter dining room you may be asked how many in your party, tables may be laid for two, four, six & eight. Each table is numbered and each number will be called to the Carvery in sequence, this should make serving quicker. It will be the same routine for Saturday and Sunday nights. Breakfast Sat, Sun, Mon is help yourself from the Carvery there was plenty of almost everything one could think of for breakfast and no restrictions. Tea & Coffee was in Thermos jugs and surprisingly hot & tasty. There will be a finger buffet at Sunday Lunchtime and a Carvery roast for Dinner. Coaches: It is hoped to lay on a

couple of coaches during the weekend, one to Birmingham City Centre on Saturday and one to Warwick Castle and Stratford on Avon, Sunday. The Sunday trip will be split between Warwick and Stratford. We are sorry but due to the increase in cost of coaches we are asking for £2 per trip. Later, when you pay the hotel bill, we will ask if you require seat/s. The main bar and lounge are quite big, other function rooms a not quite as large, more narrow, the dance floor is small and separate to the seating arrangement. there is a bar in each room. Entertainment we have to get ourselves, Friday night is arranged. Saturday & Sunday night TBC. Our bedroom last weekend was very comfortable, good double bed, Power shower/Bath/Toilet, Tea & Coffee, TV. Settee, Chair, & Table, Triple glazing kept the road noise down to nil, 3 lifts all working. Ample Car parking. No 900 bus stops two minutes from the hotel, believe it leaves from the City Centre Bus Station. Taxis are £7 /£12 from the station. (Bus free for over 60s) I will find out more about traveling later on. AGM will be Sunday morning after breakfast. Padre Ray will be saying prayers each morning. Raffle prizes requested for Fri & Sat night.

Federation of Naval Associations (FNA).

Their AGM/Reunion will be held at the Lyme Bay Holiday Village, Seaton, Devon. From Friday 29th Feb - Monday 3rd March. A Booking form is enclosed. A good & lively weekend, join Lil & Roy at the venue.

Copy of letter received:-

Dear Sir or Madam,

The Decorations and Honours Register is now accepting registrations for the Commemorative Edition to be published in the spring of 2008.

We believe that many of your members are eligible for inclusion and we would welcome their entries in this new and unique book.

Registration is free of charge and painless, either via our web site www.honoursregister.co.uk or by simply sending in an individual's name, list of medals, decorations and/or honours with dates awarded, to us by post to the address shown below. The closing date for registration is 29 February 2008.

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Please see press release <http://www.honoursregister.co.uk/PROct07.pdf> which contains all the information your members should need to participate in this new reference book. Perhaps you may kindly print it off and post it on your member's notice board or mention the Register in your member's magazine or newsletter. (*See note below*)

The Register has been featured in the Daily Express, the Daily Telegraph, the British Legion magazine and Medal News. Our Editor, the honours expert Charles Mosley, was recently interviewed on BBC Breakfast and SKY television. If you would like any more information please do not hesitate to contact the writer. Thanking you in advance for your help and support.

Yours faithfully,

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*NOTE - I am only sending a copy of the press release to shipmates who have honours attached to their names. I apologise if I have missed anyone out, or you feel you should be included, if so please contact me.
 Secretary - 01235 211501.*

S/m Derek West has upheld the HMS Phoebe name at quite a few parades and dedications during the past year by carrying the Standard with such dignity and aplomb. The Standard is no lightweight, 90% is thick heavy-weight silk even the staff bends under the weight, Both S/m Bob Hobbs and Derek are not big guys but both carry the standard to perfection. We thank Derek and Bob for their commitment. Although Bob suffers with his back we hope we can still call upon him in the future.

**For Reference: The Treasurers address is the same as my address.
 See Members List.**

I have been looking for a location for the 2009 reunion, I know its 17 months away, but arranging events early is fast becoming the procedure. Quite a few of the hotels that cater for reunions hold what they call Showcase Weekends, some are just one day, most are two sometimes three. I have been to a few of them, even one night venues are well worth going to and everything except the bar is free. They are usually Half Board, one or two make it full board. Entertainment is laid on each evening, and there is not usually a limit of how many from each association can attend. They can be held any time between September and March. I do not very often get the information regarding dates in time for a newsletter. But all it takes is a phone call to me to see if there is anything available. All we ask you to do if you go to one is to see if the location would be viable for us to hold a reunion there. I was lining up the Round House at Bournemouth for 2009, but that has been scrapped, I have found it not to be suitable, we may have to go further afield. There are a couple of hotels in Oxford that may be ok, plenty of sights to visit here including working steam trains. If you have any venues you want us to look at just remember pricing, distance and train stations are the main factors..

Sadly I regret to inform you of a email sent to me from the granddaughter of shipmate Henry Smith to say Henry passed away in his sleep on Nov 10th. A message of condolence has been sent.

Remembrance Sunday, November 11th:

Lil and I spent the Saturday night at Chaplain Ray's. The following morning we met up with shipmates Bob Hobbs. wife Pat, and daughter Emma and her partner, later S/m Stuart and Yvonne Bundy arrived. Bob was able to carry the standard in the parade, and Stuart laid our wreath at the Towns Memorial. When that service was over we moved across the gardens to our own memorial to set up the PA and meet other ladies and gentlemen who usually come to our service, we had over an hour to wait before the Mayor was due which gave us plenty of time to meet everyone. Caroline was with us again parading the Wrens Standard, also Bournemouth British Legion Standard bearer, some of the younger sea cadets & Marine cadets were there parading their Standard. Several members of the Wrens association

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As we approach Christmas we move into the “goodwill to all men” area and I thought it an opportunity to write a story of feminine heroism. We learnt at school about Nurse Cavell and Florence Nightingale, but I do not recall being told much about Grace Darling’s heroic deed.

Grace Darling was the daughter of a lighthouse keeper on the Farne Islands off the coast of Northumberland. The beauty of these islands belies the treacherous obstacle they pose to ships, with their jagged rocks waiting below the water’s surface. On September 6th 1838, a violent storm sent down the SS Forfarshire at the Big Harcar rocks, $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile from the Darling’s Longstone Lighthouse. Of approximately 60 crew and passengers on board, nine escaped by using the ship’s lifeboat, and nine survived clinging to the rocks, the plight was realised by Grace and her father William at dawn on the 7th September. In the absence of any of Mr Darling’s sons, Grace accompanied him in their boat, a cobbler, in a bid to save these stranded survivors. As her father leapt onto the rocks to help the survivors Grace rowed the cobbler back and forth to the lighthouse with each of the nine survivors, the four crewmen and five passengers sheltered in the lighthouse for 3 days until the storm abated and they were returned to the mainland. News of the dramatic rescue was first picked up by local papers, the ship’s faulty boilers took precedence over Grace’s stirring role. Amidst several pages devoted to the wreck in the *Warder of Berwick-upon-Tweed*, the heroism of “two individuals” is praised. Even in these first accounts, myth impinges upon reality. According to the *Warder*, Grace “urged her father to go off in the boat at all risks,” Grace easily fulfilled the role of the courageous, selfless heroine by her actions alone, however the more imaginative journalists, eager to create the most sensational copy, began to fill in the gaps with sentimental fabrications.

For example “the cries of the sufferers on the remaining part of the wreck were heard during the night by Grace who immediately awoke her father”. As Grace’s sister Thomasina pointed out some years later, for Grace to have heard the cries over the din of a gale force storm was heroic in itself. Journalists also romanticised the story, the *Newcastle Chronicle* reporter claimed, “One of the old seamen was moved to tears when he saw a young female of slender appearance periling her life for their preservation”.

Grace’s story was ideally suited to sentimentality and romanticism, the remote and beautiful location of the Farn Islands, the power and terror of the sea, her age and maidenhood, comely appearance, even her name -

no fiction writer could not have conjured up a more angelic character, a loyal devoted daughter content and fulfilled in her role as a housekeeper. Queen Victoria herself wrote to Grace praising her conduct and awarded her £50 for her courageous actions. But it was among the British general public that ‘Grace-fever’ really took a hold. She received countless letters requesting locks of her hair or pieces of the dress she had worn during the rescue, her friends feared she would soon need a wig to cover the loss of her hair. Portrait artists, the paparazzi of the day, clamoured to do her portrait. Five weeks after the rescue William Darling requested any other painters requiring sittings by him and Grace take their likeness from any of the seven paintings already done. In the mid 18th century automated transfers of her daring adorned trinkets, plates, postcards, chocolate-boxes and girls annuals. These mass-produced mementoes enabled her story to pervade households throughout the country. The Grace Darling legend intensified after her death in 1842. Grace died from consumption in her fathers arms just four years after the rescue. A longer life may have seen Grace marry and grow old. Instead she remains frozen in time, forever the devoted daughter and heroic maid.

.continues from P 5..... were in attendance, as was staff from TS Phoebe. It was very pleasing to see Mike Fox was able to attend. Mike has been very ill and lost a great amount of weight. Alderman Emily Morrell Cross joined us and laid the wreath for the Association. Although the sun shone there was a cold wind, everyone was glad when the Mayor at last arrived, but give her due, she went round and met everyone.

Chaplain Ray could not attend this year, in his place he arranged for Chaplain Jonothan Williams, he turned out to be a very tall policeman who carried out the job very well. Once the service was over and the Mayor gone people stood around chatting then slowly drifted away, we thanked everyone personally for attending, a pity there were only a few shipmates, no one local to Bournemouth. After stowing all the gear away in the car Lil and I went up to the TS Phoebe HQ, I had a couple of items for the HQ and also they said some eats would be available, but it was all gone when we got there, however I did give them a Ensign last flown by the frigate on its way to be scrapped, and a huge picture of the cruiser donated by S/m Stan Evans. Another successful Remembrance Day.

S/m Jim Pounder has taken a turn for the worse and is in hospital. He lost control of his legs and could not stand, we do not know how long Jim will be in hospital but hope when he does leave he feels a lot better.

The Treasurer tells me there are still some subs outstanding, if you are not sure you have paid them, phone her to find out, it will be in your records.

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There will not be new members list for next year, details of new members and amendments will as usual be in the newsletters, please look out for them and amend your list accordingly.

In the past we have posted newsletters first class, the difference between first class and second class is 10p, we post 170 newsletters to UK addresses 6 times a year (1,020) present cost of postage £346.80, cost for 2nd class £244.80 saving £102.00 per year. This saving will offset the cost of printing materials, Toner, Ink, Paper etc. If at any time we find a need to get newsletters to shipmates PDQ they will go 1st class.

Reminder Re Hotel Booking: Please get your reservations and deposits for the hotel to me by the 23rd December, I have to send a cheque to the hotel before Jan 1st. We need to send in as many as possible, **this does not mean you cannot reserve later.** Late reservations may! have some bearing on the type of room allocated??

Our Veteran shipmate diver Jim Hutchison has at last called it a day, after 65 years searching Davy Jones Locker he is hanging up his lead weighted boots and huge helmet. Jim is known world wide for his diving skills non more-so than his skill in getting the cruiser to Brooklyn after the Point Noire torpedoing.

Many present day professional divers began their careers at Jim's Diving School. For many years he presented shows in dockyards and in tanks, always wearing the ancient diving gear while his younger colleague's wore the frogman and scuba equipment. Jim is not giving in easily, he will still have his stall at shows etc, depicting all his photos and other diving memorabilia.

We congratulate you Jim and hope you enjoy your "semi retirement"

The Historical Diving Society held their annual dinner in Falmouth, knowing that Jim was retiring they presented him with a "very nice plaque" and a poem especially written for him, the poem is reproduced on the back cover

THE BATTLE OF DOGGER BANK

At 4.45 pm GMT on the 23 January 1915 Rear Admiral Hipper sailed from the Jade with the 1st and 2nd Scouting Groups of the battle-cruisers, the large armoured cruiser Blucher and four light cruisers to scout the Dogger Bank region of the North Sea and attack any British light forces in that region.

Unfortunately the order to Hipper from Admiral Von Ingenohl, head of the German navy, was intercepted and decoded the British and Vice-Admiral Beatty with his Rosyth based battle-cruiser force and the Harwich force of light cruisers under Commodore Tyrwhitt was ordered to rendezvous at Dogger Bank at 7.00am on the 24 January. The British units left port only minutes after the German fleet.

At 7.14 am. just before daybreak of 24th Jan the German light cruiser Kolberg on the portside of the German fleet sighted the light cruiser Aurora of the Harwich force. Aurora challenged the German ship which opened fire scoring two hits, Aurora returned fire also scoring a couple of hits.

Hipper turned his heavy units towards the firing thinking there were only light enemy units in the area. Almost immediately on turning Strelson saw the smoke of Beatty's battlecruiser's to the north-north-west. He decided to head for home and so turned to the south west at 7.35 am towards the German Bight. Hipper at first thought the British ships were battleships, which he could easily outrun, but by the time he realised that they were battlecruiser's the range had already dropped to 25,000 yards. The German Line was in the order Seydlitz, Moltke, Derflinger with the large armoured cruiser Blucher last. The British pursued in a staggered line ahead formation with Lion leading followed by Tiger, Princess Royal and then the slower New Zealand and Indomitable.

Blucher was the slowest German ship at 23 knots and along with some of the coal fired torpedo boats slowed the German force down while the first three British battle-cruiser's reached 27 knots, at one point Beatty ordered the impossible speed of 29 knots to gee on his force, the two older

and slower battlecruiser's of the 2nd Battlecruiser Squadron gradually lagged behind despite exceeding their trial speeds. The British light forces tried to get in a position to attack but the speeds were too high and as the smoke they were generating was interfering with gunnery, Beatty ordered them out of the way.

At 8.52am Lion opened fire on Blucher but the range was too great. By 9.00am Blucher was within range, 20,000yards, and Lion commenced firing followed by Tiger and Princess Royal, the first hits on Blucher being achieved at 0909.

The Germans returned the fire concentrating on Lion. As the range closed New Zealand joined the firing and Beatty ordered his ships to engage the corresponding ship in the enemy line except Indomitable which was not in range. Unfortunately Tiger included Indomitable in his calculations and so joined Lion firing on Setdlitz, leaving Moltke alone. To compound her error Tiger mistook Lion's fall of shot for her own making her aim ineffective.

At 9.40 Lion scored a damaging hit on Seydlitz which penetrated the barbette of the rear turret and set fire to some of the shell cordite. The flames rose up into the turret and through a connecting door to the second turret killing the crews of both turrets, 159 were lost. Fortunately for Hipper both magazines were flooded before things got worse. Lion was not having it all her own way, by now she had all three leading German battlecruiser's concentrating their fire on her, and she was repeatedly being hit. The most serious hit was from Derflinger causing her port water feed being contaminated and port engine shut down.

Blucher had taken heavy punishment and her speed had dropped to 17 knots and was forced to drop out of line, Beatty ordered the lagging Indomitable to intercept. Lion speed was also dropping and about to be overtaken by Tiger and Princess Royal. As this happened a periscope was thought to be sighted by Lion, Beatty ordered a 90 degree turn to port. This had the effect of forcing Hipper to cancel an attack he had ordered by his torpedo boats. Once clear of the perceived danger a change of course to the north was given. Beatty signalled for the enemy rear to be attacked, but Lion's wireless antenna were destroyed, her lamps had no power and all but two of her signal halyards had gone, a signaling error by Beatty's Flag-Lt, Cdr Seymour meant that the signal was combined with a course change to the north-east and so read "Attack the rear of the enemy, bearing NE" - which was the Blucher. Beatty had to watch helplessly as his newly ap-

pointed second in command, Rear Admiral Moore in New Zealand led the British force against the already doomed Blucher, and let the rest of the German force escape. Blucher was sunk by torpedoes from Arethusa and destroyers. As survivors were being rescued a British stoker, “Nobby” Clarke was surprised to be greeted by a German sailor with “Hello Nobby fancy meeting you doing here”. The German sailor had been a neighbour of Nobby’s before the war. Whilst survivors were being picked up a German seaplane and a Zeppelin bombed the operation.

We were about to send a subscription reminder to shipmate John Sommerfield when we had a letter to say John can no longer relate to things and wished to resign from the association. But before he did so he wished to catch up on his subs.

Our thanks go to John and the hope that his health improves.

I apologise for the newsletter this time, I have not had anything much to put in this one. I scanned the internet for something new but could not find anything worth telling you about. I suppose the most discouraging news at the moment is Football, perhaps we should make the national game Uckers I’m sure there would be a few old salts who could win a cup for us even if its only for arguing over the rules.

Petrol has gone past the pound a litre mark, where will it end. The tax and VAT made from this latest increase means at least one could be cut, it was reported that 9p could be taken off a litre and still the Chancellor would be raking it in. And I remind you again, there is millions waiting to be claimed in benefits, make sure you are getting what you have paid for over the years, why should foreigners get what is rightly yours. Check with CAB, they can tell you what you are entitled to.

This story's to honour a
man we all know
Whose passion for diving
began long ago

Who said that a quart
in a pint pot won't go
They did not know Jim
as I'm going to show

It's a tale of adventure
and real derring do
And the best of these stories
is that they are true

He wed his young Vi
and he set off to sea
To defend the Empire
for his King and Country

Aircraft in a swamp
with a pilot to find
T'was not only the plane
that our Jim left behind

"You're so brave" they all said
with those crocs down below
Because they are so fast
and you are so slow

Now this was a shock
our Jim he went white
With the thought of those crocs
and their terrible bite

Hi joined HMS Phoebe
he was standing on deck
When a German torpedo
turned it into a wreck

Poor Jim was knocked over
and onto his knees
When he found that his boots
were full of mushy peas

And the fish swimming round
him were licking their lips
They thought for the moment
that he'd had his chips

But he had no intention
of being their supper
He was thinking of dinner
washed down with a cuppa

He grabbed a dead shark
made it into a raft
got picked up by a ship
a more comfortable craft

When he came to the Dive shows
he was quite a star
Drawing crowds all around him
from near and from far

He'd arrive with Jimobilia
and an old Tirpitz box
Helmet, boots, suit and cox gun
and a pair of old socks

And there he would stand
with a mike in his hand
and carry us all
to a far away land

A land full of divers
all set in the past
Of lead weights and a helmet
and gear built to last

This year out in Malta
we learned of our plight
Of the terror bombs
which fell night after night

How they waited for convoys
and we thought of young Jim
And of all the young men
who sailed there with him



That land was indepted
they gave him a prize
The Freedom of Malta
in return for supplies

Back home in Blighty
he set up Medway Diving
Jim's family life and his
business were thriving

He dived in the rivers
he dived in the seas
He dived in the pitch black
with mud up to his knees

He searched for a pastime
with alternative kit
Ditching lead for irons
found that golf was a hit

So just close your eyes now
and picture the scene
A man in a red hat
out there on the green

His shoes are much lighter
and smaller in size
Our pint sized hero with
twinkling blue eyes.