

# HMS Phoebe Association Newsletter October 2008



1940-42

I start this newsletter wishing S/m Ken and Sylvia Kent a happy and contented life in their new home. Ken & Sylvia moved house several weeks ago, they now live at: 44 St Stephenson Court, Rainhill, Hull. HU5 4DD, a new phone number as well:- 01482 447018. Please make a note of this in your members list.

Another addition is a welcome back for S/m Peter Potts. Peter left the association some time ago but has now returned to the fold, unfortunately his partner Joan is now in a care home in Northampton. Peter has taken on his old number of 62, and lives at:-

1 Hanover Close, Windsor, SL4 5NX. Tel 0779 6484701. Staying with the members list, please add No 222A Maureen Fellowes, to the Associated members list.

Please delete No 122, S/m Eric Owen, who, because of extremely poor health, is unable to carry on with his membership.

Also S/m Tony Raven, although having paid this years subscription has decided to resign as from September 2009.

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You may have got this newsletter a couple of days early, as Lil and I went away for a week and this weekend we are off to Babbacombe for the HMS Sheffield reunion and AGM. The hotel is the Trecarn and is now owned by Shearings, who are pulling the hotel down later to build a new one, in the past it has been a favourite hotel for ships reunions but I do believe it will be used for coach parties in the future. After the reunion, as we are almost into Cornwall, we have decided to carry on with a week at my daughters cottage near Lands End. Home again about the 12th October.

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As regards subscriptions there are still a lot outstanding, can we have them please, phone us if you are not sure they have been paid.

**PLEASE RETURN YOUR SUBS FORM WITH  
YOUR REMITTANCE**

A lot of members are not returning their subscription forms, we require them and use them as a confirmation of subs being paid. not sending them back may lead to you getting a reminder Treasurer.



*The cover photo this time is of a group of Phoebe's 1941 crewmen, the main person is Stoker Leslie Bennett, I believe the others are engine room department as well. Are you in the photo, if so, do you remember Les? Would you be willing to write or talk to his daughter or son in law who want to gather some info on his life aboard. Phone or write to me.*

*Roy Pavely*

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S/m John Vickers sent in the following short tale:-

After completion of my training my first draft was to Dundee to join the liaison crew comprising of one officer one killick and seven communication ratings on a Dutch destroyer *HMNS Tjenk Hiddes*. The ship was undergoing repairs so we were billeted in the submarine base HMS Ambrose, where exceptionally good food, easy going routine, and a city with a surfeit of bonny lassies made this a very pleasant stay.

Our officer, Lt Peter Franks, who came from Jersey and had served in the same capacity previously on a Dutch submarine in the Pacific explained to us the different routines, customs and food we were likely to encounter. With regard to the latter he suggested we give it a try and should it not be to our taste, we could draw our own rations and cook it ourselves. The Dutch did not get a rum allocation so we kept our own supply in stone jars, our tots of neater's were very generous! Spiced meat balls with Sauerkraut and mashed potatoes swimming in pure fat for dinner, and for tea the Dutch favourite of whole raw herrings, all served while doing sea trials in a rough sea around Bell Rock lighthouse was enough to convince even the hardest seafarer amongst us that our own cooking was the lesser of two evils. Despite our lack of culinary skills, edible meals were produced appreciation of which was enhanced by the aforementioned generous tots of neat rum! We also received extra pay for being aboard a foreign destroyer, but! we received it rather spasmodically, resulting sometimes in small amounts then other times in large amounts. We received a large payment when we were in

Rotterdam, and Lt Franks suggested we put any surplus to our immediate requirements in the safe in his cabin, this we did! in my case it was the princely sum of £10, a lot of money in those far off days, I was given an IOU. Shortly afterwards we sailed for Pompey where we were to be disbanded, on arriving at Pompey I asked for our money, but on opening the safe we found it was like Mother Hubbards cupboard! Bare?

Knowing Lt Franks propensity for the gin bottle we could hazard a guess as to where our cash had disappeared to. He made his apologies to us and dished out cheques to us all for the sums involved from his personal bank account, we then went our separate ways.

Sometime later whilst berthed at Piraeus I visited Athens and encountered another member of the liaison team who asked if I had cashed my cheque ok as his had bounced. Having no bank account I had cashed mine at the local grocer while on leave with no problem.

One Sunday after I was de-mobbed, I was reading the juicy bits in the N of the W and I came across an article about an ex Naval Officer who had been living in a house of ill repute in London, and had done a runner with the ill-gotten takings, he was sentenced to a term in jail during which on his 25th birthday he inherited from a relative in Jersey £2,500, an absolute fortune in those days, and you are not wrong, it was Lt Franks.

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*I must say I have been very surprised lately, I have had some articles from members to put in the newsletter, I have been getting the occasional article and the rest from off the internet. This time there are three articles I can reproduce, one you have just read and two more to follow, so this newsletter won't have so much in it written by me, "I can hear you applauding" I started this type of newsletter years ago, it has to have four pages added each time, it won't work unless it has four, and years ago we had twenty pages, then it went down to sixteen pages, but it became so hard to find articles of interest to fill the pages that we went down and stuck at twelve. It is still difficult to fill the pages, close up the gaps, use 10 font instead of 12 and we would be down to 8 pages.. **So keep the articles coming Please.***

This next item from S/m Mick Keir, who kept his promise to send a article, I had better not say too much or he may suggest I meet him in the ring??

*Many who have served in the Far East know how balmy the evenings are. I was in company in the Royal Malayan Navy's Senior Rates Mess on one such evening. The flowing Tiger tops and brandy made for an enjoyable occasion. The "club-swinger" (PTI) was one of the group and he brought the conversation round to boxing- it turned out he was to organise a boxing team to take on the Malayan Army, he was short of and looking for a 'light middleweight'. For some daft reason I piped up and declared that was the weight I thought at when I boxed as a sprog! No more was said then!!*

*Come Monday Morning I was called to the gymnasium and told I was in the team, nasty!, I could not refuse for as we are all aware to lose face in the far east is social suicide, or worse.. The training started immediately and it was cruel, in precis it amounted to early nights; no alcohol; no sex! plus daily workouts with the team. In a blurr of time and sweat the Navy team arrived in Kuala Lumpur to take on the Army, the contest to be staged in a large hangar which came the evenings events was full to capacity with spectators. On the morning of my fight I went down with the dreaded "dog" I reported sick thinking happily that this was my way out of my bout. The army doctor who examined me, (A true Sadist), thought otherwise and prescribed some pills for me, four in number. I tell you if a chassis was mounted on them I'dve had a go-cart`.*

*So into the ring and my fight, still in a bit of a stupor I hung over the ropes ogling those those gorgeous European women that were being squired by the top brass that filled the seats if the first front rows, those cheong-sams are marvelous, they're something else! The bell sounded and I turned to face my opponent, strewth! he was the original "brick" from the "s..thouse". I knew my upset stomach could not take a straight punch, so what to do? I took the fight to him before he could settle. Mercifully it was over pretty quick thanks to his ability to impale himself on a few straight lefts coupled with a right cross or two. I was chuffed when the ref stepped up and stopped our bout in the first round and declared me the winner on a TKO, not a moment too soon as the pills were wearing off & I had to run. I retired after that with a title Federation of Malaya Army 1962 Light Middleweight Boxing Champ. followed by my name. "Well done Mick"*

A bit of lighthearted banter now:-

## **THE COMPUTER**

### **SWALLOWED**

#### **GRANDMA**

**The computer swallowed grandma.  
Yes, honestly its true!  
She pressed 'control' and 'enter'  
And disappeared from view.  
It devoured her completely,  
The thought just makes me squirm.  
She must have caught a virus  
Or been eaten by a worm.  
I've searched through the recycle bin  
And files of every kind;  
I've even used the Internet,  
But nothing did I find.  
In desperation, I asked Google  
My searches to refine.  
The reply from them was negative,  
Not a thing was found 'online.'  
So, if inside your 'Inbox,'  
My Grandma you should see,  
Please 'Copy,' 'Scan' and 'Paste' her  
And send her back to me.**

Mick met Paddy in the street and said, 'Paddy, will you draw your bedroom curtains before making love to your wife in future?' 'Bejaysus Why?' Paddy asked. 'Because,' said Mick, 'the whole street was laughing when they saw you making love yesterday.' Paddy said, 'Stupid twits, the laugh's on them I wasn't home yesterday.'

Last night, my wife and I were sitting in the living room and I said to her, "I never want to live in a vegetative state, and be dependent on some machine and fluids from a bottle. If that ever happens, just pull the plug. She got up, unplugged the TV and then threw out my beer. She's such a bitch" .....

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Little Suzie asked her Mum if she could take Lassie for a walk, but Mum said "Lassie is on heat dear, you had better ask your Dad. Suzie found her Dad in the garage, "Dad, Mum said Lassie is on heat and to ask you if I can I take her for a walk" Dad stood up, "Just a minute Suzie" said Dad, walking over to his bench where he raised a can and poured petrol onto a cloth, then going over to Lassie he rubbed the the petrol into her hind quarters. "That should stop the dogs going for her" he said, "Just take her once round the block" Suzie set off with Lassie on her lead, five minutes later she walked into the garage on her own, No Dog!, Her Dad looked at Suzie then asked where the dog was. "Oh! she ran out of petrol".said Suzy "And another dog is pushing her home!"

**Contracts to build two Royal Navy aircraft carriers, the largest and most potent warships to be designed and built in the UK, have been signed by the MOD and industry today, Thursday 3 July 2008.**

The contracts, worth in the region of £3 billion, were signed with a new UK maritime joint venture, formed by BAE Systems and VT Group, called BVT Surface Fleet, and the Aircraft Carrier Alliance onboard existing aircraft carrier and Fleet Flagship HMS Ark Royal at Portsmouth today, Thursday 3 July 2008. The future aircraft carriers, to be named HMS Queen Elizabeth and HMS Prince of Wales, will dramatically improve the UK's ability to project expeditionary air power over the coming decades and will be a highly versatile and potent joint defence asset, able to meet the widest range of tasks. The carriers are expected to enter service in 2014 and 2016 respectively; once they enter service they are expected to remain in the fleet for at least thirty years.

Defence Secretary Des Browne said of today's announcement:

"This is a historic day for everyone in defence. The two aircraft carriers will provide our forces with the world-class capabilities they will need over the coming decades. They will support peace-keeping and conflict prevention, as well as our strategic operational priorities. Today's contract signing seals the future for thousands of jobs, and ensures that we will have a Royal Navy fit for the 21st century."

Baroness Taylor, Minister for Defence Equipment and Support, added:

"This is truly a national project, involving companies from the Clyde to the Solent. Construction work will create or sustain around 10,000 UK jobs at the peak of production. I am delighted that we have signed the contracts for manufacture today and I look forward to first cutting of steel for this exciting project later this year." The carriers will displace 65,000 tonnes at deep load, be around 280m long and 70m wide on the flight deck, accommodate around 1,500 personnel and operate a mix of up to 40 aircraft.

First Sea Lord, Admiral Sir Jonathon Band, said: "I am delighted with today's news that the contract for the two new aircraft carriers, to be named HMS Queen Elizabeth and HMS Prince of Wales, has been agreed and signed. These ships, with their embarked aircraft, will provide the UK with a potent and powerful aircraft carrier force that will deliver air power in support of the full range of future operations at sea, in the air and on land."

## Friday While or No Friday While

By Roy Walsh.

In 1954/55 I served as a Leading Seaman on HMS Loch Alvie in the Persian Gulf. During our voyage to the Gulf we called in at Trincomalee, Ceylon then. One of our Stokers, whose name I have forgotten, caused mayhem by thumping a POME and became a Captains defaulter, he was sentenced to several months DQs. When it was decided where the stoker should serve his detention it was unbelievable. He would be taken to an Army DQ situated many miles north of Singapore. This meant he would have to be flown from Colombo having first experienced an overnight train journey from Trinco'. You can guess who was detailed to be his escort, you're correct, Me!! I was detailed by the 1st Lt who briefed me and said that I would not be away for long, no more than a long weekend, and I should pack a small case, this I did with Shaving kit, change of underwear and socks etc.

We were picked up from the ship and taken to the railway station and then underwent an un-acceptable experience. We were shepherded onto the train which was in a filthy condition with hard wooden slatted seats. We underwent a all night journey to Colombo where we were met and taken to a air-base. We had to wait for some considerable time for an RAF flight to take us to Singapore. This was to be my first flight and I did not enjoy it.

We arrived at Changi airport and was met by an RN Patrolman and escorted to a Naval Barracks where my shipmate was taken from me and put in cells, from there he was escorted by Military Policemen to the Army Detention Centre. In the meantime I was making enquiries about my flight back to Colombo then I received the most devastating news. "You will not be flying back, but will await the next RN Ship going to Ceylon". What the hell was I to do now with no money, and no kit. Asking when would I be leaving I was told the date of departure was not known and I would have to be billeted in the Transit Mess. There were lots of bods waiting to go to different places, I was the senior rating and was put in charge of the mess, this made me the 'Rum Bosun'!! and my word what a story. When I mustered to collect the mess rum ration I was given at least twice as much as we were entitled to. it appeared there were no records officially kept of the number in the mess, it altered from day to day, there were no records kept for duties it was so slack we never did anything all day long.

Can you imagine what it was like to have more than a double rum ration, some of the men were even under 21! I did not let any of it get ditched, all the gash got spirited away quite quickly. Now tell me you would have acted differently. Most of us slept through the afternoons before we spent the evenings in the canteen drinking Tiger beer. No one wanted to know about us, but time was causing concern, what about my pay and my kit, I needed a change of clothes badly.. Money was a concern I had none so I contacted an officer and was advised to request a loan, which I did do and got one, it would be deducted from my fortnightly pay, this carried on for several weeks and it worried me. Then suddenly I was told to be prepared to travel, HMS Newfoundland was arriving and I would be taken aboard for the trip to Trincomalee, As soon as I boarded the cruiser I was made cox'n of the seaboat and kept various watches. It was here that another unfortunate and undesirable encounter as far as I was concerned happened?

I was reporting to the bridge at the start of a watch and was confronted by Mr 'Bloody' Cooper a Commissioned Gunner we knew each other because we fell out and I was punished by him in the Gunnery School at Chatham when he was a Chief GI, he remembered it too, but luckily I never ran into him again before I left the ship. Now to find the Loch Alvie, but she had sailed round the coast to Colombo en-route for the Persian Gulf via Southern India, which meant I spent another terrible night amongst absolute filth on a train with wood slats for seats, I was glad to get off and head into the docks to find my ship waiting to sail to the Persian gulf. It had not been a long weekend nor had it been an annual leave, and what a coincidence when we eventually arrived back in Chatham barracks I was deployed into the Barrack Guard and was used to escort shipmates to Portsmouth DQs. Thank the Lord it was not Singapore again, and these trips to Portsmouth were equivalent to a Friday While.....

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I was a Boy at Ganges with Roy Walsh and we were together on the Phoebe, I spent a long time searching for him and two other mates, then Roy suddenly turned up requesting to join the Association, and funnily a lot of that time I had spent searching for him was because he had moved from Sudbury, Suffolk and all the time he was living just a few miles away from me. I am still searching for my other pals, who knows, one day we may all get together again.

RP.

**It is with much regret and sorrow my sad duty to report the passing of S/m Jim Pounder who crossed the bar 2330, Wednesday 10th September. Jim had been in bad health for a very long time, he was confined to his bed most of that time and passed peacefully away in his sleep at home. Our condolence and sympathy has been passed on to Jeanette and family. The funeral took place on Monday 22nd at Upminster Crematorium S/m Bob Hobbs, a childhood friend of Jim and family, carried the ships standard, Pat Hobbs accompanied Bob, unfortunately S/m Ian Gough & Stuart Bundy, who served with Jim and Bob aboard the frigate could not attend. Arrangement's are in hand for Jim's ashes to be scattered at sea.**

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**I regret to inform you that shipmate Walter Thompson BEM crossed the bar on Wednesday, September 17th. Walters son, Peter, phoned me today, Sunday, 28 th to say Walter had suffered greatly with cancer and his passing would have been a relief. Unfortunately I was too late to contact any shipmate in the Ipswich area to represent the Association at the funeral.**

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Parading the Standard September 2007 - September 2008. (S/m D West)  
*“During the 1st week of September 2007 I had the honour of parading our standard at four separate events here in the south east. The first was at Dover on Wednesday Sept 3rd on the sea front at the unveiling of a new monument to the Merchant Seamen who lost their lives during all conflicts. There was 26 standards on parade and a good number of veterans, the parade was lead by the Band of the \Brigade of Gurkhas. It rained briefly during the open air service, and we all got a bit wet. On Saturday 6th Sept I was in Canterbury for a parade and thanksgiving service for the Territorial Army, it being their centenary. The TA, a large contingent of all service veterans and all the cadet services mustered in Pound Lane car park ready to march off at 1030, it was said 80 standards were on parade, but I counted just 62. It was a grand turn out. As we fell in it started to rain and it continued as we marched through Canterbury until we entered the Cathedral and typically it stopped. Once again we were very wet.*

*After the rather lengthy service two other Thanet standard bearers, and myself went by car to the Isle of Sheppey where the Sheppey RNA were holding a band concert and a parade of standards to commemorate the 250th anniversary of Lord Nelsons birth, a free tot and a buffet meal was arranged for tall 26 standard bearers. I am pleased to say we had dried out by the time we got to Sheppey, and happily it did not rain for the afternoon parade.*

*Sunday 7th, bright and early found a coach party of 43 MN, RN, & RM Veterans accompanied by their ladies and five standards proceeding up the M2 motorway to Tower Hill, London for the Merchant Navy Day service and parade. It was grand parade lead by the RM Band, and no rain this time, with predominantly MN veterans, plus a good sprinkling of RN & RM as well. The senior officer present who took the salute was retired Admiral of the Fleet, Lord West of Spithead. After the parade he made a point of speaking to all the standard bearers in turn while his good lady dished out the standard bearers commemorative bar. (we had got one from Sheppey RNA as well). The admiral paid particular attention to our standard as it was the only RN ships association standard on parade. He asked me several questions ~~about~~ the association and seemed genuinely pleased to see us there. There were plenty of RNA and other services standards, but as would be expected a lot more Merchant Navy ones. I had one more parade lined up, Trafalgar Day, but that has been cancelled as the standard has been asked to be paraded at a shipmates funeral. I enjoy parading the standard and with the permission of the association to carry on again in the future”.*

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Its time to remind you again that 2008/2009 subscriptions should have been sent by now, have you sent yours, if there was no reminder with this newsletter then you are fully paid up and no need to wonder if!

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Shipmates are now booking into the Eastbourne Hotel for the next reunion, there is no rush at present, Jason, the manager said he would like to get as many as possible booked in by the 7th April. I assume this would be the cut-off date for cancellation refunds. The hotel is not massive, just 60 rooms, 11 of which are single rooms. It is advisable to book in ASAP



I think its the engine room department round about 1941/42  
Are you in the picture.

*(3rd from left back row some clot in wrong dress of the day, 'blue cap')*

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Admiral Cunningham  
welcomes HMS Phoebe  
back to Alexandria and  
congratulates the crew for  
their efforts in evacuating  
thousands of  
New Zealand troops  
from Crete whilst  
undergoing fearsome  
bombing