

HMS Phoebe Association Newsletter

June 2004



In days gone by in ships of wood
A sailor did what a sailor could
In war or peace they sailed the seas
A special breed of men are these.
In troubled waters or seas o'fair
Steering a course where no man dares
As in the past is true today
They boldly sail into harm's way.
Oh God protect these valiant men
And bring them safely home again
To open arms and kisses warm
Protect these warriors from every harm
When faces wrinkle and beards grow grey
Minesweep sailors will gather and say
Forgive us our faults, forgive us our sins
Where the fleet goes, we've already been.

Before I do anything else, I must apologise for the late arrival of the last newsletter. Lil and I hurried home from the reunion on the Monday morning because I had an afternoon appointment at the hospital, as well as having the last couple of pages of the newsletter to complete. The appointment was kept, and I was accepted as ok for my knee operation the following Thursday, (A week early). Wednesday was the day I was to go into hospital, so Lil and I started early that morning on the last of the newsletters; by 1100 we had them all stapled and in their envelopes, 15 minutes later they were ready for posting, we went to the main Post Office to do this to make sure they were collected on time. It was while I was waiting to be admitted to a ward in the hospital that we heard the Oxford PO Sorting Office staff were on strike, that meant the newsletters were stuck in the sorting office until after the strike, which did not finish until last Friday night, some of you may still be waiting for your newsletter today! I hope this one does not arrive first??



The hotel we have reserved for the 2005 reunion faces the sea, and the town is only a short walk away, the Rail Station is about half a mile away. It does have a parking area but I believe it is 'smallish'. Lil and I will be travelling down to the hotel on the 28th May, so I will keep this newsletter open until then so that I can enter any details we get. The cost at the moment is £85 pp for two nights F/B, plus £42.50 pp if you wanted to stay a third night, however, we may be able to get a bit off if we fill the hotels 76 en-suite rooms. At the moment I do not know how many of the 76 are Double, Twin or Single rooms, I think I must warn you that for a lot of us Weymouth was one of our old, and infamous 'watering holes', I think a lot of shipmates will want to visit for this reason, so my advice to everyone is to get booked in as soon as possible. It will be a matter of "first come, first served" in reserving rooms. Just in case the hotel does get fully booked, I will see if there is another one close by for any over-spill. I will also look into a coach trip, one place I have in mind is the Yeovilton RN air museum, it is about an hours drive away. There may also be another place to visit as an alternative, if anyone has an idea on this subject let me know. I cannot say what the cost will be but what-ever we decide on it will be partly subsidised like we did for Scarborough. I am also looking into applying for the Lottery Awards for All, this time we may be lucky and get something, the full amount of £5000 would be very handy. As announced at the Scarborough reunion, Councillor Mrs Emily Morrel - Cross is the new Mayor of Bournemouth. The inauguration ceremony will take place on May 28th, this will already have happened by the time you get this newsletter, I have sent her a congratulatory letter on behalf of the association, and a report on the ceremony will be made later in this newsletter. The TS Phoebe will again be holding their Trafalgar Day Dinner in October 2004, the date is Saturday 16th October, confirmation of where it will be held will be published in the next newsletter.

Last year shipmates who attended the dinner stayed over-night at the Laguna Hotel, Suffolk Rd South, Bournemouth. Tel 01202 767022. Although we were billeted in the hotels annexe, the rooms were comfortable and en-suite, with the usual hotel facilities, the main hotel and dining room was just a short walk through the hotel grounds, there is also an heated indoor pool at your disposal. (£24 pp B&B). Car parking is on site.



Personal note:

An unreserved thank you to everyone who sent me a get well card, and to all who

have phoned their best wishes, I can't tell you how much I appreciated having so many. My knee is healing up nicely, the fourteen staples have been taken out (Ouch!) and the long thin scab has come off, (Ouch! again) it is still tender to touch and painful, but the throbbing pain has gone from the joint area, and is now congregating in the lower leg bone, I expect the bone is bruised and this is what is hurting. I can walk about with the aid of two sticks, sometimes one, and I can drive the car, although I do not go far in it as yet. I have a mobility scooter which I use when taking the dog out, and to go to the local shops. As each day goes by aches and pains seem to be easing up. I have an appointment for a hospital check up on the 29th June and hope by then the knee will be completely healed, and pain free.

Roy.

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Confirmed reservations for Weymouth are coming in, so far 32 have arrived. Keep them coming.

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We have often phoned Peter Potts without success, although he is no longer a member we send him a newsletter each time and hope that one day he will rejoin. We tried phoning him today and at last we spoke to him, he is as well as can be expected, angina still plays a major part, and taking it easy is not something he is always able to do. But it was grand to speak to him again after such a long time and hope we can converse more often.

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Sick-Bay

A sad message from S/m George White, he was not feeling too good at the reunion but was able to keep it to himself, but after a consultation with a physician it has been diagnosed George has Bowel Cancer, however it is contained, and has not spread. George goes into hospital shortly to have the cancer removed, by the time you read this, I am hoping to have more news from wife Josie of Georges progress.

On a lighter note the following are extracts from the Navy News, not new news I'm afraid, but something you may have missed:-

Clyde Naval Base has been cleaning up its act with regards to accommodation for senior ranks. In line with other bases around the country, senior rates can now get their rooms cleaned, their bins emptied and their beds made.

Director Naval Base Clyde, Commodore John Borley, officially unveiled the new service, provided by Babcock Naval Services Hotel Services - and showed some of the household staff how it is done.

"We are continually striving to improve facilities here at Clyde naval base and we are aware that quality of life is very important - if senior rates get their rooms cleaned elsewhere then they should expect to enjoy the same service here," said the Commodore.

And coming south there is news of HMS Nelson shore base:-

HMS Nelson has a new name to reflect the regeneration of the Queen St site and its importance to the Navy. The site, incorporated into the Naval Base at the turn of the century, has been undergoing major building work, and as of February 2, 2004, HMS Nelson will be known as the Nelson Personnel Centre (NPC).

The tower blocks have been demolished and replaced with four Single Living Accommodation (SLC) blocks, the four blocks provide 500 single en-suite cabins, the first two blocks are now occupied the rest to follow shortly. They are to be named Sirius, **Phoebe**, Naiad and Euryalus.

Maybe each block will have a ships plaque with its battle honours on??

Forget the health foods; I need all the preservatives I can get.



New Member

WALSH Roy Boy and O/Sea 1948/50

This new member is one of the boys who was in the same mess as me at Ganges and on Phoebe. I have been searching for him for a long time. S/Mates Eric Owen, Joe Sutton, Bob Philpott, Rattler Morgan and any-one else who remembers shipmate Roy Walsh please take note. Roy P.



Some time ago the Armed Forces Pension Group was due to go to court to fight the case they were bringing regarding pensions for men who served between 1949 and 1975, we did not hear anything about the result, but in yesterdays, (Wednesday 12th May), Daily Mail there was an article about it. The article is reproduced here for anyone who are interested in what the result was and what is being done now:- Ex-Servicemen fighting for lost pensions are taking their case to the European courts after the Government refused to help them. The Armed Forces Pension Group was set up to win back pensions for the thousands of ex-servicemen and women who missed out because they served less that 22 years. The Group are victims of MoD rules which mean those who served between 1949 and 1975 received no pension unless they served the minimum 22 years to qualify. This leaves ex-Army, Navy, and RAF members who served this country for 21 years with no pension. The rules were later changed so that anyone who joined up after 1975 qualifies for a pension after just two years.

The Armed Forces Pension Group struggled to build up a fighting fund but still took

its case against MoD to court. It lost the case and the subsequent Court of Appeal case. But it has now been granted permission to take its case to the European Court of human Rights.

Holly Richmond, of Richmond Solicitors, which is handling the case, says: 'These people are getting older and less able to fight their own cause. They haven't even been given the right to put their argument forward to the Government, so we have to go to Strasbourg now'. In a separate but similar fight over pensions, many of the ex-servicemen and women travelled to the House of Commons last week to support The Pensions Trough which is made up of widows and wives of other personnel who are also protesting the MoD's stance over their pensions. The action group represents widows whose husbands left the service during 1976 and 1977 when the Government imposed pay restraints and as a result now receive much reduced pensions.

So now it seems we must wait for the European Court to decide an issue which should have been decided on by our Government when the case was first presented around 7 years ago. I think I can see their reasoning; the millions of pounds that would have had to be paid out diminishes each year that passes, the longer the pensions can be held up the more that cross the bar, making it less to pay out.

When you fall down you wonder what else you can do while you're down there.

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My War: -

Jack Slater was born in March 1925 in South Yorkshire. He lived in a two bed roomed terraced house with his parents, his eight brothers and four sisters. Jack's father was a miner and his sons were expected to work at the Colliery too.

Jack started work as a miner as soon as he left school in 1939, at the age of 14; he became a 'motty carrier'. A mott was a small numbered disc which miners used to identify the tubs of coal they had 'pulled'. He later worked as a 'door trapper', responsible for opening the heavy air doors which circulated air throughout the pit. The coal mined was flaky and used in heavy industry, ships, trains and power stations.

Jack tried to join the Royal Navy when he was 16. He applied in Sheffield and passed his medical examination, but when it was discovered he was a miner, he had to return to the pit.

Six months later he ran away from home with the intention of joining the Merchant Navy in Liverpool. He and two friends slept in an air raid shelter where they had their money and luggage stolen. They applied to all the Star Lines but couldn't get work on any boat until they had Merchant Union membership. "In Liverpool we could see all these shells bursting and there were buildings and stones flying all over the place, and these police were giving me some hammer for being there. I should have been in a shelter, they were taking me through this bombed area, it was really flattened, to this shelter and they were still bombing". Jack was sent home.

He was fined at a tribunal at the colliery and was later tried at the local Magistrates

Court. Because it was essential work, it was like desertion, and was bound over for two years for that. "I still don't want to go down the pit", I told the judge, I said, "if you put me in the Army I don't want no training - send me overseas because I am that eager to go into the forces!" and they said "No, you can't go in the forces. You work in the pit and you stay in the pit." So that flattened me, like, and I had to stay in the pit then which I didn't like at all. Back at the pit, Jack worked as a pony driver for a while. He then became a 'trammer', filling tubs with coal and moving them from the coalface to lay-bys ready for the ponies to take away.

The family house overlooked Sheffield and the German bombers seemed to turn overhead before diving towards the City. Jack can remember seeing hundreds of bombers circling the skies on some nights. Miners underground were unaware of any air raids and most of the people in the area ignored the warnings. With so many to cook for, Jack's mother served meals in two sittings. She kept plenty of hot water in a pot by the fire and the miners in the family would wash their hands, eat, and then rush into the kitchen hoping to be the first to use the bath water. While they were working down the pit, they would strip down to shorts and socks, but their clothes became filthy with coal dust. Jack still hoped to join the Army. Because of this he refused to join the Home Guard, which had become mandatory, and found himself summoned to the Magistrates Court again. He was sentenced to two months imprisonment and spent the next six weeks sewing mailbags, which he found a very difficult experience.

Jack returned to mining and never did join the Home Guard. There were no conscientious objectors working at Jack's colliery: "No, we wouldn't have them, miners are clannish you know... They brought some Italian miners over here and we were supposed to work with them but we refused". "At back end of war we had some displaced persons came, there were about ten Poles. They used to have hostels for them, some had these numbers tattooed on their arms. We didn't mind working with them though.

Towards the close of the war, Jack moved to another colliery with one of his brothers. When Jack was asked what he particularly remembers about the war years, he replied: "Just being rebellious against the pit, if they had said, "Yes, you can go into the Army", which is what they ought to have done, or "Yes - you can go into the Navy," I think that would have made my day".

Jack continued to work in the mining industry until 1960. He worked on the coal face and became a charge hand, responsible for the welfare of 32 miners.



In Memoriam: -

It is with great sadness that I report S/m Ron Gill `crossed the bar' on Thursday 20th May. Ron was, due to his various illnesses, unable to visit our reunions, but he still took a great interest in the association, Lil and I had visited him, and his wife Nancy, on each occasion we were in Cornwall, and got to know them quite well. Nancy is literally house-bound, Ron did everything for her. They have two sons who will now take on the responsibility of looking after Nancy. We do not have any shipmates living within proximity of Falmouth who can attend the funeral, but a card and letter on behalf of shipmates offering condolence and sympathy, have been sent, we will also be sending flowers, (subject to family wishes).

well now, and says he is working hard, although like many of us, he is supposed to be retired. We left the Pavilion at about 4 pm to go home, it had been a tiring day for us, and we were glad to put our feet up for a few hours. But we were glad we went and enjoyed every moment of the ceremony.

It's frustrating when you know all the answers but nobody bothers to ask a question.



Lands End - John O-Groats;

In Aid of The Macmillan Trial.

To All Friends in HMS Phoebe Association,

A sincere personal note to say VERY MANY THANKS to you all. Sorry to have missed reunion and the 'Pussers'....

It is absolutely wonderful to be supported by so many friends from HMS Phoebe Association during the Grand Tour and I really do appreciate what you contributed. There are several reasons for this. Some may remember that after spending 9 or so months fitting her out, I was lucky enough to be one of the first to sail HMS Phoebe from a Glasgow shipyard in the mid 1960's. I then spent two wonderful years touring the world and undertaking various deeds in her, with good friends such as Bungy Williams. I've never forgotten those times. Mike (Legg) was also in Glasgow for many months at the same time as me, fitting out HMS Fife. So when he eventually became Buffer and Chief Operations Sonar Control Officer on Phoebe - 6th September 1976 to 22nd June 1979 - it was sheer joy to me (by this time I was simply a civvy, but we were always very closely in touch). He and I regularly shared stories and remembered together our times aboard Phoebe. Mike once said to me that Phoebe "had that fantastic air of friendship about her all the time - which was just what I had felt too.

During the Grand Tour last month, my wife informed me that her oldest and our very dear friend will soon be helped from hospital bed by the Macmillan Nurses.

So I am very grateful to have had the opportunity to help Macmillan Cancer Relief; which is such a magnificent organization.

Hopefully you will be able to see my short write-up..

Once again, thank you dear friends.

With very best wishes, ex-Randy (Ric or Dick) Randell



Saturday 29th May: This morning I had a phone call from Josie White with an update on husband George. S/m George was feeling a bit low and in a certain amount of pain, the operation George had was carried out successfully, George will now be deciding on what course of chemo he will have. Josie said that George is being moved out of hospital today and into a convalescent home near where their daughter lives, Josie will be staying at her daughters for a few days, if you phone you may not get an answer. Josie said she is overwhelmed by the number of cards and phone calls she and George have had, and wishes to thank everyone for their kindness and concern. Our

love and best wishes go to George and Josie, and our hope that George will soon be feeling a lot better, and soon to return home fully recovered.



THE GRAND TOUR CAPE TO CAPE

25th to 30th April 2004
on behalf of M^cmillan Cancer Relief

by Roy Williams & Dick Randell

Firstly, on behalf of Roy and myself, may we thank all our sponsors very sincerely indeed for all their tremendous support, particularly those who have spent much time encouraging others to sponsor us and gathering funds from families, friends and work colleagues. These include many people in:

- Ø Transco
- Ø Pepsi International
- Ø REXAM
- Ø Underwater Maintenance Company
- Ø HMS Phoebe Association
- Ø Anti-Submarine Warfare Instructors Association.

The really wonderful NEWS is that by the time all 25 classic cars reached Cape Wrath we had collected almost £30,000 and by the time we reached Wick this was nearly £31,000



You're getting old when you get the same sensation from a rocking chair that you got from a roller coaster ride.