

# H.M.S. Phoebe Association



## Newsletter

October 2003

Sec's report: -

Hi Shipmates nice to be back in touch again, these last two months seem to be longer than usual, mainly I suppose through our endeavours to arrange next years reunion, which I am pleased to say has now been accomplished. Lil and I returned from our trip to Scarborough yesterday (23rd Sept) tired, but pleased with the outcome, we do so hope you are too.

As I reported in the last newsletter, obtaining a hotel in York for the reunion proved fruitless, reporting the results to the committee members lead to our visit to Scarborough, at first I tried phoning various hotels but none could offer a reasonable deal, then I remembered that the isle of White Tours arranged reunions for other ships associations, so I got on to them to see if they could help, as it turned out the fellow who dealt in the arranging was Mike Crowe? He informed me of two hotels in Scarborough that he had been able to organise reunions at, and would do the same for us. In the meantime Shipmate Ian Gough was going to Scarborough for a break, and I asked him to look up the hotels, which he did, one could not accommodate us, but the other one could. As I had not heard from Mike Crowe I phoned the hotel and arranged to meet with the manager, but before we went up there I had a e-mail from Mike with details of what he could, or rather had organised, and it was at the hotel we were due to visit, his price was £129 pp for a three night stay at the hotel, half board, this included a coach trip on the Saturday. Lil and I drove north to Tadcaster on the Sunday to stay the night with our good friends Sid and Moreen Hall, who we thank very much for the invitation, doing this would enable us to have more time to scout around Scarborough, just in case the hotel manager had got our details wrong, which, when going to the hotel we found the manager to be off on holiday, and we had to deal with the Company Director, also the details I had arranged with the Manager were wrong, he had thought I was asking for a reservation for 40 people instead of an estimated 40 rooms, so the date he had given me could not be had. Other dates meant we would have had to share the hotel with other guests, and after this years reunion fiasco at the Russell Court, I did not want that.

We have reserved the whole Rivelyn Hotel for the weekend of Fri 2nd - Mon 5th April, this is the weekend before Easter, the hotel has 26 twin rooms, 15 double and 18 single. The cost for the whole weekend (half-board) Friday to Monday is £83 per person, and for Friday to Sunday £56 pp. A deposit of £20 per person is required The Rivelyn Hotel is situated not too far from town or the station, a short taxi or bus ride, it is still across the bridge and part way up the hill, the No 7 bus stop is about a hundred yards from the station to the right, outside Thomas Cooks. You need to get off at the nearest stop to Albion Rd. Crown crescent is a few yards down Albion Rd on the left.

I will be sending out a map and more details of the location in the next newsletter, (December) including a hotel reservation form.

Parking on the hotel premises is limited; parking in the street is free with the ticket that the hotel supplies to its guests. If you have a disabled badge it is free anyway. We were able to arrange with the hotel to provide our own entertainment on Saturday evening; the hotel will provide entertainment on Friday and Sunday evening.

We also visited a Coach Hire company and were able to obtain a fair price for hiring a 49-seat coach for a visit to the Eden Camp Museum. We have included a pamphlet about the museum in most of the newsletters. We obtained the maximum allowed; if you do not get one but do require one, please let me know and we will send off for some more. To obtain a group booking we will have to inform the museum in advance of the number in the group. There are two discounted prices, one for seniors (£2) and one for the not so senior, (£3), if you intend to take this trip we will want to know what category you come under, (and no cheating??). It may be that we shall have to hire two coaches? Our Treasurer assures me that this will be possible, and not make too much of a hole in our funds. I think I have covered everything now; all we can hope for is a good attendance from you all. Phone me for any more info that you require. (01235) 211501.

We are still waiting for some subscriptions to come in, our Oxford Sorting Office went on unofficial strike over the weekend, and so some deliveries of mail will still be outstanding. The Treasurer apologises for her mistake in trying to get extra subs from members who have paid in advance, she hopes it won't happen again?

I am sorry to say that three members - S/m Ralph Worth, S/m Les Chapman & S/m Gerald Davies have withdrawn from the association, no reason was given.

#### Pension Credit

Pension Credit will be introduced this month, and will replace Minimum Income Guarantee. It will provide at least the same minimum income for people aged 60 and over. You may be one of them. The Pension Service will be writing to people aged 60 and over about the Pension Credit. If you are already getting the Minimum Income Guarantee, you will automatically be transferred to the Pension Credit Scheme. There is no immediate rush to apply or send in the forms after you get them. If you qualify for the Pension Credit it will be backdated to Oct 1st 2003.

Did you know if you are aged 70 or over, the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency has cut the fee for a three-year driving license to £6?

And if you are aged 75 or over your TV license is free - Phone 0845 603

6999 for more information.

Does anyone who was aboard the Frigate in 1978 remember a shipmate named Bob Phillips? Do you know how to find him? His friend Tony Whetstone is seeking him. Phone me – (01235) 211501

I have received a letter from The Maritime Steam Restoration Trust regarding LCT 3515- HMS Stalker LST 3. No 3515. She is the last Steam Driven Tank Landing Ship in the UK & probably the last in the world. The trust has been set up to restore her as a fully working memorial to all who served on the various landing craft, particularly to those who lost their lives while doing so. Help is needed either as a volunteer working on board carrying out restoration work or by making a donation towards the cost of the restoration. If making a donation would you please do so in the form of a cheque, made payable to The Maritime Steam Restoration Fund, and send to the Treasurer, Fred Kinsey, 94 Queens Close, Harston, Cambs, CB2 5QN

The following is a personal letter from, I should imagine, the founder of the Trust. It reads:

Dear Shipmate.

I apologise for “cold calling’ upon you in this fashion and ask you to spare time to read the enclosed leaflet. (See above).

As it says, this is the last steam driven LST in this country, and possibly the world. Four ex-Royal Naval men have formed the above Trust and are in constant touch with the present owners to purchase the ship subject to raising the asking price. Part of this agreement states that, upon the present owner receiving a deposit of £20,000, the trust will be able to start on the restoration. This is of course a large amount of money for four people to raise, it is not so large if we can find sufficient interested people to donate the equivalent of a couple of packets of cigarettes or two pints of beer, which is why I am sending out the enclosed leaflet to ship’s association’s and RNA branches, plus national newspapers. We feel this is a wonderful opportunity to save this vessel, the boilers and engines are in excellent condition having had very little use, the auxiliaries are still in place. A chipping hammer and a coat of paint will brighten her appearance. What is desperately needed now are funds to secure the vessel and start working on her, May I ask you to present this to your members and ask them to consider making a small donation.

Yours sincerely (signed) F W Kinsey.

Should the project not get under way, monies collected will be diverted to other ship restoration funds.

NB. It does not say what the full cost will be to acquire the ship, neither does it tell us where the ship now is, or where it will be restored, neither does it say where it will be berthed once the restoration is completed. I am therefore leaving it entirely up to the individual to do as he, or she, feels fit.

I now have the details regarding the TS Phoebe Trafalgar Night Dinner to be held at the East Cliff Court Hotel, East Overcliff Drive, Bournemouth, on Saturday night 18th October 2003

Menu:

Starters

Prawn Cocktail

Cream of Tomato Soup

Main Course

Roast Beef

Escalope of Chicken in White Wine Sauce

Vegetables

Roast Potatoes

Broccoli

Swede

Caramelised Braised Onions

Desert

Bread & Butter Pudding

Strawberry Gateaux

Followed by - Coffee & Mints.

If you wish to attend this venue please phone ASAP:

S/m Ernie Clewes by October 7<sup>th</sup> stating your chosen menu.

The cost of the dinner is £16.50 pp. All cheques should be made payable to Bournemouth Sea Cadets Mess Account (Do not send your payment to our treasurer, it is a TS Phoebe venue, which I always attend).

You must arrange your own lodgings in Bournemouth.

(Eight Association members have so far booked in)

Two Changes of Address:

S/m Alf Larkin. (*contact Secretary for details – not for public disclosure*)

S/m Henry Smith. (*contact Secretary for details – not for public disclosure*)

Remembrance Sunday: 9th November - Central Gdns, Bournemouth. We will meet at the war memorial 10/10.30am, before taking up position. We will then proceed to our memorial to lay a wreath of poppies. Our Standard will be on parade, S/m Bob Hobbs the bearer. This is all the detail I have at the moment, hope to have more info when we meet at the memorial.

British Navy fail to see the light

A Full scale Naval confrontation narrowly avoided off the coast of Kerry. Ireland:

This is the actual transcript of a radio conversation of a British Naval ship and the Irish, off the coast of Kerry, October 1995,

Irish: Please divert your course 15' to the South to avoid a collision.

British: Recommend you divert your course 15' to the North to avoid a collision.

Irish: Negative! You will have to divert your course 15' to the South to avoid a collision.

British: This is the Captain of a British Naval ship. I say again, divert your course!

Irish: Negative! You will have to divert your course now!

British: This is the aircraft carrier HMS Invincible, the second largest ship in the British Atlantic Fleet. We are accompanied by three destroyers, two missile cruisers, and numerous support vessels. I demand that you change course 15' North, I say again, that is 15' North, or counter-measures will be undertaken to ensure the safety of this ship.

Irish: We are a lighthouse. 'Your call'

("Yeah! Yeah! Heard it all before but different wording")

From Mike Kier:

The Frigate Phoebe was on one of those long deployments to the West Indies, "Cor" Talk about stress"- imagine swimming in crystal clear warm seas. lazing on sun kissed golden sands. Bar B Qs on emerald green lawns where the sea breezes competed with the strains of blood stirring, foot-tapping music (sounds like a travel brochure blurb). All very exotic if one likes that kind of thing, (*Reminds me of Ganges foreshore in '47- Roy*). It was hard work though, but someone had to do it! For those who have had similar trips, wasn't it great to go to sea again, not least to catch up on some dhobying, sleep and letter writing! It was on this trip that I learnt of the Regulating Staff's 11th Commandment. i.e. Thou shall not pay for anything. Certainly true for our MAA who had the idea that I, as 'Chippy'. would furnish him with a Phoebe crest, FREE, at every island we called in at. I said "No", which did not add to his pleasure. He was to be further displeased by events later, which makes for this spit-kid yarn.

Unfortunately there was a theft in the stoker's mess whilst on the way home; this led to sealing off of the mess whilst a locker search was conducted. The Chief Stoker, Chief ERA, 2nd MEO and the MAA were the searchers. The missing money was not recovered, but what was revealed, was that 2 out of 3 stokers had a Phoebe crest in their lockers. The MAA went ballistic when he summoned me to his office a little later. I was not bothered a bit cos' what I had omitted to tell him was about an arrangement I had with the 1st Lt. For every crest I produced for the wardroom, re official visits etc, I was allowed to turn out a similar number for private sale, a proviso being that 10% of the proceeds went to the Welfare Fund. It proved to be a winner, a 'nice little earner' so to speak. Midnight oil was burnt in the 'chippies shop' whilst me and my stoker mate worked on the venture, (naturally he got a cut of the profits), I made enough to buy a set of golf clubs in the Jacksonville servicemen's PX. Just a tiny difficulty was encountered during the enterprise, and that was painting in Phoebe's eyes to match equally, a real test, particularly after a good run ashore. So, if anyone reading this goes to the West Indies and visits an establishment where the Phoebe's crest is displayed - it may well appear as though a wink stares back at you, or even boss eyed.... "Nah! Can't be, put it down to a trick of the light"?? Yours Mike.

Just an infill.

In 1963/4 I spent the whole of the winter months on the dole. There was no work to be had, money was so tight we lived on 1d cubes of soup from Woolies, and streaky bacon, always making sure the kids had enough to eat, we were literally on the breadline, then the opportunity arose to take up Bus driving, it was a fifteen week PSV course, of one hour's driving, five days a week for which we got more dole money to cover expenses? Although we drove only for one hour, there were eight learners to each bus, so we did a full eight-hour day. It was

a very old Guy Chieftain bus, not a synchromesh gearbox, but one that you had to put the clutch and gear lever in at the same time or it stalled. The instructor stood behind you shouting in your ear to be heard above the engine noise, he tapped you on the shoulder each time he shouted, "In together, Out together", to make sure you did just that changing gear. One of the most difficult gear changes was changing down into 1st gear when you went up a steep hill, to get it into gear you had to let the bus almost come to a standstill before you could change down, then too many revs and you 'kangarooed' as you drove off. We followed a regular course, one that the instructor assured us we would be using for our PSV test. Hour after hour we drove over this course until most of us were proficient, then the instructor decided that once a week was enough for each of us. He took us into the country then, along narrow lanes and under bridges. Even now I look to see the height of any bridge I drive under? (*That's because you're not very tall – Neil*) The week before we took the test was spent driving round the course again, then on Saturday at 10 am we went to take the test, but found Margate carnival was being prepared on part of our course, and we had to go on another course, one we did not know even existed, when it came to my turn I was shaking. I missed gears, and once I turned too quick and went over a curb with a back wheel, then came the reversing round a corner to my left manoeuvre, and stopping close enough to the curb for the examiner to step down onto the path? Well for weeks we had been doing this in a certain road where there was a row of trees down the left hand side of the path, and as we reversed we waited for a certain tree to come into view in the fourth window from the front of the bus, then started to turn the wheel to the left, straightening up slowly when the bus had gone past two more trees, that always took us alongside the curb, but not this time. There were no trees. The examiner stood on the rear platform looking out and our instructor came and stood behind me and tapped my shoulder when he thought it was time for me to turn the wheel. I did, but much slower than usual, consequently when the bus was at last round the corner, although it was laying parallel to the path, it was a good 6 foot away from it, I was called down to the back of the bus, on the platform stood the examiner. He said, "Mr Pavely, if I was an old lady, do you think I could get onto the path without stepping down into the road." I looked and thought, 'I've had it', Jimmy, one of the lads said, "She could if she took a run at it." The examiner turned to the speaker and glared at him. "Let's see you do it then." Jimmy went up a couple of stairs then run down onto the platform and jumped, he landed almost in the centre of the path, and everyone clapped. "Alright, Alright," the examiner said. Then, stepping down off the platform onto the roadside he signed a paper, handed it to me, and said, "A bit more practice on that reversing, Mr Pavely," as he stepped up onto the bus for the next examination. I looked at the paper, unfolding it I expected to see that I had failed, but in nice big letters it said that I was now a qualified PSV driver. I don't think any of us failed that day, and back at the bus depot our instructor said that we all needed a bit more practice but, as the company were putting on more buses for the seasonal trade, we were to start on Monday morning. Within a few weeks of starting, new Atlantean buses were brought in. They had everything we could

wish for, power steering, air brakes, sliding doors, and almost fully automatic. They were a joy to drive after those old Guys, Leylands and Dennis. R.W.P. (tbc)

The photograph that appeared on the front of last month's newsletter (*not the website edition*) was that of HMS Vanguard, the Dreadnought class battleship, built in 1909. She was 536ft long, displaced 19,558 tons, and had served with the Grand Fleet at the battle of Jutland.

On 9<sup>th</sup> July 1917, she was at anchor in Scapa Flow when she was destroyed by a huge explosion. Of the 670 men on board, only one officer and two seamen survived, although later the officer died of his wounds. The resulting enquiry found that the explosion had probably been caused by the deterioration of the high explosives stored in her magazine.

The dangers of carrying large quantities of HE on board are borne out by the numbers of large ships that exploded in harbour during World War 1. Four Italian, two Japanese, one Russian and four British warships were lost in this way.