

HMS Phoebe Association



Newsletter

October 2004

TS Phoebe, Bournemouth.

The Trafalgar Night Dinner will take place at the Bournemouth Sands Hotel (01202 312314) on Saturday 16th October 2004, (Dinner £17 pp).

Invitations to Association members is still open, but they must be made within the next few days; some shipmates have already reserved a place. I am not sure if there are still rooms available at the Sands Hotel at this late date, but it is worth a try. There is however another hotel within walking distance of the Sands Hotel; shipmates have used this other hotel on occasions and found it reasonable, it is also within walking distance to the War Memorial and Town hall.

The Laguna Hotel, Queens Rd South, Bournemouth.
(£24 pp, B&B)
Telephone:- 01202 767022

Armistice Sunday at Bournemouth:-

The service at the Town Memorial will begin at 10 am, we have been invited to attend the service with our Standard. It will be a bit different to last year in as much that the sea cadets will be parading. After the Town ceremony, the Mayor and other council members will return to the Town Hall for a short break. From the Town Hall the Mayor will lead councillors to our memorial; the cadets will be also be parading again.

I am requesting that our chaplain, Ray Merrick, carry out a short memorial service during which The Mayor and Councillors will lay wreaths, including the laying of our own wreath. I hope to have a bugler sound Last Post and Reveille, (can't do it myself - front teeth are missing).

We owe our most grateful thanks to the Mayor, Mrs Emily Cross-Morrel, for organising the council to take part in our ceremony, we hope this will be the norm in future ceremonies. "It would be nice to see more shipmates at the parade this year." After the service we are invited back to the Mayor's Parlour where you may be able to visit the 'Phoebe Room'. Last year car parking was free in the NCP car park behind the Town Hall.

BIGOT

This was the name given to people working on the highly secret maps and documents associated with the proposed D-Day landings. It seemed appropriate to include the following in a newsletter leading up to the 60th Anniversary of VE-Day

The BIGOT maps and documents were created in isolated cocoons of secrecy. One was hidden in Selfridges department store in London. BIGOT workers entered and left Selfridges by a back door, many of them knowing only that they were delivering scraps of information that somehow contributed to the war effort.

Others with BIGOT clearances worked on Allied staffs scattered around London and Southern England. So restricted was the BIGOT project that when King George visited a command ship and asked what was beyond a curtained compartment, he was politely turned away because, as a sentinel officer later said, "Nobody told me he was a Bigot."

The system occasionally broke down....The strangest breach of security came from the London *Daily Telegraph*, whose crossword puzzles alarmed BIGOT security officers. One puzzle, on May 2, included "Utah" in its answers. Two weeks later, "Omaha" appeared as an answer. The puzzle's author, a schoolmaster, was placed under surveillance. Next came "Mulberry," code name for artificial harbours that were secretly being built in England for use off invasion beach-

es. Then came the most alarming answer of all: "Neptune."

This time the schoolmaster was arrested. Confounded investigators finally decided that the words had been the product of an incredible series of coincidences.

Not until 1984 was the mystery solved: One of the schoolmaster's pupils revealed that he had picked up the words while hanging around nearby camps and eavesdropping on soldiers' conversations. He then passed the odd words on to his unwitting schoolmaster when he asked his pupils to provide ingredients for his crosswords.

Welfare:-

It is with a great sadness and regret I report the passing of S/m Silvester McDonald's wife Virginia, she had been very ill for a long time, and on August 10th, after pneumonia had set in, she silently 'crossed the bar', our sympathy and condolence go out to Mac and his family in N Jersey, America, and hope in time they can recover from this sad moment.

Sympathy and condolence also to S/m Derek West whose wife, after a long illness, passed away suddenly.

On a lighter note a message I received with great pleasure was from S/m Gordon Pettman, of Wingham, Kent. Gordon has suffered from leukaemia for a long time, and now reports that after 45 sessions of chemo-therapy, and 35 injections, the leukaemia is now stable and he is getting back to enjoying life. However he is a bit annoyed that his long bushy beard disappeared, but hopes that that will now start growing again. We hope so too shipmate, and good luck for the future.

Shipmate John Fuller has had some trying times lately. In March he had to undergo a By-pass in his left leg, it was touch or go whether he lost the leg or not, luckily he didn't lose it. Then in August he had a massive Angina attack which kept him hospitalised for over a week. He is now waiting to go into Bournemouth hospital for a Cardiac Angiogram, and once his heart has been sorted out his right leg will undergo a Bypass operation, as John implies "if its not one thing it's another." Good luck John with the above. (At least living in Weymouth, "Nancy won't have to piggy-back you far to the reunion").

Shipmate George White is also receiving chemo treatment, and is now recovering well, one thing he is pleased about, he can get out and about now that he can drive his car. Good luck George, we hope a full recovery will soon be forthcoming.

Reunion 2005

Reservations have been coming in fast, although during the past two weeks it has slowed down, there is still a long way to go before the final date for booking through me, April 1st; from then on any reservations we receive will be referred to the hotel.

Any rooms left vacant after this date the hotel will let out to customers, but they will not be using our facilities. It is gratifying to find some shipmates are making use of the instalment plan, we thought it may be easier than paying the full amount in one go. I too am using the facility. At the moment I think everyone who has asked for a sea view has got one, a check on this will be made soon.

In with your newsletter you will find a receipt, your receipt is private to you only, it will also contain your room number and marked sea view, if your room has one! Keep your receipts in a safe place, (but not like me, I can never remember where the safe place is).

When arriving at the hotel they will want to know your name and hotel room, if you are lucky to find a parking space at the hotel, (very limited), they will want to know your car registration number. If you take your car out of the hotel parking space, don't be surprised to find it filled on your return!

Your receipt will also contain refund conditions, these are our own conditions up till April 1st when we have to send all names, cheque, and room No's, etc to the hotel, after the 1st April the hotel will take over the reservations and conditions of refunds from then on is subject to the hotel's regulations. I have been in touch with the RNAS Air museum regarding a group visit, although there is a slight reduction in the entrance fee for groups, it is not much. We hope to look into this further nearer the reunion date; so far no one has come up with any other places to visit, but I thought a trip to Cheddar Gorge maybe worth a try, this could be on Sunday, the coach fare may have to be paid by those going, (subject to funds) But don't forget our S/m Alf has offered trips on his boat for the Sunday (subject to how the sea is running). Names of those wishing to visit RNAS and/or Cheddar I will ask for at a later date.

The words 'crossed the bar' I always use when reporting a persons death. I first saw the words in a RNA report on the passing of a shipmate, and thought then that it must be a Naval saying, although I had never heard of it before. Today I attended a shipmates funeral, and at the end of the service a verse, written by Alfred Lord Tennyson in 1889, was read out by the Padre, I repeat it here:-

Sunset and Evening Star,
And one clear call for me!
And may there be no moaning of the bar
When I put out to sea.

But such a tide as moving seems asleep,
Too full for sound or foam,
When that which drew from out the boundless deep
Turns again home.

Twilight and evening bell
And after that the dark!
And may there be no sadness of farewell
When I embark.

For tho' from out our bourne of time and place
The flood may bear me far
I hope to see my Pilot face to face
'When I have crossed the bar'.

After reading it a few times the meaning becomes clear.

Further to parking in Weymouth, restricted parking on the sea front does not come into force until June 1st, you can therefore park near the hotel, the car park opposite the hotel has disabled places, but free time is limited to 3 hrs, we understand that the hotel next to the Prince Regent is also owned by the same company and they have more parking spaces there, as it is part of the group we see no reason why their car park cannot be used by us.

We have had new members join, their names and addresses are on the back page of this newsletter. As usual you will all be receiving an updated Members List probably with the February newsletter, (it gets a bit hectic here to get one done for December) I would also like to

add a page containing your Email addresses, so send me an email so that I can get them listed. <r.pavely@ntlworld.com> send it even if I already have your email address, in the subject line put Members List and I will know what it is for. There is no need for a message unless you want to send one.

Lil and I was invited to lunch with S/m Ken & Catherine Bartlett, they live about two hours drive away from us, we had a very good lunch at their local hostelry, then back to their house for a chin-wag. Ken has been looking into a trip to Burma under the Heroes Return funding, the travelling and accommodation arrangements being organised by his local travel agent, (whose husband by the way served aboard the Frigate, Ken may try and get him to join up, be convenient to have a travel agent in our midst. How about a reunion in Malta for a change??).

Although you see in your members list that Ken was a corporal in the RAF he actually got demobbed from the Army as a Major, (Long story).

Ken said that if anyone else would like to join him on the trip to Burma and the interior, making use of the funding for it etc, he would act for them, so if you have a mind to go please get in touch with him, his address is in your Members List. If you have mislaid it, phone me, Ken is ex-directory.

I am sorry but I made a slight error on the hotel booking form, the correct price for two nights should be £85 pp. and not £86.50. Very sorry about that, but the treasurer will sort it out if you sent more than you should have.

S/m Chas Mayhew was hospitalised for a short period, but is home again now, we sent a card to him wishing him well and received a phone call back, thanking us.

There have had 2 or 3 resignations from the association this year, but with the number of new members joining we still remain at 165. This is a very good number considering that the Cruiser only changed the full crew twice after WWII, and the Frigate had a smaller crew, some of which only stayed aboard for a short time. Its not bad when looking back to 1996 when the association first started and had only 22 members. '2006' will be our tenth anniversary, it would be nice if we could return to the place we first met, Nottingham, but with the amount of trouble reported to be going on there, would it be safe.

Many of you asked if we could return again to the Rivelyn Hotel in Scarborough. When I wrote to them and thanked them for entertaining us so well, I did mention that 2006 was our tenth anniversary, and was invited to spend it with them, however, Scarborough is a long way for many of you to go, but at the moment it is the only place that I can think of.

There would be no point in trying Leamington, for one thing the RNA Club is fully booked, and I am not sure if there is a suitable hotel that could accommodate us at a reasonable price. Although it is a long way off, a place to look into now would be very beneficial to us. If any one has an idea of where to go, or enquire into, I am sure the committee would be interested. But it must be a hotel with at least 50 rooms, and a dance floor, also it must have a lift to all floors, facilities for the disabled, and preferably car parking. If you have an idea, and can get some info, get in touch so I can inform the committee. Although it was agreed reunions would be held North and South, at the present time this can cause a stumbling block regarding hotels and availability. A southern area may again have to be considered.

I applied to the Home Front (a subsidiary of the Heroes Return Fund) for our next reunion to be funded by them, I have now received a application form which I am completing, (with not too many untruths, I hope). As some of you may know the Home Front Fund is for street parties, reunions and other events to celebrate VE-DAY and war service by the ARP, NSF etc, it is

also for the armed forces who were stationed at home. When I phoned to ask if our reunion could be included in this fund it was accepted, hence the application form. There is nowhere near as much to reply to as in the Awards For All application, except I have to tell them what the reunion is about and what it will do for the younger generation. The emphasis seems to indicate that your knowledge regarding activities during WWII you will pass on to the younger generation at the reunion, I was not sure how to answer this question, but with the permission of the TS Phoebe committee, (not yet sought), I thought it may be an idea to invite the senior sea cadets from TS Phoebe to join us for the reunion, the cadets could be placed among you to learn of your experiences in both wartime, and peacetime, giving them an insight into our ships' activities. I have to describe what else we will do, so I have split it up into days, ie, Day 1 pm arrival at hotel. Meet with pals we may not have seen for many years. Day 2 am - Greet the arrival of cadets(??), am/pm Visit RNAS Museum Yeovilton - recall aircraft carrier escort duties. Dinner to celebrate 60th Anniversary of VE-Day, cadets will spread among you after, talk to them, answer their questions regarding the ships activities and your own. (they may be too young to drink, so no sippers if they are). Day 3 - 9.30 am meeting for prayers and AGM. A volunteer Party will lay a wreath of poppies at the town war memorial? A nostalgic boat trip round Portland Bill is in hand, providing the sea allows it. Evening - it is hoped to have some form of entertainment relating to the 1940s, probably music, dancing and a 'sing-along'?, I take it we all know Run Rabbit Run ???. Although this is not entirely what I have quoted in the application, it will give you some idea of what is required, I have only made a rough copy, it may be altered when Lil peruses it, and she will definitely be doing the hand writing, we would get nowhere if I wrote it. I could have applied for the maximum £20,000, but wouldn't it be nice to get the £7,000 I asked for.

I was asked to give a short account of the first HMS Phoebe by a shipmate the following was written by Lt Cdr D Alexander. 1st Lt HMS Phoebe 1979:-

The first HMS Phoebe was built at Deptford, Kent by Sir John Henslow and was launched on 29th September 1795. Overall length 142' 9" length at the waterline 119'. Breadth 38' 3" Deck height 15' 5 1/2" Her armament then was 36 various sized canon. I jump to the year 1814 now when she was refitted with 46 various poundage canon those being:- 26 - long 18 Pdrs, 4 - long 9 Pdr's, 1 - short 18 Pdr's, 14 - short 32 Pdr's, & 1 - short 12 Pdr.

March 28th 1814

The previous six months had been spent by the **Phoebe** (Captain James Hilyar) and **Cherub** (Captain Tucker) searching for the American ship, **USS Essex**. The last six weeks they had anxiously kept a look-out on the Port of Valparaiso, Chile for the **Essex** and her companion, the **USS Essex Junior**, to quit the port. At 1500 on the 28th March the **Essex** was seen to weigh anchor, the British ship made sail to close her. On rounding the outer point of the Bay the **Essex** stretched her canvas to the limit, endeavouring to escape from the British ships. As a result she lost her main topmast and not being able to regain the limits of the port, bore up and anchored close to the shore a few miles to leeward of the Port, this was to prevent the British ships passing ahead of her without a risk to their ships. The **Phoebe** closed, attempting to pass close to her stern, just after 1600 **Phoebe** opened fire and continued to do so for ten minutes. It produced little effect. **Phoebe**, having increased her distance from the **Essex** by wearing, fired just a few random shots, again without any success. The **Phoebe** then decided to drop anchor and carry out a few repairs, (she had lost the use of her mainsail, jib, and mainstay). Captain Tucker was directed to keep **Cherub** under way and take a convenient station for annoying their opponent.

On closing **Essex** at 1735 the firing recommenced, but before the **Phoebe** regained her intended position the **Essex's** cable was cut, which resulted in **Phoebe's** guns

becoming more destructive. Her crew knew at this stage that victory was theirs, which was indeed achieved at 1820 hrs. The **Phoebe's** loss was small, just 4 killed, one of which was the 1st Lt. Aboard the **Essex**, of the 260 men victualled aboard, 161 became prisoners, 23 were found dead on the decks, 20 or 30 had escaped to the shore when the ship caught fire and the rest were probably drowned. The sloop **Essex Junior** was also taken after the battle and her prizes released.

In 1830 the **Phoebe** went into retirement as a 'slops ship' moored in the Hamooze, Devonport.

On May 27th 1841 she was sold to Mr J Cristal and removed from the Navy List. (Fifty Three years later the next HMS Phoebe saw action on the Benin River)

(Did you know that on March 18th 1918, the destroyer HMS Phoebe was one of the pathfinder's for HMS Vindictive in the Raid on Zebrugge Harbour?)

Lapel Badges

Our supplier of lapel badges can no longer obtain the badges in small amounts, the minimum is 100; this would be far too many for us to stock, so we have had to find an alternative supplier.

I remembered S/m George White saying years ago that we could get them from HMS Ganges Association, asking George if they still were able to supply them I rang the Association and was able to order cruiser and frigate type in any quantity, unfortunately they cost more, and are not as good as we have been getting, there is no face on the moon, they are a little bit smaller and thinner. They now cost £3.50 each. inc pp.

Subscriptions:-

There are a great number of subscriptions (52 in total) due now that have not yet been paid, probably an accidental oversight. Please do not feel offended if you find a reminder in this newsletter, phone 01235 211501 if you have a query and the treasurer will give you the info you require.

We have a few who have not paid their subs for over two years, and one we see is three years.

Subscriptions are still the main source of income for the association, without them we sink.

With the prudent spending and tight grip the treasurer has on the account, we do not see any reason to increase subscriptions for sometime to come. Secretary.

Postscript 1.

It is with much regret and sadness that I have to report S/m Eddie Gore 'crossed the bar' on 29th September. The funeral took place on Monday 4th October. Eddy had been hospitalised for six weeks during which he suffered much pain. He contracted MRSA and did not recover.

Our condolence and sympathy have been passed on to his family.

Postscript 2.

Arrived too late- On the subject of trips to former operational areas under the Heroes Return scheme S/m Ken Bartlett has found a possible tour to Burma next year which might interest those of the cruiser complement who operated along the Burma coast and into Rangoon in April/May 1945. The Rangoon anniversary date would be out because of the Weymouth reunion but a return to celebrate VJ Day would be very appropriate. The tour flies to Rangoon via

Kuala Lumpur (Malaya). It goes on to other places in Burma such as Mandalay, Shwebo and Pagan and includes a trip on the Irrawaddy river in a replica paddle steamer of the former Irrawaddy Flotilla Company (of Kipling's "Road to Mandalay" fame). Return to UK would also be via Kuala Lumpur. The cost would be about £2000 per person of which £1200 could be recovered by an individual (£2100 for an individual plus spouse or £3150 for individual plus spouse and carer) from Lottery Funds under the Heroes Return arrangements. A minimum of six people would be required for a "private" tour but individuals might be able to join another tour. Anyone interested should seek further details from Ken on e-mail akhouse@totalise.co.uk (no telephone calls, please!) before the end of October. Interestingly, connected with the tour company with which Ken is in touch is a former helicopter pilot and executive officer (Ratcliffe) of the post-war frigate. Who said it's a small world!"