

HMS Phoebe Association

Newsletter
June 2008



S/m Harry Bailey
1924-2008

Hear we are again another reunion under our belt, but not without some controversy. First let me say how we, the committee, were disappointed with the small number that turned out this year, we wonder why? Is it because we chose the wrong area, hotel or time?? Why is it that most of the men were the older members, where were all you younger ones? From a list of over 161 full and associated members only 53 turned up, the lowest number we have ever had. We cannot negotiate for low costing unless we have the numbers to back it up, so please do think about joining us at the reunions, we try to make it easier for you by running a reunion savings group, you can pay in as much as you like when you like, you can also withdraw your savings at any time, we are just a phone call away. Please do think about next year, we know travel costs are high, it is for me too, but we save up over the year. The reunion date May 15th-18th. 2009, at Eastbourne, is written on the calendar, and we work round it.

Coventry Hill Hotel was not a good venue as far as the hotel management were concerned although they did try and sort things out as and when it was needed. The Saturday coach should have been ordered by the Hotel and wasn't, it was a mad rush phoning companies late on Friday afternoon and into the evening to hire a coach, eventually we did get one.

Two coach parties arrived on Friday and stayed overnight this meant they had breakfast early which held us up, some of our members were still eating breakfast when our coach loaded. Another two overnight coaches arrived late Saturday afternoon, they went to dinner before us, but took so long at the carvery that our entertainer had to start his show while we were still eating, and at breakfast the next morning we had to wait for more food to be cooked. The AGM was held after I had the seating changed round. But everyone who had the cold meat buffet at lunch-time commented on how good it was. The evening meal was not too bad except that the roast beef I am sure was meant for the cobblers!! But even with the bother everyone said they enjoyed the weekend and will be there next year. I am getting emails to that effect as well. Although this was by far the most expensive hotel in relation to association expenditure, most of it was recovered by the Raffles and Slop sales. My thanks to everyone who helped to make it an enjoyable week end.

Now for next year at the Afton Hotel. Eastbourne.

The date has been arranged for Friday 15th May to Monday 18th May. 2009. I am sorry but there is no smoking in the hotel & bedrooms. Accom' is 7 single, 12 double and 37 twin all en-suite, (56 rooms). Enough room for 106 people, wouldn't it be nice to fill them up with our membership? Booking forms will be sent to you in the August newsletter. You book through the Hotel and not the association. £25 pp deposit required

Lil and I spent a night at the Afton and found it to be a friendly hotel, excellent staff, quick service in the dining room, the meals we had were very good with a good selection for dinner. Our room was well furnished with two small arm chairs, and radiators that can be easily adjusted.

There will be entertainment laid on every night in the ball room which is adjacent to the large bar. Car parking is on street, at the moment you pay a fee into the machines, but next year 50p per 24hrs parking fees will be paid to the hotel, (much the same as in Scarborough, but a bit dearer). Advise finding a parking space and keeping it all the week end. Train travellers, the hotel is just a few minutes from the station by busses No 12, 12a. & 90.

Bus stop is Pier Hotel/Queens hotel. Our Hotel is on the left 30 yds up the turning opposite the Pier. We will run a coach on Saturday, not sure where yet? If coming to Eastbourne anti-clockwise down M25 I found it quicker and easier to turn off onto the M23 (Gatwick) then the A23 to the A27 and into Eastbourne that way. The A22 is a narrow and congested road.

Lil and I will be off on a weeks holiday on Saturday 5th July, we will be at a holiday camp in St Margaret's Bay, Kent, but before we arrive there we will be stopping for the day at Chatham Dockyard for Veterans Day. This is a good friendly venue, a free tot as well? Gates open at 10am and it is free for veterans, but it is a ticket only affair, application forms for tickets can be had from me, phone 01235 211501. I now have 8 tickets available on a 1st come basis. (Veteran ex forces only). Phone me for a ticket or form.

Join us there with S/Ms Jim Hutchison and Derek West with our Standard.

The Demise of "Jack Tar"

"Jack Tar" - the nic-name given to a sailor. The traditional male sailor was not defined by his looks. He was defined by his attitude; his name was Jack Tar. He was a happy go lucky sort of a bloke; he took the good times with the bad. He did not cry 'Victimisation', 'bastardisation', or 'discrimination' nor cry for his mum when things did not go his way.

He took responsibility for his own, sometimes, self-destructive actions. He loved to laugh at anything or anybody. Rank, gender, race, creed or behaviour, it did not matter to Jack, he would take the piss out of anyone, including himself. If someone took it out of him he did not get offended; it was a natural part of life. If he offended someone, so be it

Free from many of the rules of polite society, Jacks manners were somewhat rough. His ability to swear was legendary. He would always stand up for his mates. Jack was extravagant with his support to those he thought needed it.

He may have been right or wrong, it did not matter. Jacks mates was the luckiest people alive.

Jack loved women. He loved to chase them to the ends of the earth, and sometimes he even caught one, less often than he would have you believe though. His tales of the chase and its conclusion win or lose, is the stuff of legends. Jacks favourite drink was beer, and he could drink it like a fish. His actions when inebriated would, on occasion, land him in trouble. But he took it on the chin, did his punishment, then went and did it again.

Jack loved his job. He took an immense pride in what he did. His radar was always the best in the fleet, his engines always worked better than anyone else's, his eyes could spot a contact before anyone else and shoot at it first. It was a matter of personal pride.

Jack was the consummate professional when he was at work and sober. He was a bit like a mischievous child. He had a gleam in his eye and a larger than life outlook. He was as rough as hell! You had to be thick skinned to survive. He worked hard and played hard.

His master's tut-tutted at some of his more exuberant expressions of 'Joie de vivre', and the occasional bout of number 9s or stoppage of leave let him know where his limits were. The late 20th Century and on, has seen the demise of Jack.

The work place no longer echoes with his ribald comment and bawdy tales, for someone is sure to take offence. Whereas those stories of daring do and ingenuity in the face of adversity, usually whilst pissed, lack the audacity of the past, and a wicked sense of humour is now a liability, rather than a necessity. Jack has been engineered out of existence.

What was once normal is now offensive.

An Omen & Justice From the Sea.

Four seamen wrestled with the cargo hatches in the raging storm. The giant waves were so menacing that they frequently had to stop to cling on for dear life...And it was while that was happening that an oak coffin suddenly swept onto the deck beside them. It was new - and empty.

Captain John Murray, 46, whose hobby was reading ghost stories, was told about the deathly offering from the sea within minutes, and he steadfastly refused the request of some of the crew of the SS Trelawney to ditch the coffin. A superstitious man, Capt Murray, though he felt uneasy about the incident, ordered that the coffin should be left. Captain Murray did not know it at the time, but his decision was to ensure that justice was done in the end.

The SS Trelawney's fantastic 1918 voyage started soon after the first world war. She was headed for the Far East and Australia following a refit at Liverpool.

The owners of the 12,000 tone cargo ship signed Murray as master of the Trelawney knowing he had been in command of a minesweeper during the war. It was a good recommendation. But when Murray came to take his ghost story books on board with him little did he know that he was to be involved in a drama as grim as anything he had ever read.

The sailing date was set for October 5th and the night before some of the all-male crew of 34 went ashore for a binge. Deck-hand Bill Grossland, who had served in the Navy during the war was among them, boasting to his new shipmates about his experiences with women in foreign ports. He had once been jilted and he said: " I don't trust women. Love them and leave them, that's how it is with me".

When the drinking party broke up several sailors returned on board to sleep it off. Others went looking for women in the sprawling dockland area. Grossland, 28, tall and handsome, went off alone. He always was a bit of a lone wolf and he preferred to try his luck with nobody else around.

He wasn't seen again until 8am the next morning, when the First Officer Dugald Cameron took a roll call. At 7pm the SS Trelawney set sail.

Three days out from Liverpool, and about to enter the Bay of Biscay, a heavy swell started to run, making life extremely uncomfortable aboard. Captain Murray stayed on the bridge until nearly midnight and

when at last he decided to turn in, he thought he heard a woman's voice. But it couldn't have been, he told himself, clearly the wind or his ears, or maybe both, were playing tricks. The strange thing was though, that his hearing had never been proved wrong before. But, too tired to investigate, he proceeded to his cabin to snatch a few hours sleep while the storm lashed his ship.

The weather had not improved by mid-morning and it was then the coffin came inboard, lying over the side and landing on the deck. Minutes later Captain Murray was inspecting the coffin, it was in good condition, he observed, and it appeared to have been never used. On unusual feature was the lid. It was hinged on one side making it easier to open.

Some of the sailors were most unhappy about the coffin staying onboard, seeing it as a unlucky omen. Nonetheless, hardly anyone failed to take a closer look at it, trying to figure out how it came to have been lost at sea. In the crews quarters later that day somebody produced a bottle of rum. It had been taken on board in Liverpool against the rules but nobody minded about that as it was passed around. And Grossland had his share. The sailors were in happy spirits when they trotted back once more to inspect the curious coffin. One man jumped in it to try it for size, and laughingly exclaimed "Its not for me, it doesn't fit"!! Others followed his example.....and they too were either too big or too small.

Then Grossland got in to try it, he stretched himself out and found that it fitted as if it had been made for him. Suddenly! At that moment, a huge wave streamed over the side and shut the coffin lid down with a loud bang, and before anyone had quite realised what was happening, the coffin was carried over the side and out to sea where it vanished in the raging waters. Though the Captain turned the ship about no one could spot the coffin in which Grossland had been trapped alive. Two days later the SS Trelawney arrived at Gibraltar, after tying up, Captain Murray was told that the police were waiting to question Grossland in connection with the murder of a girl in the dockland area of Liverpool the night before they had sailed. But justice had been done. The murderer had been committed to the deep.

The story of a remarkable A/B who never went to sea

During its long and chequered history The British RN had more than its fair share of eccentrics and odd characters in its ranks. One of the strangest seamen was the one that signed up on August 25th 1939 at the Simonstown Naval Base in Cape Town. Sth Africa. Unable to write he affixed his print to the contract and Able Seaman Just Nuisance became a fully fledged member of His Majesty's Royal Navy. The Royal Navy's first and, to the best of my knowledge, only fully enlisted Great Dane. Just Nuisance was not born a to the navy like other "old sea dogs" he chose it as a way of life. His impressive pedigree gave his name as 'Pride of Rondesboche' in honour of the Cape suburb where he was born in 1937.

A few years later his owners moved to Simonstown and their dog discovered the Navy. He loved all sailors and they loved him. It was the sailors who named him 'Just a Nuisance' supposedly because of his habit of placing his large bulk in the most awkward places and refusing to move no matter who tripped over him. He took his duty to his new found friends seriously, and regarded seeing them safely home at night to be a major part of that duty. To this end he would travel on the suburban railway into Cape Town each evening.

Many sailors having sampled the delights of Cape Town's waterfront bars and other attractions, found himself being escorted by his guardian Great Dane, onto a train that was heading for Simonstown and the naval base. That some of the sailors were not actually based in Simonstown was of little consequence, and did not bother him. Nightly he herded anyone wearing regulation bell-bottoms onto the Simonstown train. This made him highly popular with his new found naval friends, who returned his love.

Unfortunately the staff of the South African Railway did not share this feeling. Sailors had passes to use the railways, Great Danes, however, did not. The guards and conductors regularly tried to evict him from the trains, but, a Great Dane who is on a mission is hard to deter. Standing on his back paws he towered over most men, and lying down emitting the odd growl he was pretty much an immovable object.

The railway authority, harassed by constant complaints from their staff threatened to have nuisance put down. The sailors were outraged and appealed to a higher authority. Realising the value to morale of Just a Nuisance, and recognising the publicity benefits that would accrue, higher authority came up with a solution. Just a Nuisance would become a member of His Majesty's Navy and as such have his own train pass. The "a" was dropped from his name on enlistment and he became Able Seaman Just Nuisance. His time in the Navy was comparatively short. He was involved in a motor accident in 1944 and eventually had to be put down. As befits a dog who had served the navy so well he was buried with full military honours. A statue of him now stands in Simonstown and his memory is kept alive there. In the museum his collar and papers are on display. His service record is not unblemished - he was guilty at times of losing his collar, going AWOL and refusing to leave licensed premises at closing time.

He was forbidden bones for a week for sleeping on a bed in the POs Mess. Today in Cape Town his legend lives on - with Just Nuisance parades and look-alike competitions, but the truth is he was a true original, even the Royal Navy will never have another like him..

It is with great sadness I report the passing of a shipmate and friend. S/m Harry Bailey who crossed the bar suddenly on 11th May. His son had taken him to visit his wife Gertrude in hospital, as they drove home Harry collapsed and died in the car. The funeral was on Tuesday 20th May.

Lil and I made the journey to Sleaford to represent the Association and to say our good-byes. There were quite a lot of mourners at the church, Harry's wife Gertrude arrived in a wheelchair, I am afraid Alzheimer's had taken its toll, she looked very frail and could not recognise us. It was very sad.

We joined the Guard of Honour of 16 RNA, RBL members to line the route into church and again as the coffin came out. It was to be a burial but we were given the wrong directions to get to the cemetery, and by the time we arrived there, the burial was over and everyone had left. It was getting late by then so as we had a 3 & half hour journey to make we left for home, arriving home at 1945pm.

Here is a somewhat belated letter from S/m Derek West, which I was supposed to publish in the (I think), February, newsletter, and have been got at by him because it was not. I request, nay plead, absolution Derek and will pay my penance of a tot on July 5th.

"As most of you know, if you read your newsletters? I had the honour and privilege of carrying our Standard at quite a few services and parades during 2007. The most notable included Sea Sunday at Broadstairs, the Falklands 25th Anniversary parade at Chatham Historic Dockyard, and an excellent commemorative lunch to do with the Channel Dash, held at the international Airport, (Manston). There was also a Falklands Plaque dedication and parade at Pembroke House, Gillingham, where Lil and Roy were also attended. And I also paraded the standard at the Trafalgar Day parade at Margate, there were other parades too. I know our Standard is well received wherever I take it, it is so distinctive and different from the

Dark blue of the RNA standards that attend these parades. Although new to being a bearer, I must be doing things right because I have been invited to parade the standard at two venues already this year.

When I received an invite at my last RNA Meeting, I explained that I did not have the standard as it was paraded on Armistice Day in Bournemouth. However, a quick word with Roy and within a couple of days it arrived by courier. The first parade and service I did was a wreath laying ceremony at Ramsgate Harbour in remembrance of those who did not return from the Channel Dash episode. The wreath will be taken from Ramsgate and laid in the Channel on Feb 12th. 2008. It will be taken out on one of the RN College training boats. I will also be on parade on Vets Day at Chatham Dockyard on 5th July.

My next date is at Tower Hill, London where I have been invited to the Merchant Navy Day Parade. I also served some time in the Merchant Navy after finishing my RN service. A lot of RNA & RMA etc standards are usually in attendance, it is only fitting that our standard should, if possible, be at a MN event, after all Phoebe carried out convoy escort duties including Operation Pedestal in 1942. I have no doubt there will be other parades that I will be pleased to attend and carry the standard with pride.

I never thought, when I was a boy Seaman & OD aboard Phoebe in 1946/48, that 60 years later would be carrying the standard of our lovely ships association. But, then of course there was no such thing as the HMS Phoebe Association".

Long may it exist. D. West.

Come and see Derek carrying the standard, join in the parade with him, there is a free tot at the end of the parade in the Vets enclosure, for a small fee watch the RMs Beat the Retreat and their marvellous "Sunset"

It is a ticket only event, I have eight (8) veterans tickets to give away.

First come first served, but remember:

THEY ARE VETERANS TICKETS ONLY

Phone 01235 211501

A few weeks ago Associated Member Moreen Hall suffered a heart attack and was rushed to hospital. Husband Sid phoned me on the day she left hospital to say she was a lot better but must take it easy for a few weeks. Those of us who have suffered heart attacks know how frightening an attack can be. I have been speaking to Moreen today, she is almost back to normal and hopes that sometime in the future she and Sid will be able to meet us all again at a reunion, they do not live too far from Scarborough, perhaps we will return there sometime for a reunion?
We wish you well Moreen, keep taking the tablets!

Any member requiring an up to date copy of the Constitution please phone me, 01235 211501. We will send one with your next newsletter.

My thanks for the following from a member of the 4th Destroyer Ass':-
Middle Watch: A young seaman who joined his first ship straight from "Raleigh" did his joining routine and upon receiving his station card was told he had the middle watch as a lookout on the bridge. He turned in early and at the appointed hour was shaken, got dressed and made his way to the bridge, unable to discern anything on the darkened bridge he called out. "Is anybody here". The Captain was the first to regain his composure and said, "Of course there is!" "Alright" declared the young sailor with renewed confidence, "Your relief's her you can f*** off now"

We often hear double entendre's on TV and Radio here are some more, some that did not get a second airing??:-

1..Weightlifting commentator at a female event:- ***"This is Gregoriava from Bulgaria. I saw her snatch this morning, it was amazing"***.

2..NZ Rugby commentator:- ***"Andrew Mehrtens loves it when Daryl Gibson comes inside him"***.

3..Ted Walsh Horse Racing Com':- ***This really is a lovely horse, I once rode her mother"***

4..Harry Carpenter, Cambs & Oxford Boat Race:- ***"Ah! Isn't that nice? The wife of the Cambridge President kissing the cox of the Oxford crew"***.

5..US PGA Com':- ***"One reason why Arnie Palmer is playing so well, Is before he tees off his wife takes out his balls and kisses them for luck....Oh My God! what have I said"???***

6..When overnight snow did not arrive a female news reporter turned to the weatherman and said:- ***"So Bob, Where's that eight inches you promised me last night!"***.

7..Steve Rider covering the U.S. Masters:- ***"Ballesteros felt much Better today after a 69 yesterday"***.

8..Claire Frisby talking about a Jumbo Hot-Dog on 'Look North':- ***There's nothing like a big hot sausage inside you on a cold night like this"***

9..Mike Hallett discussing missed snooker shots on Sky Sports:- ***"Steve Hendry jumps on Steve Davis's misses every chance he gets"***

10..Ken Brown commenting on Nick Faldo and his caddie Fanny Sunneson lining up shots at the Scottish Open. ***"Some weeks Nick likes to use Fanny, other weeks he prefers to do it himself"***

OBITUARY TO COMMON SENSE

Today we mourn the passing of Common Sense, who has been with us for many years. No one knows for sure how old he was, since his birth records were lost in bureaucratic red tape.

He will be remembered as having cultivated such valuable lessons as knowing when to come in out of the rain, why the early bird catches the worm. Life isn't always fair and maybe it was my fault. Common Sense lived by simple, sound financial policies, don't spend more than you can earn. And reliable strategies, adult, not children, are in charge.

His health began to deteriorate rapidly when well-intentioned

but overbearing regulations were put in place. Reports of a 6 year old boy charged with sexual harassment for kissing a classmate, teens suspended from school for using mouth-was after lunch, and a teacher fired for reprimanding an unruly student only worsened his condition.

Common Sense lost ground when parents attacked teachers for doing the job that they themselves had failed to do, to discipline their unruly children. It declined even further when schools were required to get parental consent to administer sun-lotion or a band-aid to a student, but could not inform parents when a student became pregnant and wanted an abortion.

Common Sense lost the will to live as the Ten Commandments became contraband, churches became business, and criminals received better treatment than their victims. Common Sense took a beating when you couldn't defend yourself from a burglar in your own home and the burglar could sue you for assault.

Common Sense finally gave up the will to live after a woman failed to realise that a steaming cup of coffee was hot. She spilled a little in her lap and was promptly awarded a huge cash settlement. Common Sense was preceded in death by his parents, Thruth and Trust, his wife Discretion, his daughter Responsibility and his son Reason. He is survived by his 3 step-brothers, I know my rights, Someone else is to blame and I'm a victim. Not may attended the his funeral because so few realised he was gone. If you still remember him pass this on.

If not, join the majority and do nothing



2008 Reunion Coventry

Rock & Roller Margaret, thoroughly enjoying herself at the Neil Diamond. show.