

HAS Hoebbe Association

Newsletter

February 2012



**Spinnaker Tower and
Gunwharf Quays**

Portsmouth

(Not far from the Dockyard)

*Take your camera up and take
some wonderful photos*

Happy New Year everyone, yes! we are well and truly into another year, today is January 6th and thankfully the harsh winds in my area have reduced to a light breeze, it is also sunny, but! ‘ruddy cold’ I don’t expect we can see it getting much warmer just yet. Bluebells are six inches high in my garden, a summer flowering indoor plant is in bloom and has been for weeks, even the clematis is still in bud and some buds have flowered, talk about balmy seasons. I have loads to do outside, but this sharp cold effects my heart and I have to get inside quickly. Health wise I feel a lot better now I am on a different tablet, and others have been reduced in Mg. There are other shipmates a lot worse off than me; so lets hope all of us have a good healthy year, perhaps a prosperous one too.

The Portsmouth Cathedral event is definitely on now for Sunday 18th March, service starts at 1100. I have had a look at the streetview map around the Cathedral and could not see any double yellow lines. If, like me, you are thinking of staying in a hotel on Saturday night, there are two places nearby, suggest you get booked in quick, there is going to be a very large crowd attending the event. Derek West will be parading the Standard.

As far as I know the official opening of the TS Phoebe new HQ is still scheduled the Saturday of our reunion, not sure if its am or pm, hoping to get a bit more news from Mike or Andy, likewise the tree planting in the Phoebe Woods (Abingdon) in March, it needs to be after March 18th so that the Standard can attend. I will get onto that today.

Our memorial in the Central Gardens is looking a bit worn out, we are seeking permission to replace it with a larger stone, one that is more durable, and one with all the names etc engraved on it. Our friend Emily is dealing with the planning side, its so good of her to volunteer to do things for us, I know she has plenty of work to do herself. If we get planning consent we will be asking for donations, stones cost quite a bit, we have already had one offer of a huge donation from a shipmate, so donation collecting or promises is already under-way.

Donations received will be paid into our account, No! No! Not mine and Lils, the Phoebe account and, named ‘The Stone Fund’. We hope to get everything in place for a September dedication venue, any later the weather may be a bit against us. “Could it be a mini reunion”??

Change of Address:

S/m C Ambler - "Coppers" - Seaview Lane - Seaview - Isle of Wight PO34 5DJ - Tel: 01983 566133.

S/m J Barrat - 42 St Cecelia House - Poets Walk - Walmer - Deal CT14 7QF - Tel: 01304 694164

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Welfare: S/m Tom Bateman spent several weeks in hospital in the later part of last year, multiple heart bypass was one of the reasons, out now and says he is feeling fine. Take it easy Tom for get the marathon this year??

S/m Ian Gough has been having diabetic troubles but is stablising now. Wife Janett has been having eye trouble but treatment is helping.

S/m George White has also not been well, wife Josie is very poorly and George does most of the work around the house, they are a lovely couple we hope that Josie can respond to treatment and get well again.

All the above have booked into the reunion let us hope all goes well with them and things get better so that they can enjoy the reunion.

That reminds me I have just found out the Sheffield October reunion this year is £164 pp for 3 nights in Sherbourne,. A trip to the RNAS Museum, is included in the reunion payment, which means you pay whether you go to the RNAS or not? And a 3 hours visit on Sunday to Weymouth, by coach is £7 pp. I think we are doing well with our package of £155.

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I forgot to put this bit in for the Portsmouth Cathedral venue. *If you are, or maybe attending the Cathedral would you let me know ASAP.*

The organiser, Jim, is arranging refreshments for those attending, so he needs to know roughly how many to cater for. Tel me at. 01235 211501.

Lil and I will be staying at the Holiday Inn, Pembroke Rd, Portsmouth on the Saturday night, it is not far from the Cathedral.

Did you have a subscription reminder attached to the front of this newsletter? If you did it means you are in arrears with your subscription. It will also tell you what is owed. The allowance for being in arrears is two years. If payment is not received after a further month, you will be classified as having left the Association and your records will be removed. Section IV Subscriptions. Item 4.2 (Amended AGM 2004).

Coach for arranged, (See book, £3 a seat. visit the dockyard with its Spinaker Quays and The entrance to but to visit all the for seniors and tickets for can be bought. Museum is closed There are eating



Portsmouth is Next page), no rush to If you do not want to the sea front is close by Tower and Gunwharf Dickens birthplace. the dockyard is free, attractions it is £18.15 £21.60 Adults. But individual attractions The Mary Rose until the summer. places at the Quays.

If you want the coach drop off and pick-up other than the Dockyard we can probably arrange this with the driver.

When it comes to asking each other what present one would like for Christmas the answer is "I don't know". When a couple have been together for a great many years they have probably got everything and can think of nothing they really want. This happened to Lil and me. Then my youngest son on a visit to us suggested we buy a Kindle each, he had his with him and showed what we could do with it. So, what is a Kindle? It is an E-book reader, the supplier being Amazon, although it is also sold at other outlets, we got ours from Currys, they are all sold at the same price, £80, and the contents are the same. They are about the size of a paper-back book, but only about 1/2" thick. A slight touch with a finger turns a page over in less than a second, the same for turning a page back. You can download E-books from the internet using its USB cable. It can hold many thousands of books in its memory. E-bay is a good source for E-books, some sites are selling a CD disk with 40,000 books on it for £4.50. I read Clive Cussler and I got a CD with 46 of his novels on it for £1.99 + £1 PP. 21 of them I had read. I have been getting free downloads too of authors I read like 22 Peter Robinson (DCI Banks books), 25 Ian Rankin, 14 Martina Cole, etc. I reckon I have enough to last a couple of years. Lil likes hers too she has Lillian Harry, Susan Salis, and Margaret Dickinson downloaded, she also likes how easy it is to enlarge or shrink the text. The Kindle batteries can be charged using USB or the mains, although the mains plug has to be bought separate, £1.50 inc pp on E Bay We are becoming regular bookworms.

And we highly recommend a Kindle for a present.

A/c Ted Ansfield Observer RAF Lancaster Mk 111 JB 303-MG-F.

It was my fifth bombing mission to Berlin 26/27 November 1943. We were attacked by a German Bf 110 night-fighter, our engines and fuel tanks were taken out, engulfed in flames the order to 'bale out' was given, a few seconds later there was a blinding flash and I knew no more until I came too in a forest almost 1½ hours later numb with cold. My parachute lay open beside me. It had either been blasted open or I had sub-consciously pulled the rip-cord whilst falling. Apart from a serious head pain I appeared to be in one piece. I hit my parachute and Mae West and struck off southwesterly.

After a few hours I collapsed exhausted in a ditch and awoke at 0600 stiff with cold, the ground was frozen. When I sat up and looked around I was surprised to see a parachute draped over a bush about fifty yards away. Investigating I found the body of our planes engineer, and covered him with his parachute, then I checked my 'escape map' and turned my electrically heated waistcoat inside out to make it look more like a civilian jacket and continued walking. It started to rain towards nightfall then it became torrential, making it impossible to make any progress in the dark and over boggy ground. I found a clump of bushes to squeeze under. The following day was no better it was just impossible to make any progress and I found I was having difficulty in orientating myself; unbeknown to me I had sustained a fractured skull. For a while I laid up in an abandoned quarry hoping the rain would stop, but it did not. Later in the day I attempted to try cross-country walking, but the fields were now flooded. I had a narrow escape when a Fieseler Storch passed overhead at treetop height, scrambling under a hedge and looking up, I saw the observer looking through binoculars, searching for escaping airmen like myself. When it had gone I was able to start walking again until I reached a river, presumably the Lahn. It was in full flood and the only bridge over the river I could see was overloaded with traffic. I hid up till darkness, then stealthily made my way across the bridge. I kept to the edge of the road and made good progress, hiding in the ditch when vehicles went by. After four days my flying boots were almost worn though, making it difficult to walk. The rain continued to pour down and I was suffering severe head pains, as it grew darker I climbed a wooded slope looking for somewhere to shelter, suddenly the ground gave way and I slid down into an abandoned quarry 20 or 30 foot deep. I decided to stay there until the morning. Some hours later I awoke feeling a strange warmth. The rain had turned to snow and I was covered by a thick layer, it was keeping my body warmth captive, but within minutes I was shivering and on my way again. One thing about it snowing made my chances of escape a bit better, my hope of getting to Paris where I had contacts with persons in the "resistance" who would assist me induced me to push on and eventually came to a railway, which appeared to be going the right way. I followed the tracks for about a mile and came to a station. Avoiding railway workers I hid up and waited for a train

going in the right direction, I was soon rewarded, a freight train was approaching and slowing down. I crossed the tracks, as it got to me I stood and leapt for one of the wagons, I grabbed a handhold and was dragged off my feet, but before I could drag myself aboard my strength gave out and I almost fell under the wheels. My best chance had gone.

Through the falling snow I trudged along the snow covered tracks for a few miles and collapsed on them, not waking until dawn I moved over to a road running parallel with the tracks. It took me to a small town. In my six Days as a fugitive I have never dared to come in close contact with people. I now became in-cautious, wrapping my scarf around my head to cover my growth of beard, I entered the little town. In the main street I noticed a policeman talking to a man in a long leather coat and a felt hat. I watched their reflections in a shop window and noticed thaone of them was pointing in my direction. I casually sauntered down the street and out of the corner of my eye I could see I was being followed.

I came to what appeared to be a small cinema, the doors were open so I quickly darted inside, ran down the aisle between the seats and out of the rear exit and back into the countryside. On a hillside above the town I again collapsed, I was utterly exhausted and terribly weak. I could only be a few miles from the Rhine. A burly farmer driving a horse and cart saw me and challenged me.

He jumped down from his cart and helped me to my feet. This was the end; it was 2nd December 1943. He took me back to his home where his wif gave me a cup of ersatz coffee and a piece of bread. The Police arrived and I was force-marched to the police station where I was flung into a stinking dungeon.

I lay down on a filthy bunk and fell asleep only to be awakened after a very short time and dragged from this filthy hole into a room where a female interpreter commenced to question me in the presence of the police chief and my escort. I would only give my name, rank and service number, whereupon my escort threw me to the floor and said in a strongly broken American accent "Smart guy eh! Vot vud you say if ve hang you"? I Burst out laughing and told him politely that under those circumstances I could say a damned sight less. Realising his error and just about to smash his rifle but into my ribs, in walked a Luftwaffe Lieutenant who quickly stood between us and floored the guard. He helped me to my feet and apologised. For me this part of the war was over. My escort to captivity had arrived.



Subject to committee approval and confirmation I have been able to organise next years (2013) reunion hotel. I think you will like it. I cannot tell you where it is yet except to say it is by the, (not in the south or west), and I hope to incorporate May Day bank holiday in the package, ideal for those who work on Mondays, now they can stay the whole week end. At the moment the cost for 3 nights is less than £140.

I have more info reference our memorial stone. Shipmate Bob Hobbs is in touch with the stone masons who built the Bournemouth Cenotaph, they have kindly been down to the stone to check it out, and found although it is in need of some TLC it is not damaged. The company have given us their advice on what is needed to renovate and make it more visible to visitors to the Gardens. They recommend the stone be taken out the plaque removed and the stone be sand blasted, the bottom of the stone be shaped to sit into a plinth that would be staked to the ground, the plaque to be set into the stone so that there are no raised edges. When re-erected in the gardens the stone will be a lot higher and more noticeable. The stone masons will also maintain the stone the same as they do the Cenotaph. I would like to have a new plaque made, possibly a bit larger than the present one with the ships crests engraved as they are now, but not coloured, colouring does not take kindly to weathering, at the moment they look like black blobs. Our friend Emily has approached the council in regards to what we proposed earlier, I will tell her of the change in plans. We do not have the cost of this work, but it would be quite a bit below our previous idea.



I am still waiting for a message from the TS Phoebe CO in relation to the tree planting. According to what he has told Mike Fox he has sent me some information, I've no idea where he sent it to, I have not received it, I suppose the PO will get the blame?? Mike tells me it is now sometime in April, a sea cadet band has been organised, and cadets are staying overnight in Oxford. I hope to find out more before closing this Newsletter.



The Instant "Hero".

HMS Phoebe became HMS Hero, the star of the "Warship" television series, on Monday, 5th February 1973 at Gibraltar. In one moment, she was a modest if effective unit of the Fleet; in the next she was destined to sail into millions of homes throughout the country. As name plates, gun covers and brow-screens were changed, she assumed the role of the Navy's busiest and most celebrated Leander Class Frigate: HMS Hero was born. In the true tradition of the service, Phoebe was a volunteer for Warship duty. When the idea of a drama series about the Royal Navy crystallised in mid-1972, Phoebe was the first to offer her services for film duty - although it is doubtful if anyone on board could have foreseen then the extent of the task and the involvement therein of the entire ship's company. As the ship's identity changed, so did the nature of the series begin to unfold; and ere long, a breathless Flight Deck crew were nursing bruises from the second (or was it the third?) "take" of the helicopter scramble sequence, while the Gemini crews were speeding across a bumpy Mediterranean, hotly pursued by a BBC Camera unit. **WHY HERO??.....**

The name was chosen by series deviser Lt Cdr Ian MacKintosh, after an exhausting sifting of all ship names. He had already decided with his Producer that a Leander Class frigate was the ideal ship for the series; and when he learned that Hero was in mythology a priestess of Aphrodite, and that her lover Leander swam the Hellespoint every night to visit her, there seemed no better possible name. One of the happiest facets of making Warship was the easy and complete integration of the ship's company and film unit, such that all considered themselves as belonging to HMS Hero and became, in the true sense, "all of one company". With actors in costume, and sailors performing their every day tasks before camera, it was often difficult to distinguish between members of one organisation or the other. The actors learned quickly by example and observation, adopted Naval jargon and custom and became immersed in, and fascinated by, life at sea. For the ship's company, the mysteries of film making were qually intriguing and there was always the opportunity to take part in those sequences which were beyond the professional competence of the actors; boat-running, diving, helicopter operations and the like. During the second filming block, in the United Kingdom in June 1973, the whole project took on an extra dimension, because while the unit were onboard making the last three programmes, the series began transmission with those episodes made earlier in the year. There was therefore, the opportunity for cast and ship's company to watch the programmes together and discuss each other's performances! If all this seems like a pleasant escape from reality, it should be remembered that like many ladies of the theatre, Phoebe did not rest between performances. Despite the filming, she kept completely to her operational programme, took part in three major exercises during the filming period and performed all the more normal and less glamourous functions of the Fleet. For all that, Phoebe must have a special place in the hearts of millions of TV Viewers.

She is HMS HERO, the Fighting Forty-Two of the warship series.

I have often wondered where the saying The Fighting Forty-Two emanated from. Now we all know. ROY.

I have just had a phone call from our friend Emily to say the details I gave her regarding the replacing of our memorial stone were passed to the council official concerned; and that no planning permission is required, the projected replacement can go ahead as and when arrangements with the stone mason have been confirmed.

I will be contacting the stone masons shortly.

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Tree Planting? Each person I phone tells me that the CO told them he has been in touch with me! The last time I spoke to the Co was at our reunion last year. I have not heard anything from him since then. Any news that I get is via Mike Fox, not the correct way to go about it. I am still waiting for the date etc of the tree planting that is now said to be in April. Local sea cadet force is said to be supplying the band but checking with them they do not have anything laid on for April. I know some of you want to attend this event. All I can do is ask you to get in touch with me later, say in March.

Roy