

HMS¹ Phoebe

Association

June 2011

Newsletter



In Loving Memory of
Shipmate Marjorie Evelyn Chanter
18th January 1922 - 16th May 2011

Tuesday May 15th. Returned home from the reunion yesterday a bit worn out so just unloaded and rested up, even went to bed early, big mistake because I was wide awake by 4am, had short naps then until I eventually arose at 7.15. Once I had had a cup of tea I was almost normal. In other words the computer got switched on and I was searching through the 56 emails for news, but it was nearly all Freecycle adverts, so just deleted the lot. When I went back to the computer I found my service provider had shut down completely and stayed so for 8 hours, consequently email that were sent during that time I could not answer.

The next morning I switched on and it was working again, the first thing I found was a email from shipmate Vic Chanter, opening it I was shocked to find his wife Marjorie had passed away while he was with us at the reunion, what a sad thing to happen.

Not all of you will have met Marjorie, but I can tell you that Marjorie, and Sylvia Kent were the main instigators of the association being formed, coercing their husbands into advertising for a meeting in Nottingham. Marge had been ill for quite a while, she managed to attend our last meeting in Chatham although even then her feet and legs were in a bad way, since then her health went quickly downhill and Vic moved them into a residential village. Vic was able to come to the reunion because Marge had gone into a respite centre for a short stay. I cannot express my, and Lil's grief at this moment, we will of course attend the funeral.

Watching the Meridian News on Monday evening we saw the bit about the awful accident when a ancient bi-plane crashed near Wimbourne, in Dorset, killing a passenger. Who was being interviewed? Non other than the CO of the Sea Cadets Andrew Marlborough who was our guest on Saturday at the reunion.

Now we come to the reunion report: The weather on Friday for our trip down to Bournemouth was sunny and very warm, just not quite hot enough to have the air-con working?? We arrived at the hotel to find a reserved parking space for me right outside the front door, ideal for unloading all the Association stuff we bring. A young attendant took our personal things to our room, and finding a couple of members testing the bar equipment! we got them to unload the rest for us.

Our ground floor room was large and well furnished as were, so we were told by shipmates, all or most of the other rooms. Reception staff were attentive and helpful, and later we met up with Barbara, the Manageress, for a chat and get things organised also a welcome coffee.

Although we had already arranged the organising over the phone, some things still had to be sorted. I had made out an itinerary for everyone, it was not until we actually went for meals that we found the meal times I had written down had been revised, and were in fact half an hour earlier, except for Saturday nights Dinner.

Shipmates began to arrive so quickly it was a job to keep up with greeting you all, if we missed anyone we apologise. The menus for the whole weekend were excellent, three choices for dinner, and the variations we were told the best we have had. Entertainment was laid on for all three evenings, Saturday night being the best as usual. In fact the entertainer was asked if he would perform for us the next time we were in Bournemouth, the answer was yes, so we have that to look forward to.

Saturday morning the AGM was held at 0945, no toast this time as we were doing it at the dinner.

Although we did not count the attendance I do not think many were missing, maybe a couple of ladies. Our Chairman Ian Gough was unable to attend the reunion so the Vice-Chairman, Stuart Bundy took charge, and what a good job he did too. More about the AGM in the enclosed minutes.

We had nothing special laid on for that day so shipmates went their separate ways, some went to the big markets in Wimbourne. Lil and I spent most of the day at the walk in clinic. Lil is diabetic and has to inject insulin 3 times a day, she uses a special gun to do it, and it developed a fault, although she normally carry's a spare, it was at home. The hotel receptionist arranged for our clinic appointment, but when we got there they did not have a gun and had to phone chemists for one, after a few hours they found one at Boots in Boscombe, off we trundled to pick it up. Although it did not inject the full amount, (Lil had to reload it each time), it sufficed for the weekend, now she has made sure of it and got two more guns, one I have told her is to be left in the car. The clinic was great, all towns should have one like this one, it is open every day and evening, & its NHS run, you do not need an appointment, just walk in, of course, its according to how many others are waiting to see a nurse or doctor to how long you would have to wait.

Back to the reunion: A table was set up just inside the restaurant for the toast drinks, we supplied the Rum and the hotel supplied complimentary Sherry and White wine, the set up was "Up Spirits" S/Ms Doug Harris and Alf Larkin, dressed up in No 8s and using pusser measures and served the drinks out as members walked in.

Once all were sitting The acting Chairman called the assembly to order. I stood to make the presentation to the TS Phoebe CO & Chairman, of the painting of the cruiser. The looks on their faces when the picture was unveiled said everything we had hoped for, there were sounds of what I would say were astonishment from those seated. I must admit the painting looked great raised up on a easel. Quite a few came and took photos, may I ask here if anyone has photos of the ceremony, could we please have a copy, we need them for the album also the web site. When all were seated again, the padre said grace and dinner commenced, the main course was Lamb Shank, a great favourite of mine. After dinner there was dancing and singing, everyone enjoyed the entertainer who got great ovations after each number. Our daughter Sharon took charge of the raffles, I'm sure she must threaten a dire punishment for anyone not buying tickets, the proceeds for the two raffles literally ran into hundreds of pounds, boosting the funds by almost £600. The sale of slops and some donations took our total for the weekend to almost £700. We are overwhelmed with gratitude to the reunion attendees for their support in raffles and donations, An auction of a bottle of "Special 25 year old Pussers Rum" brought in £60, the bottle was donated by our good friend Alderman Emily Morrell-Cross who was one of our guests for the evening. We must thank shipmate Doug Harris for his usual prowess as an auctioneer. Cheers Doug.

The rest of the evening was taken up with dancing and raucous accompaniment to the music.

Sunday saw some leaving for home, then we had a coach trip to the Tank Museum which turned out to be not all that entertaining, there were of course tanks of all shapes and sizes, some were surprising in what jobs they were designed to do, not all were combat tanks, there was even a very small radio controlled tank which apparently was a mobile bomb. We should have been there until 4.30 pm, but by 3 pm everyone was ready to leave, we expected something to be happening in the outside show area, but not a thing was laid on, so disappointedly we left.

Where do we make for next year, how about Pompey Dockyard, Beaulieu National Motor Museum, Longleat Safari Park, just remember that we may not be able to subsidise entrance fees, but who wants to go where, I will make that a point of putting a note in with the booking form. If anyone has any other ideas for a coach trip let me have them before the August newsletter, that's when the reunion booking form will be sent.

Just a note about next year, (Read this in conjunction with the AGM Minutes). We envisage a large response to reservations for next year, the hotel does not have a massive selection of rooms, so may I recommend you decide quickly whether you will be attending, several rooms have already been reserved by shipmates who attended this year. Lil will be running the savings club again for collecting your payments, pay what and when you like and get a receipt for each payment made. Your first payment must be a deposit of at least £10 pp.

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About four or more weeks ago we attended the 1st Turf dig at the new TS HQ in Kings Park, not an easy place to find with the road works taking place in Boscombe, although proceedings were underway when we got there we were in time for the main part. We met up with the Mayor and Mayoress, also some Admiral, after the ceremony we went for tea at Chairman Mike Fox's house, and ended up having a fish & chip supper there. And getting home about 2130.

At the reunion we learnt that the HQ building work was well on under way, and the roof was being fitted, the next thing is to complete the inside rooms, then comes the decorating and furnishing, this will take the longest time to accomplish. It is suggested that the opening will take place sometime in September, more about that in the August newsletter.

If its during a weekend, perhaps some of you would care to join us, we could make it an overnight thing so we could imbibe somewhat and commission the new wardroom bar??

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WE are visiting Kent again this year and hoping to meet up with shipmates, wives, partners, and friends for our usual lunch. This jaunt is open to all and is held in Thanet, this time I think it will be at Hurn.

All arrangements regarding the reservation will be made by Derek West, he is rather good at it? He will phone Kent shipmates to find out who and how many will attend. Lil and I will be at our holiday site in Seasalter as usual, the date of the lunch meet will be a week day between July 11th & 15th.

Last year there were eleven of us.

May 29th = Latest update - Lunch arranged for Tues 12th July. 16 attending.

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Yesterday, Friday. May 27th, we set out at 1330 for Nottingham to pay our last respects to S/m Marjorie Chanter. Although the service was not until 1700, I thought there would be hold-ups on the M1, and I was right, there were three, the longest being after we had passed junction 21. We arrived at the Crematorium at 1630. The cortage arrived, Lil and I dresses in our Phoebe regalia stood to attention beside the chapel entrance as the coffin was carried in, there were many mourners following behind the family, we waited until the last had passed then made our entrance. The service began but being right at the back I could not hear much, the lectern mike was not switched on. It was not too long a service and a recordings made by Vic, with him singing was played, this made it all the more poignant. I am a very emotional person and tears fell. We remembered Marge as a very lovely person who was a great help to us at the reunions she was able to attend. We have missed her enormously since we last saw her at Chatham in 2007. Was it that long ago?

Marjorie had been a Wren during the war and met up with Vic when they were stationed at Chatham, within a year they were married. We met with some of Vic's family after the service, but we could not stay too long in case there were more traffic jams.. So we said our goodbyes to Vic, and left for home. I was surprised to find just one short build up of traffic going south on the M1, but the northern side was horrendous, miles of queuing traffic. We arrived home at 2015, it had taken just 2 hrs 20 min's to cover 131 miles, which, considering the route taken, was marvelous. But best of all it was still daylight, I hate night driving now.

Photos wanted for the album and web site of the painting presentation to the TS Phoebe Officers at the dinner, and the "Up Spirits" issue. If anyone can spare a copy's I would be most grateful, or I can copy and return photos sent.

If you holiday in England and stay at hotels that you think suitable for a reunion please let me know. We look for hotels that are accessible by rail and coach, a lift to all floors, disabled facilities, private car parking, 50 bedrooms. Dance Floor. As much information as is possible please.

This is the story of a poor boy who lived on a miserable plantation on the Kennebec River, in New England, yet who ended by becoming a noble-man of Old England. His name was William Phips, In his early life he learned the trade of a ship carpenter. He learned to read and write and, later on, married a good wife. He settled down to hard work, and after ten years became Captain of one of the King's ships. Little did he know he was about to face the great adventure of his life.

These were the days when Spanish ships were seeking silver and gold and precious stones on the coast of Peru. Some of these cargoes went to the bottom in storms, or ran foul on dangerous reefs along the shores of the Bahamas. On one of his trips to the Bahamas, Phips heard of a Spanish wreck "wherein was left a mighty treasure" at the bottom of the sea. He made up his mind to be the discoverer of that ship and to recover that treasure, if it was possible. Many a man would have laughed at the story, but Phips was not like other men. He was born for great adventure, and herein he saw his chance.

He sailed for England, and sought the wealthy people of the realm. He was a comely man, full of honesty and sincerity, and Royalty at Court listened to his smooth words for he came back to New England, Captain of his King's ship, with full power to search the seas for silver and gold in sunken cargoes. Phips's task was not an easy one. Fifty years had passed since the particular ship of which he had heard had sunk; hence the exact spot was not easy to find. All that was known was that it was somewhere near the Bahamas. But Phips was not one to be dismayed. He took his ship to the Bahamas, and began his long and discouraging search. He dredged here and there; he questioned the old inhabitants; he used every means of information and discovery. But without success. At length his crew grew mutinous. Accordingly, one day they rose, and marched with drawn swords to the Captain, saying, "Take us to more profitable waters under the black flag, or we will heave you overboard. We will not search the bottom of the sea for ships, when there are plenty to be found on top." Phips was aghast at this mutiny, slowly he approached the ring-leader, as if to parley, then, with bare hands, he leaped upon him, knocked him down, seized his cutlass, and attacked the others with fury. So impetuous was the onset the deck was strewn with wounded men, many others begging mercy of the infuriated Captain.

Soon after the mutiny, Phips sailed back to Jamaica in order to get a new crew. The treasure ship must be somewhere, and its riches haunted him day and night. He sailed to Hispaniola in search of information. He met a very old Spaniard who said he knew where the ship was sunk, on a reef of shoals, a few leagues from Hispaniola, and not far from Port de la Plata.

This was enough for our hero. He needed more men and more money, he bravely returned to England to beg for both. He had a hard time to convince any one of his story, but Phips was very plausible and won many admirers. It was not long before Captain Phips found himself headed for the lost treasure on the quarter-deck of a new ship, well manned and equipped.

He reached Port de la Plata in due time. It was now about 1685. He set about getting ready a great canoe, hollowed out of the trunk of an enormous tree. The point selected by him for search was a terrible reef, known as "The Boilers," Phips anchored his ship near the spot, made ready his divers and his diving-bell, got out the canoe, and set to work with a steady resolve to see the under-taking through or else perish.

Days passed in vain search. The weather was calm and the ship's supplies were abundant. The men did not complain, but dived down, looking everywhere for signs of a lost vessel. One day a boatman, gazing into the clear water, saw what he thought was a beautiful sea feather, usually to be found in sea gardens. So an Indian diver went down after it and brought it up in his hands. "That was not a rock, but a great gun you saw," said the diver to his companions in the boat. "What! a Gun you say! It must be what we are seeking! There was intense excitement in the canoe. Other Indians were sent down, and one of them came back with a lump of silver in his hands. A bar worth a thousand dollars. "I found it near the gun. There are other guns and other lumps like it, - many, many ! " he explained, his eyes almost starting from their sockets.

The sailors roared with joy. At last the place was found! Their search was over! They were masters of the silver-ship! Riches untold were in their possession! They marked the spot with a buoy, and rowed back to the ship to inform Phips of what they had found and to show him the bar of silver. "Thanks be to God, our fortunes are made," cried the Captain, and at once repaired with his men to the spot marked by the buoy. There was no indifference now on the part of the crew. Every diver went down and every sailor lent a hand. Bar after bar was brought up from the ocean's depths, and stored away, as well as cases of silver coin, gold in large quantities, together with pearls and precious stones. Never was there such treasure dug up from the bottom of the ocean, where it had lain for half a century. It was worth a million and a half dollars. The work continued until provisions were exhausted and the men were ill. Though the sunken ship held more, they had to leave it where it was. Phips sailed to England and showed his treasures to the King, and to his friends. He was the most honest and generous man of his day, and paid his crew liberally. He gave his patrons a large share of his fortune, and his employees had nought to complain of.

What remained to him after this still left him a very rich man, and for a time he was the most talked of man in England. As for the King, he was so well pleased with the adventure, and with the admirable manners of Phips, that he made the latter a knight of the realm. He was called "Sir William Phips" from that time on. And this is the story of how a plain country boy of New England came, through his manly qualities and his love of adventure, to belong to the aristocracy of England.

Our American honorary member, Jean Taylor, has it seems been subject to some bad luck. Her Florida membership of the HMS Phoebe chapter of the Daughters of the British Empire was curtailed when the chapter closed down due to the lack of members. For a while Jean busied herself with other things, but missed the DOB so much she joined another chapter, for several months she enjoyed the fellowship of this chapter, but that too suffered losses in its membership until it too closed its doors.

Once again Jean found herself becoming listless until she found solace by increasing her affiliation with Richard, the person who accompanied her to our Scarborough reunion. Jean tells me she is once again happy and content. She still harks back to her visit to us, and remembers it as something she will never forget, her wish? 'to visit with us again', but the time has come when a wish is not likely to be fulfilled. Unless? Like most of us, she wins the Lottery. Good Luck be with you for the future Jean. You may yet have your wishes come true.