

HMS Phoebe Association

February 2013

Newsletter



Christening Party - Aboard the cruiser - Malta. 1949

From right to left in the photo are, front rank Audrey Guest, Audrey Mouzer with Suzette Guest, Maisie Moore holding the baby, Chris Bridges and Captain H G Dickenson DSC. Rear rank, Leading Seaman Ken Guest, Leading Seaman Bernard Mouzer, Electrician Vernon Bridges, Leading Seaman Alec (Pony) Moore and the Chaplain.

Another Christmas and New Year have passed, and what a year it has been, rain, rain and more rain, floods everywhere even in places that have never ever seen a flood before, it amazes me to see the Thames overflow. I live a couple of miles from the river, if we go the shortest way to Oxford it takes us alongside the river past a favourite spot for fishing, along the opposite side of the road a wooden walk-way is erected, this week it is completely under water, further along is the famous 3 Men in a Boat pub named 'The Barley Mow' the Thames is licking at its doors, round the corner is a bridge and a house, the house is almost submerged, the surrounding fields are all under water too. I see that the Thames Barrier was closed during Christmas week, I would have thought all the sixteen locks would have been opened when the Thames was on the ebb, but they were all closed no wonder the river burst its banks. Did you watch the fireworks on the telly?, they were great, a wonderful show.

Went to start the car new years day and all I got when turning the key was a gong sound and no dash lights, tried to fathom it out just sitting there, then went in got the works manual out and read it almost through, found out how to reset the key code and tried it to no avail a few times, then realised it must be the immobiliser had cut out, there was no mention of how to reset it in the manual, but remembering my son has had the same trouble a few times I called him in, he tried it and straight away said "battery is flat", we charged it for a few minutes, disconnected and turned on the ignition, one turn of the key and away it went. So a few hours of wasted time to find it was simply a flat battery, I should have known better, although I have used the car every day its only been to go down to the shops and being a diesel it takes a bit extra to start especially when its cold and frosty, I've always worked on the assumption that one engine start uses twenty minutes of battery power, that was where the trouble lay.

My new year resolution, charge the battery monthly, (if I remember to)??

Reunion: We have been in touch with the company organising the reunion reference the cut off date being in March. We now have the date changed to April 15th, it means payments for everyone attending must be paid into the tour company by then, so shipmates if you still have payments to make, please pay them ASAP. Cash returns for cancellations after this date would be subject to hotel ruling. The Sunday coach & steamer trip has attracted 61 passengers, it meant another coach was required, but Sally, our reunion admin officer, is trying to arrange for a double-decker.

OBITUARY

This has been a bad year for the Association in respect of our members crossing the bar, six in all, most in the last six months. Although some I have reported on in earlier newsletters, this obituary will name them again with a bit more detail about them added to some.

Norman Masters - Crosse the Bar 18th Dec. Served aboard during 1940/41 as a Boy Seaman. During 1957/59 I met up and served with him on HMS Sheffield, he was then a PO Writer.

Eric How - Stoker/Mech - aboard 1947/49 I was a Boy Seaman aboard in 1949 but Boys were not allowed to mix with adults, so I would not have know him. Lilian and I attended his funeral and met his wife Doreen

Hugh Cox-Nichol aged 65, a Frigate crewman 1965/72 Sto/Mech 1, one of the first to volunteer for committee. Hugh was confined to a wheelchair so did not get to many meetings, Hotels with wheelchair access were always chosen to accommodate Hugh.. We still specify this requirement.

Bruce Walker - 1940/43 - L/Writer. Bruce had never been to a reunion so not many will have met him, but he did attend the reunion in Malta for the men who were serving aboard ships in 'Operation Pedestal' the last Malta Convoy to save the island from disaster and capitulation.

Roy Walsh - 1948/50 - Boy Seaman. I met up with Roy at Liverpool Street Station on September 7th 1947 on our way to join HMS Ganges as Boy Seamen, we were allotted to Jelicoe 1 in the annexe, weeks later we were moved to 40 Mess in the main establishment, there we remained for one years training, how we stuck it out I will never know? From there we went to Chatham Barracks and then to HMS Phoebe, joining her in September 1948, she was due to sail for the Med fleet as soon as trials were completed. I was a boy seaman bugler and took over that duty a day after stepping onboard, Roy got the job of 'side boy' (QD Messenger). We were placed in the boys mess-deck, for the next two years we two Roy's were constant companions, we were given nic names, I was Pablo, and Roy, because of his reddish hair was Ginger. In October 1950 we returned to the UK aboard the trooper SS Orduna, landing at Liverpool we entrained for Chatham, we did a quick joining routine a went off on a months leave, on our return I was

drafted to the reserve fleet at Sheerness and Roy to a Frigate, that was the last time we saw each other. I married and moved to Ramsgate.

After I was de-mobbed I searched for Roy, checking out the electoral rolls in Suffolk, and Cambridgeshire, (Roy had lived in Sudbury, Suffolk). All to no avail, and when the inter-net started I searched it there too. Then Roy joined the association and I found he had been living in Birchington, about ten miles from Ramsgate all that time. Roy (Ginger) Walsh Crossed the bar December 20th.

Sylvester MacDonald - 1940/42. Sick Berth Attendant. When the ship was torpedoed off Tobruk in 41 Mac was given the job of removing the decomposing bodies from the bilges, it proved to be a traumatic experience and prayed on Macs mind for months, nowadays it would be called Post Traumatic Stress (PTS). During the repairs in Brooklyn Mac met and married Virginia, an American girl, then Mac got drafted to another big ship that was due to return to the UK. Mac managed to get his wife onto a warship also returning to the UK. But Mac became very distressed when she had gone and he found his new ship was not going home but to the Pacific to fight the Japs, so distressed that he deserted and went on the run. He moved around the country going from port to port, trying to get a job on a merchant ship, after months of trying he got taken on by a Dutch Company, a couple of months later he was in a lifeboat floating around the Pacific, his ship had been torpedoed and sunk. He was picked up after ten days and landed in Halifax. Because he had lost all his gear in the sinking and he was supposed to be Dutch, he was given new documents and a Dutch passport his excuse for not speaking Dutch was because he was brought up in Canada by an aunt. Mac spent a long time on his next ship, but once again he was torpedoed and this time found him in the Indian Ocean on a life-raft for five weeks. In 1945 Mac surrendered, and was deported to England for a Court Martial, expecting to get a long sentence and dismissal. He was greatly surprised when the bench decided that although he had deserted, it was at a time when he was suffering from stress and also he had literally “jumped from the frying pan into the fire” so to speak, he was admonished, but fined one years pay, and returned to service. He received a years back pay and 14 days leave as well. He went on to become a PO, and was de-mobbed in 46 He and Virginia emigrated to New Jersey and raised a family. When Mac lost Virginia he began to go downhill and passed away on August 6th 2012.’

Albert Hoyle Albert crossed the bar on 11th December, a stalwart member of the Association and a long time committee member. He had some unfortunate health problems that stopped him from attending the reunions, but he was still able to do his voluntary work at his local swimming pool, helping the disabled and children with their swimming, also doing some of the office work. Albert was a nice friendly man who went out of his way to help others. It is not often we can write an obituary, in fact it is not very often that we know of their passing until a long time after they have gone. It would be wonderful if NOK are told about informing the Sec Roy or Lil quickly, (01235 211501), of anything untoward happening to you?

SUBSCRIPTIONS: There are still a number of members who have not yet paid their subscriptions, (5 at 3 Years - 4 at 2 years & 17 at 1 Year). I know those who are up to date get fed up being reminded of these dues, but non payers should think of the treasurer who has to check the ledger umpteen times, of course some times a mistake is made and you are told you are behind with your subs when you are not, and we apologise profusely. Remember without your subscription, especially now with costs increasing almost daily, our funds would soon drop to danger level, thanks to our prudent treasurer they have never done so yet. So please, please, reply to the reminder you find in your newsletter, only you and the treasurer know you have received a reminder, we tell no one else, lets see if we can have a completed subs ledger for once. For those owing 3 years this will be your last newsletter. and you will no longer be a member unless we hear from you. The subs ledger can be checked quite quickly, it goes back quite a few years and includes cheque numbers and dates received.

Phone: 01235 211501 for a subscription check.

Atlantic Medal: After years of saying no to this medal, and telling the recipients of the Russian Convoy Medal, that they cannot wear the Russian issued medal, Ministers concerned have now agreed to issue the UK version, but they are still denying the wearing of the first awarded Russian Convoy Medal. This UK version has been held back so long there are now less than two hundred survivors left alive to collect it. I have always maintained that if you earned, and was awarded a medal, no matter what country awarded it you should be allowed to wear it. I have yet to see a law that says it is criminally illegal to do so. How many Royals wear medals they are not entitled too, they all do? You can wear them on the right hand side, providing you are not wearing a military uniform, I see no reason not to. In 1943 my cousin Len was a Navy stoker 1st Cl, his ship was sunk on a Russian Convoy and he spent a period of time in the icy water before being rescued, returned to the UK he was hospitalised, months later he was medically discharged from the Navy, still not fully recovered from his time in the sea. A short time after being discharged he developed meningitis and died quite quickly. No pension for his mother or any other payment.

It was as if he had not been in the Navy at all.

The USS Indianapolis:

At 12:14 a.m. on July 30, 1945. it was torpedoed by a Japanese submarine in the Philippine Sea and sank in 12 minutes. Of 1,196 men on board, approximately 300 went down with the ship. The remainder, about 900 men, were left floating in shark-infested waters with no lifeboats and most with no food or water. The ship was never missed, and the survivors were spotted by accident four days later, only 316 men were still alive.

The ship's captain, the late Charles Butler McVay III, survived and was court-martialed and convicted of "hazarding his ship by failing to zigzag" despite overwhelming evidence that the Navy itself had placed the ship in harm's way, despite testimony from the Japanese submarine commander that zigzagging would have made no difference, and despite that fact that, although over 350 navy ships were lost in combat in WWII, McVay was the only captain to be court-martialed. Materials declassified years later add to the evidence that McVay was a scapegoat for the mistakes of others.

In October of 2000, following years of effort by the survivors and their supporters, legislation was passed in Washington and signed by President Clinton expressing the sense of Congress, among other things, that Captain McVay's record should now reflect that he is exonerated for the loss of the Indianapolis and for the death of her crew who were lost.

In July of 2001 the Navy Department announced that Captain McVay's record has been amended to exonerate him for the loss of the Indianapolis and the lives of those who perished as a result of her sinking. The action was taken by Secretary of the Navy Gordon R. England who was persuaded to do so by New Hampshire Senator Bob Smith, a strong advocate of McVay's innocence. The survivors are deeply grateful to Secretary England and Senator Smith and also to young Hunter Scott of Pensacola, Florida, without whom the injustice to Captain McVay would never have been brought to the attention of the media and the Congress.

Unfortunately, the conviction for hazarding his ship by failing to zigzag remains on Captain McVay's record. Never in the history of the U.S. military has the verdict of a court-martial been overturned, and there is no known process for doing so. It can be stated unequivocally, however, that, if the Indianapolis had arrived safely at Leyte without incident, Captain McVay would never have been court-martialed. Thus, by exonerating him for the loss of the ship and the death of 880 of her crew members, the Navy Department has at last conceded that he was innocent of any wrong-doing.

His exoneration is tantamount to an admission that he should never have been court-martialed in the first place. The survivors are thankful that after 56 years the good name of their captain has been cleared.

I was drafted to Phoebe in 1948 as a Leading Seaman for the 1948/1951 Mediterranean Fleet Commission. Audrey and I had just married but she flew out to Malta at her own expense so as to be as near to the ship as possible. Among my close friends onboard were two other natives, Ken Guest and Pony Moore. In 1949, whilst the ship was being refitted in Malta, Ken and Audrey Guest had their second child baby Clive christened onboard.

From right to left in the photo are, front rank Audrey Guest, Audrey Mouzer with Suzette Guest, Maisie Moore holding the baby, Chris Bridges and Captain H G Dickenson DSC. Rear rank, Leading Seaman Ken Guest, Leading Seaman Bernard Mouzer, Electrician Vernon Bridges, Leading Seaman Alec (Pony) Moore and the Chaplain.

Audrey and I, and Pony and Maisie were Godparents to Clive but soon after the Christening Ken left the ship to return home to UK, taking his family with him. He then left the RN and we lost touch. We knew that they were from Somerset and tried over the years to make contact but without success until we did so over 60 years later in 2012, with the aid of modern technology. By then Ken had passed away but Audrey is still going strong and in wonderful form and she travelled to see us for a delightful reunion. Audrey had gone on to have seven children and with grandchildren and great grandchildren now has a total of around 37 descendants! It is difficult to be exact. On the last occasion that we spoke she said, 'Oh, there is another one arriving today in Australia!'

As for baby Clive, he was by now in his sixties - but a very fine man indeed. He came over from the USA just before Christmas so Audrey and I had another delightful reunion. By coincidence Clive was a Royal Marine Commando and a member of the Special Boat Service and used to canoe past our yacht, *Ivanhoe* whilst training in Poole Harbour and on the River Frome. He also lived for a time just a mile or two away. He then travelled extensively all over the world engaged on important security work, until he retired to Florida last year.

Following the Christening in 1949, in accordance with tradition, Clive Guest's name was engraved on the Ship's bell. Since Phoebe was adopted by Bournemouth during the war and given that there is a Phoebe Room in Bournemouth Council House I thought for certain that the bell would be there. But it isn't. There is a bell but it is from the later frigate Phoebe. The whereabouts of our cruiser's bell are not known. Secretary Roy Pavely has made enquiries, including at the Trophy Room in Portsmouth, but without success. Nor is it known where the other trophies finished up - including that magnificent silver Cock of the Fleet which we won in 1950. I had the pleasure of rowing in the Seaman's B crew on that occasion.

Clive would love just to see that bell, or to have a photograph of it. Any ideas?

Bernard Mouzer

Thank you Bernard for the note and the photos. When the photos were printed in a newsletter a few years ago I could not give any details of who was who, but now we can put names to faces in the photo you have sent it is reproduced on the front cover.

St Georges Theatre, Great Yarmouth, King Street

This £20 per ticket show happens to be on Saturday the 4th May. 19.30 to 2200 It's fun all the way as the "Purveyors of Cool" swing into town with a sensational show featuring The Greatest Music Of The 20th Century. Wonderful memories of Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin & Sammy Davis Junior, in a fabulous production that continues to be successful all over the world. All totally live, with their fantastic orchestra who also join in with the fun, along with The Fabulous Vegas Showgirls, to add a touch of glamour!

Every song is an absolute classic - Come Fly With Me, Under My Skin, Mr Bojangles, Lady Is A Tramp, That's Amore, Mack The Knife, Sway plus many more of your favourites.

With an abundance of class & style they take you on a trip back in time to vintage 60,s Las Vegas hip and cool as their timeless soiree remains the the pinnacle of quality entertainment.

Just thought I would let you know what else is going on at Gt Yarmouth at the same time as our reunion. Our entertainment might be better???

Surround sound on Freeview etc

Have you bought a new TV lately with a Freeview and DVD player installed in it? Have you got your own DVD/Surround Sound system connected to the TV by an HDMI cable, good! It is probably working ok, but your surround sound does not work on Freiewor the Tvs dvd? although you have an audio RCA cable fitted from your TV to your DVD/Surround system, you are using the wrong RCA cable. Your Tv has, most probably, got a RCA/SPDIF socket, the RCA plugs are not fully connecting to the socket. To fix it you will need a Digital Optical Toslink to Analogue RCA Audio Converter kit, plus a Twin RCA cable, and a RCA/SPDIF cable. Buying these in such places as PC world etc is very expensive, buying them on Ebay is pennies in comparison. (The difference between the standard RCA Cable and the SPDIF type is the length of the centre pin, the SPDIF type pin is longer). Cables come in different lengths, don't get one too long. An RCA cable at PC world was from £18, the converter includes a mains power supply, the kit would cost about £60 in a shop. My purchases on Ebay were: Twin RCA cable £3.95 - Converter kit £15 - RCA SPDIF cable £3.99. All free Delivery. If this helps you but you want more help regarding buying on Ebay call me.

01235 211501 - Roy.