

HMS Phoebe

ASSOCIATION

Newsletter

October 2012



Set into the “Hall of Fame” floor in the
Bay Shopping Centre
St Julians, Malta
.In commemoration of
“OPERATION PEDESTAL”



Quite a few of you acknowledged the deliberate mistake I made in the copy part of the booking form; where I increased the price by a few quid, however I managed to rectify it in some copies.

Apologies for those I did not catch in time.

A letter has arrived from shipmate Fred Spearman's daughter, too late for the August newsletter. It is sad to report that Fred passed away 5th July 2011. Fred was a life member. His coffin was draped with the White Ensign.

Another bit of news that was supposed to be in the last newsletter is from S/m Francis 'Pincher' Martin reporting on his progress following his bowel cancer operation. He writes:

"It was quite a major operation, (Re-arranging the plumbing)! But I came through it, and through the convalescence period. I am now gaining confidence in living with a 'STOMA' and bag. It is quite a challenge living with a 'bag' but I am getting the hang! of it. Living alone and travelling alone makes me uncertain if I will be able to attend another reunion, you know how much I enjoyed them. But I will try to put together a routine that will allow me to attend. I thank you all for the good wishes I received before the operation, it helped immensely. Yours Faithfully, 'Pincher'.

I am sure everyone joins me in wishing Pincher a happy future and we do so hope to see you at a reunion again mate, you were greatly missed at the last one, (there was quite a depletion in raffle ticket sales), so hurry up back.? Keep in touch as much as you can. Roy.

The Association web site was started by Neil Avery back in 1999 and newsletters were introduced to the site, I'm not sure when I took over from Neil, I know I could not get on with the web server 1&1 so changed to one that was easier to get on with and use? I say easy, I suppose it would be if one was IT literate, me! I'm illiterate, no, no, not illegitimate silly, illiterate in that respect, but I seem to get along. However, it appears I forgot to enter last June's newsletter, so started to upload it when I did the August one, after several tries I managed to get it onto the web site, then started on the August one and that is where I came to a halt, no matter what I did or how many times I clicked the right buttons it would not install. I even got in touch with the server for support and received one variation which I tried, this time a dialogue box opened telling me I had exceeded the space allowance of 2 Mega Bytes, checking I found the newsletter was 5 MB, this could only be because of the number of coloured photos I had included, hastily I reduced

Those were the days:-

The pure savagery of the Royal Navy in Lord Nelson's era is hard to comprehend; yet despite brutal punishment and appalling conditions, it produced some of England's finest sailors. So, what does that have to do with an American reader? The War of 1812, for one thing. One reason was in response to the Royal Navy's practice of stopping American merchant ships on the high seas to seize real or alleged RN deserters. Pay in the RN was 1 pound 12 shillings per month, compared to 5 pounds 10 shillings on American ships.

Briefly, in 1805 conditions for free Englishmen serving in the RN were worse than slavery. As he wisely learned on entering the Navy, a sailor "must confine his thoughts to the hold of his mind, and never suffer them to escape the hatchway of utterance."

When spoken to by an officer, even if it was a bullying 12-year-old midshipman, the ordinary seaman was only allowed to say, "Aye, aye, sir" while touching his forehead. Were he to say more, he could be flogged for insolence. In one instance, after two marines threw an officer overboard, they were seized and immediately hanged from the yardarm.

Conditions were appalling; discipline was by sheer terror, not by reason or persuasion. Yet, when pennants were hoisted stating, "England expects each man this day do his duty" these sailors responded with a pride and courage that made England master of the seas for centuries. It's a marvelous glimpse at the brutality that was all too common; and the pride of Englishmen in their country. It's the reality of the class distinctions of England, and why the Industrial Revolution spawned the appalling conditions that made Karl Marx inevitable. Understanding the everyday conditions of those times, explains why so many Englishmen and Europeans were willing to risk so much to get to America.

The latest design for the Type 26 Frigate, key to the future of the RN's surface fleet was revealed by the MoD yesterday. Although this design was shown off by BAE back in March, this now looks likely to be the basic arrangement for the ship. In general terms it is: 148 metres long, 5,400 tonnes, is armed with a new medium calibre gun, has vertical launch missile silos, carries the Sea Ceptor self defence missile, mounts 2 Phalanx CIWS and 2 x 30 or 40mm guns. It will have a large flight deck and hangar and a

‘mission bay’ to carry unmanned vehicles. It is primarily an anti-submarine ship but with a diverse range of other capabilities. It will have diesel / gas turbine /electric propulsion (similar to the Type 23) with a top speed of over 28 knots and an exceptionally good range of up to 11,000 nm.

Officially it’s called the “Global Combat Ship” – an indication perhaps of the controversies around the concept of a frigate. In laying down the specification for this ship the Naval Staff have been navigating through very choppy seas. In a climate of cuts and austerity, somehow the RN has to balance cost and capability with competing arguments about future needs. There are several ‘schools of thought’ on modern frigates; some say they should be simpler, cheaper maritime security-orientated ships built in large numbers for the low-intensity operations that is the RN’s main occupation today. Or there is the ‘gold plated’ school that demands a warship survivable in the most high-intensity naval conflicts with the most modern (and therefore expensive) weapons and sensors possible. Then there are the radical fringe who argue the concept of the surface escort is fundamentally obsolete and because submarine hunting is mostly done by helicopter, the RN should just convert cheap merchant ships to carry lots of helicopters. Against this background the latest design appears to offer something of a ‘middle way’ – ship that is ‘relatively affordable’ while offering some high-end capabilities.

Positives: At approx 5,000 tonnes it is smaller than the previous 7,000 tonne ugly duckling initially proposed. This offers a little hope it should be affordable in decent numbers. The ‘middle way’ design has real export potential which could help keep costs down. The design includes MK41 silos for vertically launched Tomahawk Land attack missile (TLAM) tubes, amongst the most useful and relevant weapons possessed by the UK. This also provides an option to carry a variety of missile types in future. Increase in accommodation to allow for 190 offers more flexible manning in future. ‘Lean manning’ keeps running costs down but Falklands war veterans will tell you exhaustion becomes a big factor for crews on prolonged operations. Numbers of sailors are needed for damage control and automation is not a substitute. Has adaptable mission bay and large hangar providing flexibility and allowing for operation of Unmanned aircraft and submersibles in the future. Use of proven technology that may have already been to sea on the Type 23 will help reduce costs and technical problems. Aesthetically pleasing! Possibly the best looking RN warship or auxiliary design to emerge for sometime.

Negatives

- Although maybe a choice dictated by circumstance, it is not a very radical design, the mission bay is really the only major innovation for an RN vessel and foreign warships with these features are already at sea.
- Slow pace of design and building means it could it be partially obsolete soon after it enters service. As the power of anti-ship missiles continues to increase, directed energy weapons (Lasers) maybe the only credible defence and this design does not have provision for this.
- It's still quite large a design for a frigate and although an attempt to keep costs under control, it's difficult to be optimistic, given the dismal history of cost inflation and export failure. Whether costs can be controlled and export orders or international collaboration can be achieved remains to be seen

“It is simply madness to think that a country the size, capability and creativity of Britain could not make its own way in the world. If [Europe] wants proof of that, look no further than the London Olympics. The Games demonstrate again something [we] really should have learnt by now; that the British when galvanised can be world-beaters. If only Britain’s defeatist elite could see what the British people instinctively see.”

The picture on the rear cover is a copy of what was sent to us in answer to our Jubilee message sent to the Queen on one of Lil’s special home made cards

I have this portion of the newsletter to finish but we are on a 5 day break at Butlins in Bognor Regis, so to fill in the gap I will tell you how I find it here. We left home on Monday 24th, it was teeming down with rain, and gale force winds We were booked into the Wave; the newest hotel, quite nice but no facilities. Dining was in 3 restaurants a hundred yds away in the Pavilion entertainment complex. They were very much like large works canteens, crowded and noisy, everything was self service. Entertainment was mainly for children, what they called floor shows were on in the afternoons and early evening and each lasted about an hour, nowhere near enough seating, most were standing. Loads of slot machines and some small stalls everywhere, The Fun fair rides were free, but the more interesting things had a price tag. It was not easy to find your way around the site, the map you get is not very informative. So far we have not found anything of interest to do in the evenings that is free, the cinema is not free and only kids films are showing, adults have a quiz night and a karaoke night at the pub, and that is it, there are other things like go-karts, archery, football, but even these are mainly for the children or maybe teenagers. The fun-fair rides are free, but not all of them. Our 3rd floor room had a balcony and a sea view?? which could just be seen between houses and trees about a mile away. It was our first visit to a Butlins holiday centre and definitely our last, the brochure made it out to be a wonderful adventure, it might well be for young kids, but I would not recommend it to anyone older than 16. After two boring days we decided to cut our losses and go home. And here we are. Roy.



BUCKINGHAM PALACE

1st August, 2012.

Dear Mr. & Mrs. Pavely,

I have been asked to thank you and the Members of the HMS PHOEBE Association for your hand made card containing a message of congratulations to The Queen, sent on the occasion of the Sixtieth Anniversary of Her Majesty's Accession to the Throne.

The Queen much appreciates your thoughtfulness and sends her best wishes for an enjoyable Diamond Jubilee year.

Yours sincerely,
Christopher Sandamas

Christopher Sandamas
The Chief Clerk to The Queen

Mr. & Mrs. R. Pavely.