

*HMS Phoebe
Association
Newsletter
August 2010*



Roy & Lilian Pavely

11th July and we have just returned from our weeks holiday in Kent, the weather was well into the 80's and even touched 90' on occasions, sad to say we forgot to ask someone to water the plants so we have pots of withered fuchias, geraniums, etc. We met up with some shipmates for a luncheon party at a local pub, it was nice to meet up with members who cannot get to a reunion, we had plenty to talk about and the lamp swung for hours. The rest of the week was spent driving around to visit old haunts, we had lived in Ramsgate for 9 years when it was a really good holiday resort, now there is just the sandy beach worth mentioning. Margate is not much better with all its closed shops. Our caravan, although a new one had little to offer in comfort in the heat, just one small window in two rooms that opened about 4 inches, plus the kitchen window, if we had not taken a large table fan with us we would have felt like we were living in a sauna, and to top it off the telly would not work on all channels, watching football in a snow storm while your sweating your 'whatsits' off is no joke. Actually I was glad to get home, its a cottage next year, we hope? When we were at the luncheon we were able to present two members with their Life Membership cert's and badges, one member knew he would be getting it, but the other one was very surprised and a bit dumb-struck for a moment.

We are pleased to hear that Vic & Marge Chanter are now settled in their new home, Vic says there is still a lot to do before he is completely settled but they are making the most of what they have at the moment. Awarding Vic and Ken Kent Life Membership for their bringing together shipmates and the forming of the association was a big surprise to them, and they have written their thanks and appreciation to all shipmates and expressed their sorrow that they are unable attend reunions.

And now we get to the subject of next years reunion in Bournemouth.

As we all know now VAT is going to rise up to 20% in January 2011, unfortunately this will now have some bearing on what the reunion will cost, although it is an increase of two and a half percent it is not too much of a burden. We sat and worked the increase out and came up with the same result that the hotel has sent us. Its not that they are quick off the mark, it was I who asked them for an update so that I could get it put onto the new booking forms you will find in the envelope, I also jumped the gun by printing off the booking forms ages ago, which are now about to be put through the shredder, too much trouble to alter them by hand.

The price you see here has been rounded up by a couple of pence, it will make it easier for adding up. Whereas the original price was £135 pp for three nights it is now £138.50 pp, or approx £46.17 pp per night. There is no supplements for singles, if only two nights (Fri & Sat) are required it is £92.34 pp. Any money left over after paying the bill will naturally go into the funds. I remind you about the hotel, It is the Hinton Firs, a 3* hotel which looks more like 4* with its facilities of both indoor and outdoor swimming pools, an indoor Jacuzzi, and a Sauna, so bring your cozzies, (with much regret no skinny-dipping is allowed).

The hotel is situated in Manor Rd, a few minutes walk from the East Cliff, it has three car-parks in the grounds, so don't overcrowd the small front one. It is just a short taxi ride from the station, and not too far from the town. While here have a walk down to Central Gardens and see our own memorial, it is on the opposite side of the gardens to the towns cenotaph. A warning: **There is no free parking for blue badge holders in any Dorsetshire car park.**

You can start booking the hotel from now, it has to be done through us, the same as for Llandudno. You can send to the treasurer as much as you like and as often as you like, or you can send the whole amount. Each time you send money **do so by cheque made payable to HMS Phoebe Association** **Do not on any account make cheques payable to Lil or Roy.**

Your cheque's must be paid into the Associations bank account. You can withdraw your money any time you like until April 30th, our cut-off date.(This could be changed by the hotel).

You will receive a receipt for each payment made. Although it is 9 months and a couple of weeks away, I think this venue will be well attended and quickly booked up, don't leave it till the last minute to reserve a room, send a deposit of £10 pp ASAP to secure your accommodation.

OBITUARY:

Shipmate Colin Critchley crossed the bar five weeks ago.. This information came from a shipmate of mine in the HMS Sheffield Association; who happened to mention to me in a email he was attending Colin's funeral along with other members of the Southend on Sea RNA Branch.. He had no idea who to get in touch with, but said he would offer condolences on behalf of the HMS Phoebe Association to the chief mourner, which turned out to be a female cousin.

‘The Beginning, almost the end’

By George. Green

I was a radio telegraphist when, towards the end of April 1941 we left Iceland aboard HMS Foresight, a fleet destroyer, bound for Murmansk. There were 14 merchant ships, the cruiser H.M.S. Edinburgh, H.M.S. Forester(our sister ship) and four older ex-American destroyers... On the night of April 31, Edinburgh, Forester and ourselves were ordered to search for three German destroyers who were Hunting the convoy. I was on the second dog watch (6pm - 8pm). The sea was very rough, visibility only a few yards, driving snow squalls and temperature about -60 degrees. Suddenly the low frequency receiver crackled, telling me that Edinburgh had received two torpedo hits from a U Boat (U 356) which had blown her stem away, she could neither steer nor make way.

We and Forester made our best speed to reach her. Our Captain decided he would try to tow her to Murmansk. For 12 hours we tried to get a wire hawser aboard. When we did the strain was so great that it snapped, recoiling like a whiplash. It would have killed any man in its path.

Suddenly the three destroyers we were searching for found us, before we realised it, shells were exploding round us.

We received Admiralty orders to sink Edinburgh quickly to prevent her being captured. We put two torpedoes into her, sinking her in minutes. The three Germans decided to sink Forester first. They came three abreast, throwing everything they had at her. In a matter of seconds she was ablaze, all her superstructure and bridge had been blown away, many of the crew had been killed too. Knowing she was no danger, the German destroyers turned to fight us.

In the interim, we had fired torpedoes and hit the Herman Schoemann and sinking her. But during those few seconds they hit us with two direct hits. One of which exploded in the boiler room, killing all who were down there, and ripping a hole the size of a bus in our port side. The ship slowly came to a halt, listing badly.

We all felt our time was up. The Chief Stoker, a very brave man, gave his life to save the ship. He went into the wrecked boiler room through scalding steam to turn the main taps off and prevent the ship from blowing up. He died within minutes.

I cannot understand why the two destroyers didn't finish us off.

Instead, they turned away. Our Captain gave the order to abandon ship.

We knew that if we went into the sea we would last about five minutes; there were only Carly rafts for the crew. Then the Captain discovered that his lifeboat was frozen to the davits and could not be lowered.

He rescinded the order to abandon ship and asked us if we would be prepared to save her, or go down with her. We chose to save her and gave three cheers,. Later he had a barrel of rum placed on the deck, and we were told to help ourselves. The ship was now listing 30 degrees to port, and in danger of capsizing. We moved everything moveable to the starboard side.

After eight hours she had nearly righted and the hole was out of the water, we plugged it with hammocks, kitbags, everything we could. Towards midnight we got an auxiliary engine going, giving us about five knots. We passed a towing hawser to Forester, who by that time had put out the her fires. Taking up the strain slowly the hawser held fast, and we were under-way. By the grace of God we arrived at Murmansk.

All that was left to do now was bury our 35 dead shipmates. We sailed to within a few miles of Kola and stopped, a few words were said, and the bodies, sewn up in their hammocks, were committed to the deep. We sailed back to Murmansk to carry out repairs before returning home.

A couple of addresses now of new associated members, who joined us at the Llandudno reunion, we welcome to the fold:

The brother of S/m Bill Graham.

No 149c Harry Graham. 8 Westlay Way. Poulton - le - Fylde. FY6 8AD.

And Bills daughter:

No 149d Carol Melvin. 1 Paddocks Rd. Hollywood. Birmingham. B47 5EG

New address: S /m Vic Chanter. 220 New Rise. Clifton. Notts. NG11 8BZ

I've seen a lot of Ex Phoebe frigate shipmates names on the internet, mainly on the "Old Oppos" web site, it would be nice to get in touch with them.

Me being an 'oldie' I would not know who they are, but some of our members may. So if you can get on the Internet, take a look at the Forces reunited sites, enter a search for HMS Phoebe and see if there is anyone you know who you maybe able to persuade to join us. If you are a member of a RNA branch, is there anyone in the branch who served aboard a Phoebe? Even one day makes them a full member, and all ex RN are welcome too.

I am in a quandary at the moment? For one thing I have run out of things to put in this newsletter, so it looks like a revert to the internet. Also I am having trouble with my computer, it is old and has so much rubbish running in the background that it takes ten minutes to get anything working. I bought a program to clean up the registry, luckily it did not cost much, because it was useless, in fact the computer went slower, so that was deleted.

Then I found a highly recommended registry cleaner, this one cost quite a bit. Once paid for I was to receive a code by email so that I could use the program straight away, but then got an error message to say the code could not be delivered. Tried all sorts of things to get it to work, last resort get onto PayPal to get it sorted out or my money back, got to wait now.

Another pit fall was three of my printers decided to go on the blink, the two Brother inkjet ones had the same fault, the ink stopped running, nothing anyone can do, to get them serviced cost more than buying another printer. Then my Kyocera laser printer went berserk, toner spraying out everywhere, a new fuser is wanted costing more than I paid for the machine, so that's been ditched. All I was left with was my photo-copier until I found one on E-Bay, a larger multifunction printer, Bidding started at £41, but no one was bidding on it, I waited until the time had almost run out then bid £45, and got the printer for £41. Looked up the price of a new one it was £245. It was delivered next day for free. Its even got new ink cartridges in it.

It looks like this will be an 8 page newsletter again, articles are desperately needed, put on your thinking caps, there must be something you can write about. Why did you join the mob is a good subject, as is those runs ashore, holidays too.

Anonymous articles very welcome. (no swearing, well, not too much?).

Cover Photo:

Lil and I apologise in publishing our latest photo, taken at the Llandudno reunion. But it is fourteen years since the first meeting took place, a lot of members have passed on; and some have left, but there are plenty of you who have never been to a reunion and consequently have never met either of us, hence the photo. Its just to let you know what a (*tongue in cheek*)! handsome couple we are?? Perhaps you might be thinking "I ought to go and meet them next year", that would be grand, we like meeting up with shipmates and swing the lamp. As the years went by we learnt a great deal about most of the HMS Phoebe's. If only we could hear more about the frigate, and what her shipmates got up to ashore or aboard.

One More Trip 1939

She was old and grey and rusting a bit
 Before the war she'd been quite a hit
 Sailing the oceans far and wide.
 Then coming home on the incoming tide.

The years have passed and times are hard
 She's not worth much at the breakers yard
 But wait a bit, what's the news?
 They're talking war - the shortening fuse,

She should have gone to the yard this day,
 If the breaker's men had had their way.
 They are not the type to recognise
 A ship's got pride in her captain's eyes!

We're waiting for news, it won't be long:
 Will she be needed if things go wrong?
 It's true, we've heard, we'll sail again;
 The ship won't have to bear the pain.

The breaker's men will have to wait,
 Another time, another date;
 Before they get their hands on her
 And cruel men decide her fate

Thousands on tons of food she brought,
 The U Boats tried but she was not caught
 But who knows how long that game will last?
 She's very old and never fast.

A lick of paint was all she got,
 That kept her from the smelting pot.
 So say a prayer and mean it too,
 She's out somewhere on the ocean blue.

Tell her we're waiting to see her pride.
 Bring her home on the incoming tide.

Brian Dixon

A cover-up

In 1942 I was a 22 year old Seaman in the Merchant Navy aboard the Queen Mary, returning to Glasgow from New York. The Queen Mary was carrying about 20,000 American Troops to join the Allied Forces. There were 2 of us on the poop deck down aft, and we were manning the 6 inch gun in case we came under attack. What good we could have done with one gun, I've no idea!

A cruiser named HMS Curacao met us 200 miles off the coast to escort us into Greenock. I could see her clearly from the gun deck as she turned about and started zig-zagging in front of us - it was common for the ships and cruisers to zig-zag to confuse the U-boats.

In this case however the escort was very, very close to us. I said to my mate "You know she's zig-zigging all over the place in front of us, I'm sure we're going to hit her."

And sure enough, the Queen Mary sliced the cruiser in two like a knife through butter, straight through the six inch armoured plating. The Queen Mary just carried on going (we were doing about 25 knots). One did not stop and pick up survivors even if they were waving at you. It was too dangerous as the threat of U-Boats was always present.

My mate and I wanted to do something, so after the collision I said to my mate 'C'mon let's sling this over' and we released a cork life raft into the sea. Whether anyone from the cruiser managed to climb aboard the raft I've no idea. The Queen Mary continued her journey to Greenock, dropped anchor, and discharged the American soldiers.

I estimate that about 600 men were aboard the cruiser, I don't know if there were any survivors or not. The collision was covered up and not reported in the papers. Many years later, in 1949, the Queen Mary was exonerated of blame and the whole event was forgotten. I often wonder what the families of those men on the cruiser were told?