

*HMS Phoebe
Association*

Newsletter

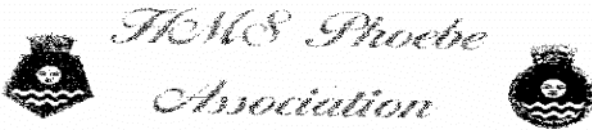
April 2010




*Welcome to Doug's
"Dunny Club"
Fully Licensed.*

Llandudno Reunion Attendees:-

The sample pass you see below will enable you to obtain a Great Orme Tramway return ticket for one person. The normal charge for a tramway return ticket is £5.50 we are asking you for a £1 donation towards our funds for each pass. The Tramway is one of the longest cable operated tramways in the UK, there is a station halfway up the Gt Orme where you can dismount and spend some time taking in the facilities on offer, then continue your journey to the top and take in the magnificent views (Great views for camera shots) and maybe walk the walks or enjoy what facilities there are to be had. The Tramway is open from 10am to 6pm, you embark at Victoria Station, in Church Walks (A Street Map is available with your pass). Tell the Ticket seller you are with HMS Phoebe Association and hand your pass in, you will be given a Tramway return ticket for each pass.. There is nothing else to pay, it is covered by the Association. This will, we hope make up somehow for there not being a coach trip. If you do not use your pass, please tear it up and bin it, we are being invoiced for all passes exchanged for tickets.



**The Great Orme Tramway
Company
Please exchange this pass for
ONE return ticket**

Signed  Secretary

I think we will have about the same attendance as we had last time we were here, I was hoping for more, perhaps it is a place too far? But we still have several weeks to go so hopefully more will book a room.

I am not at liberty to say where next years reunion will be held, but we already have it in the bag, and we are sure it will be well liked, it will be confirmed at the AGM.

Remember: **IT IS AN OFFENCE TO FEED THE SEAGULLS.**

Next year will be our fifteenth anniversary, which is not bad considering we were given just a couple of years before folding.

In 2003 I remember an ex-Ganges member putting forward a proposal to me that we got everyone to pay a £50 joining fee and do away with subscriptions, I thought this was a ridiculous proposal and never brought it up in committee. Our subscriptions started off at £5 and £2.50, over the years the account has gone up and down but we have managed to keep our heads above water, we even opened another account, namely the Welfare Account, this was well worth doing; it paid for various things and allowed us to help members too. Donations boosted the funds, although they have dried up somewhat in the last year we are still solvent, and at the moment we do not envisage any increase in subscriptions. If the need arises the Constitution allows us to ask for a one off payment from members to boost the funds, but we have never had reason to call upon this clause, hopefully we never will.

An enterprising pair of old sailors aged 73 & 80 thought they would go down to Plymouth for Navy Days, but the train fare from Stourbridge to Plymouth was out of the question, so discussing it over a couple of pints at their Stourbridge RNA meeting, they hit upon the idea of using their bus passes. After plotting the trip and packing their bags they went to the local bus depot and caught a bus to Bromsgrove, then buses to Worcester, Gloucester, Chepstow, Bristol, Wells, Taunton, then Exeter, from there they went on to Plymouth. Each time they changed buses and had to wait for the next bus they visited a pub for a quick one, Arriving in Plymouth they were taken to a hotel by the local RNA where they rested before being taken on a visit to Devonport dockyard. While in the dockyard they got in with a warrant officer onboard the Roebuck and went down to his mess with him for a couple of tots. the return bus journey went through Weston, Bristol, Chepstow, Gloucester, Upton, Worcester, Kidderminster, and Halesowen before finishing at Stourbridge. They had spent just £3.50 each on busses that they could not use their passes on, and had visited 8 pubs, during the 4 days they spent on the round trip, they met lots of friendly people and enjoyed the sight seeing they were able to do. Would they be doing it again, Oh Yes! The next time they hope to visit Chatham Historical Dockyard. (Just thought? You could use your bus pass to get you to Llandudno free).

This is an actual extract from a sex education school textbook for girls, supposed to have been printed in the 1960s, but I reckon it to have come from a much earlier edition.

“When retiring to the bedroom, prepare yourself for bed as promptly as possible. Whilst feminine hygiene is of the utmost importance, your tired husband does not want to queue for the bathroom. But remember to look your best when going to bed. Try to achieve a look that is welcoming without being obvious. If you need to apply face-cream or hair rollers wait until he is asleep as this can be shocking to a man last thing at night.

When it comes to the possibility of intimate relations with your husband it is important to remember your marriage vows and in particular your commitment to obey him. If he feels that he needs to sleep immediately then so be it. In all things be led by your husband's wishes; do not pressure him in any way to stimulate intimacy. Should your husband suggest congress then agree humbly all the while being mindful that a man's satisfaction is more important than a woman's. When he reaches his moment of fulfilment a small moan from yourself is encouraging to him and quite sufficient to indicate any enjoyment that you have had.

Should your husband suggest any of the more unusual practices be obedient and uncomplaining but register any reluctance by remaining silent. It is likely that your husband will then fall promptly asleep so adjust your clothing, freshen up and apply your night-time face and hair care products. You may then set the alarm so that you can arise shortly before him in the morning. This will enable you to have his morning cup of tea ready when he awakes.” (Yeah! Yeah! Make it a law, but I wonder how many young ladies took notice and carried out the above).

On 12th March Lil and I went to the Federation of Naval Associations reunion at Mill Rytte, Hayling Island. Upon arrival at the camp we met up with Tom & Pat Bateman and spent most of the weekend with them, it was a good event although it was not as good regarding entertainment this time as it was in past visits, new management I expect. As it was close to St Patrick Day celebrations the entertainment was mostly loud Irish music, much too loud.

mostly Irish, especially the terrifically loud music. But there was a young illusionist and his woman partner on Sunday night who stole the limelight for the whole weekend, I am still trying to fathom out where the multitude of

umbrellas appeared from, small chiffon squares turned into umbrellas at the shake of a hand. Tom, Lil and I went to RAF Tangmere Museum on Sunday afternoon, it was their 'Open Day'.

A great war museum and well worth a visit.

REUNION

It is getting close to sending in the remainder of your reunion booking, we would like all payments to be made by April 27th, we have to sort what we have and get it sent off to the hotel, but do not worry if you have not booked by then, we will still be open for business, but from that date the whole

payment will have to be sent to us with your booking form.

The following is by shipmate Bill Wilson and is his version of the 'Cyclone' Published in the last newsletter and written by Shipmate Albert Hoyle. "I too remember the occasion very well. I was on watch in the Plotting Room, just below the bridge, it was my cruising station. Anything you couldn't find was rolling round the deck. Plotting the ships progress and taking measurements was done with great difficulty. I also remember the chaos that reigned on the foc'sle mess deck with broken crockery and cutlery everywhere. As I recall there was a thick rope secured along each of the ships waists, these were lifelines, it was essential for anyone walking forward or aft along these decks to keep a hold on these lines, or be washed overboard.

It was an unforgettable experience making your way along the rope, your life in your hands. I thank God we never met with another Cyclone. I also remember after the storm our approach our destination, Akyab. The destroyers were there first then we followed them, the larger cruisers came on astern of us. All ships company's were at action stations by then. As S/m Hoyle stated we spent quite a long time in that area picking up troops from Chittagong, and land them south of Akyab using landing-craft. The first lot to land were Indian troops, of whom the least said soonest mended because of the mess they left behind. Our Captain swore he would never embark Indian troops again. Although we did on several occasions have onboard a company of Ghurkhas, they were friendly and well mannered

It was a treat to mix with them and talk about their experiences. On that occasion Phoebe was like a mother duck with all her chicks (landing-craft) around her. At arrival at the destination the troops boarded the landing-craft and sailed of with our best wishes, what brave men they all were.

Phoebe had quite a few runs up and down the Burmese coast from Chittagong to Sabang, at the northern tip of Sumatra. Also a trip up the Irrawadi River to Rangoon; none of which were without danger.

I recall one occasion when we were at anchor near the coast when we were suddenly alerted to the approach of an MTB that we could not identify; pom-pom and light anti-aircraft guns were manned just in case, however, it turned out to be one of our own from a small group working under cover to create havoc behind enemy lines. They had come begging for fresh food supplies and some clothing. They looked more like pirates dressed in sarongs and bodies browned to a crisp! We were pleased to supply food, beers and cigarettes and some rum of course!! They went off to their hiding place happier than when they first appeared.

HMS Phoebe showed she had many talents and uses before we paid off and began our long journey back to the UK and Chatham.

I have been in the wars again, I went into hospital for a day to have what was supposed to be one Angioplasty and two balloons inserted, one in the right leg artery and one in the Pelvis artery. But that was changed in the ops room to a angioplasty in left and right groin and three balloons inserted. I did not mind as it was supposed to help me walk better??

I think too long was spent groping around in my stomach because that night I woke up at 2am with breathing difficulties, in fact I though I was about to have another heart attack, I sat on the edge of the bed trying to get more breath. For three hours I sat there fighting for breath trying to make up my mind whether to call out the paramedics, I decided not to when I began to breathe a bit easier, it had been very frightening and still was for a few more hours until bedtime and I was breathing freely, although the slightest movement made me out of breath. I woke at 5am breathing like I had just completed a race, but as the day wore on it got better, its still not exactly right, but I have an appointment with my doc tomorrow. I hope I can get a parking spot close to the surgery, I don't want too far to walk.

I was a radio telegraphist when, towards the end of April 1941, we left Iceland aboard H.M.S. 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 whip-lash. 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 a blazing hulk. All her superstructure had been blown away and all her officers, with many of the crew, killed. Knowing she was no danger, they turned to fight us. In the interim, we had fired torpedoes and hit the Herman Schoemann, sinking her. But during those few seconds they hit us with two direct hits. One 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 this was the end of our story. The Chief Stoker, a very brave man, gave his life to save the ship. He went into the wrecked boiler room in 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 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.

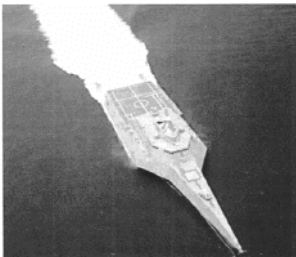
We gave three cheers and he placed a barrel of rum on the deck to help ourselves. The ship was now listing 30 degrees, in danger of capsizing. We moved everything to the starboard side. After eight hours she had nearly righted and the hole was out of the water. We plugged it with hammocks, kitbags, everything we could... Towards midnight we got an auxiliary engine going, giving us about five knots. We put a hawser on to Forester who by that time had put out the fires. It held fast. By the grace of God we arrived at Murmansk. All that was left was to bury our dead. There were 35 .of them, sewn up in their hammocks. They were committed to the deep a few miles from Kola. (Author Unknown)

GET Pension Tax Credit:

£30-a-week top-up may be available but almost TWO MILLION eligible lower-income pensioners don't claim it. Effectively it tops up your total income to a minimum level even if you have up to £10,000 savings. To check eligibility call free - 0800 991234.

(Extracted from the News of the World)

Is it a Rocket, a Plane, or Space-ship? NO! it is a WARSHIP, this is one of the latest experimental craft for the American Navy, the prototype has proved to be such a success that 50 more are to be built, at what cost? Well! each one is reckoned to be cheap at 208,000,000.



This is the USS Independence its a triple hulled ship “Littoral Combat Ship” (LCS). The tri-maran can move huge weapons around faster than any Navy ship. They are tailor made for launching helicopter's and armoured vehicles, sweeping mines and firing all manners of torpedoes, missiles, and machine guns.

This tri-maran, is the first of the fire breathing breed and is ready to scoot out of dock at a rumoured 60 knots.

It is likely to be a terrifically speedy and heavily armed aircraft carrier for Helicopter's.

Pocket battleships such as the Bismarck and Graf Spee were sent out to create havoc among our merchant shipping with the aim of cutting off our supply lines. The Graf Spee sank nine of our merchant ships whose 300 surviving crew members were taken aboard then transferred to the secret German supply ship 'Altmark'.

The Graf Spee, in mid December, was scuttled in Montevideo Harbour, so now 'Altmark' was left alone; with her holds packed with British prisoners, her engines faulty and unable to make it back to Germany, her prisoners no longer a secret, and running short of food it was January before she could sail north, her destination, the neutral waters of Norway.

Arriving at Norway the crew thought they had escaped the ambushes of the Royal Navy, and the prisoners felt that they were to become long term guests of Germany. However, Royal Naval intelligence became aware of the ship and a flotilla of destroyers plus a cruiser were sent to try and intercept.

On 16th February, at 08.25 a flight of Lockheed Hudson aircraft pinpointed the Altmark, took photographs and passed information on of her position and direction.

HMS Cossack, intercepted the message and Captain Vian immediately gave pursuit. The Admiralty ordered that interception be made in neutral waters but Vian sent in the destroyers but Altmark ignored orders to heave to. Two Norwegian MTBs appeared and began to shepherd the Altmark towards Josing Fiord and safety. Reaching the Fiord the Norwegians closed in and blocked off the channel. As darkness fell the Cossack arrived. The situation was tense...if there were no prisoners aboard the German ship then the Norwegians had acted correctly. In Cossack Lt Craven RNVR invited the senior Norwegian officer aboard and informed him of the British prisoners aboard Altmark and demanded the right to search the German ship. The Norwegian declared that the ship had been searched three times already and no prisoners were found, his orders were to resist any entry by force and pointed out that his torpedo tubes were trained on the Cossack.

Deadlock - It took Vian three hours to elicit a response for instructions from the Admiralty. These were: "Unless Norwegian MTBs undertake to convoy Altmark to Bergen with a joint Anglo-Norwegian guard on board and a joint escort, you should board Altmark, liberate the prisoners and take possession of the ship pending further instructions. If Norwegian MTBs interfere you should warn them to stand off, if they fire on you do not reply unless attack is serious, in which case you must defend yourself using no more force than is

Necessary, and cease fire when they desist”. These orders placed Vian in a terrible dilemma, when is an attack serious?

The Norwegian officer was not moved by the argument until it was pointed out that the Cossack had repositioned its-self and the MTBs tubes were no longer pointed at the Cossack but the Cossacks pom-poms were trained on the MTBS. Lt Craven stated that the Royal Navy was going to board and search Altmark “Whether we had to fight the Norwegians or not”. At this stage the Norwegian officer decided he could withdraw with honour, and did so.

Altmark came into view as Cossack steamed round a bend, her bows pointing inshore and covered in ice, against the snow covered mountains her stark black bulk made a striking contrast. The captain of Altmark was not giving up easily, he went charging astern through the channel he had made in the ice, his searchlight trained on the destroyers bridge to blind the men there. Disaster from collision was only avoided by some class manoeuvring by the Cossack, as the two ships closed together, the leader of the boarding party, Lt Bradwell Turner, leaped across the gap between the two ships, this feat after the event became quite famous, but Petty

Officer Atkins was not so adept and fell short, hanging by his arms until Turner hoisted him inboard. Both ships now secured to each other the boarding party stormed aboard. On Altmarks bridge Turner found the engine telegraphs at Full Ahead intending to push Cossack inshore, he rang them to Stop. The German officers on the bridge surrendered except for one who tried to change the telegraphs once more and almost got shot by Turner.

Altmarks stern now grounded, quickly Cossack cast off, just avoiding a similar fate. With the German captain giving up, Turner anticipated the release of any prisoners would be a routine affair, not so, an armed guard who was on board from the Graf Spee shot Gunner Smith of the boarding party. In the ensuing battle six Germans were killed and six badly wounded. When the holds were broken open groups of men were found.

Turner shouted out “Any British down there” a tremendous roar of “Yes! We are all British” was the reply.

Turner made his now famous reply.

“COME ON UP THEN, THE NAVY’S HERE”

There is one person that I will always remember, a person I consider to be the most wonderful man I ever met. Sadly I do not know his name only that he is buried in the Naval Cemetery in Murmansk. N. Russia. We met in a lifeboat in the Barents Sea 120 miles north of Russia, in the winter of 1942, when my ship the "SS Induna" that had picked him up was sunk, and finished four days later when we sighted land and were picked up by a Russian boat. It was then that he said these words to me. "We made it kid", but sadly this wonderful man died the next day, and found his last resting place in Murmansk.

We had been adrift for four days in a lifeboat after the submarine U376 had torpedoed the SS Iduna on 30th March 1942. This man was not a crew member of the Induna but was aboard the "SS Ballot" when she was sunk. The SS Ballot had sailed from New York to Iceland where she joined the convoy PQ13 bound for Murmansk.

The long range German planes found the ships and attacked the escort destroyers, but were beaten off by the cruiser HMS Trinidad. The JU88s and high level Focke Wolfes attacked with bombs. The SS Ballot suffered some near misses from a dive bomber attack, losing steam she stopped astern of the convoy, a lifeboat was lowered with 16 men aboard and they were picked up by the Whaler "Silja". A few ships went north to get out of the ice, but the "SS Induna" got stuck, other ships sailed on, but "Silja" stayed, but as she was a small boat the rescued "SS Ballot" men walked across the ice onto the "Induna". Then the "Silja" ran out of fuel and was taken in tow by "Induna". But at 10 pm the tow broke and the ships parted, "Silja" was not seen again. Next morning at about 7.30 am the "Induna" was torpedoed in number 5 hold under a load of aviation spirit, the explosion turned the deck into a blazing furnace. We were sent to boat stations, a few people ran through the flames, some on the stern jumped into the sea away from the flames. The last man was one of those rescued from the "Ballot", he had no shoes on his feet were ripped ragged from the cargo of barbed wire we were carrying, his bloody footprints visible across the boat deck. The lifeboat was lowered to deck level, I and others were ordered into it, this was when I saw this man coming towards us, his hair was burnt off, and his face and hands were badly burnt his jacket and trousers were alight, we rolled him into the boat and quickly beat out his flaming clothes.

The boat was lowered into the sea, as we rowed away another torpedo smashed into the ship, and she immediately sank with all the men that were still aboard. We were in the lifeboat for four in terrible weather, it was winter in the arctic and Barents Sea.

The burnt man sat in the boat with the seas crashing over him we covered him with a blanket and a spare coat, the others in the boat were no help, just the gunner and myself did the baling. We tried talking to the burnt man but he was so burnt he could hardly speak, he did manage to tell me he was American. As the seas broke over him a coat of ice formed on him which as time went by got thicker and thicker, but never once did he complain he just sat there quietly and all that he ever asked for was the occasional cigarette, which I would light for him and put it in his mouth, he would move his head when I was to remove the cigarette, this happened just a few times each day, he would say "Gunner can I have a cigarette?"

This went on for the four days we were adrift, and then at dusk on the fourth day we sighted land, when we told him he asked if we could turn the boat around so that he could see it, we did this for him, his next words were "Put an oar into my hands and I can rock my body to help". At this time his hands were twice as thick as they should be, with his fingers drawn and bent and ice cold, they were black with knuckles burst and covered in scabs, yet still he wanted to help. Then we saw rescue boats and were picked up, as I was pulled aboard, I saw a Russian sailor down in the lifeboat looking at the American and passing a rope around him. I do not know how they got him out of the lifeboat for I was taken onto the bridge and did not see it done. The next time I saw him was after a Russian female crew member called to me, she was having difficulty with our cabin boy, a seventeen year old lad called Anderson, who was bent double and frozen stiff. Cutting off his jacket we found his body was completely laid down to his waist, there was nothing we could do for him except to cover him up and to leave him. After a few vodkas I was taken to see the American who put out his hand for me to hold and said "WE MADE IT KID" words that I will never forget from a man who was now suffering from terrible burns and frostbite. The next day we arrived in Murmansk and went into a Russian hospital where I went into a long deep sleep. When I woke I was told that the cabin boy had died and later that the American had died from his injuries as well.

Who was he? I will never know for certain, but there is a grave in Murmansk to an unknown sailor from the "SS Ballot", a man who died with dignity, a man who anyone can be proud to say, "I met that man".