



Newsletter – Volume 3 - No 1 – March 2009.

Opening Comment: - Here's hoping that you have managed to survive this past 'not very nice' winter? Now of course we are all probably thinking maybe we will get a decent spring, followed perhaps by a good summer; it would be rather nice for us? It has been changeable of late!

Terry.

Chairman's Corner: - Hello Shipmates, with the reunion looming, I hope those of you attending have sent your deposit to the hotel. If you intend doing the Saturday coach trip do please send your cheques to our Treasurer, Andrea. During last year I heard from a reliable source that the Trecarn Hotel in Babbacombe was to be demolished in the early part of this year, so recalling the enjoyable reunions over the years we have spent there, I feared for the future of our ship's badge which adorns the walls at this place. Not wanting to hear that it had been discarded or disposed of in some manner, I wrote to the manager explaining my concern. I did also ask a friend who was going to the Trecarn on another event to pick up the badge if so needed. I received a reply from the management as follows: -

"Thank you for your letter dated 14th December regarding the demolition of the hotel. There were reports in the press earlier this year that the hotel was possibly going to be rebuilt; however this will not happen for another couple of years. We do not have any plans as yet for the removal of plaques from the walls as they are a memorable part of the hotel's history. Should anything change we will endeavour to reunite the plaques if they are not to be displayed".

On February 6th, six committee members mustered at the Maritime Club in Queen Street Portsmouth and held a very constructive meeting, sorting out many items mostly concerning the forthcoming reunion weekend in April.

After a bite of lunch, five of us made our way to the Semaphore Tower in the dockyard where the RNA Headquarters have relocated from London. After entering through Victory Gate and getting to the point where one needs to turn left for the Tower, we were brought to an abrupt halt by the shouted instruction, "STOP". After explaining to the security bloke that we were visiting RNA H-Q's on invitation, he directed us to a check-in office where we went through quite a rigmarole of getting passes and then being made to wait for an 'escort'! Proving our identity was a bit daunting and anyone contemplating such an expedition should really have their driving licence with them; they seem to want an ID with photo and address on it! Our welcome by the RNA staff was first-class, tea/coffee and biscuits were plentiful and there were quite a few 'freebies' such as diaries, year books and little advertising objects. We enjoyed a pleasant hour with these people and all too soon it was time to leave! On 2nd January, a fine but bitterly cold day, five of us went to Hannington near Basingstoke to represent the ship at the funeral of Roy Thorne. He had a good send off and was obviously very well thought of within his family. Roy was in Ceylon for the 56/58 commission and was also a member of the BKVA having served in the Charity (D29) in 50/52.

Think this is all for now; looking forward to April 24th, best regards to you all,

Yours aye

John.

Timely Reminder: - Our president David Scott would like to remind those members interested, that the last “RN Ships in Korea Reunion” is due to be held at Leamington Spa on Saturday 6th June. If you are one of these, please contact Ken Cox (HMS Modeste) as soon as possible.

Reunion 2009: - The bookings are well advanced and as of the middle of February there were 92 people down to attend. Apparently at that time there were only 6 double/twin rooms still available, this means that anyone leaving it much longer could find themselves not being able to get a booking. Because the Kistor’s sister establishment, the Inglewood, is booked out that weekend for the Wizard Association’s reunion, there will unfortunately be no chance of getting in there on an overflow arrangement as last year. So I would certainly advise anybody wishing yet to attend that they make their booking ASAP. Anyone needing another booking form has only to contact me and I will see that one is sent pronto! There are just a few seats left for the Saturday coach trip, so if you wish to go along on that, please send your name and cheque to Andrea quite soon. Your full identity details are needed by Tony, well in advance, for the administration people at BRNC.

Sunday Arrangements: - The usual Church Service will take place in the entertainment area in the morning. This will be followed by the AGM which we hope will be well attended as there are important decisions to be made.

Terry.

Sick List: - it is sad to report that our stalwart member Bryan Jervis is not enjoying good health; Bryan as you know has been a past chairman and has organised some very good coach trips during our reunion weekends. Along with his diabetic and glaucoma problems, he recently underwent an operation to determine whether a growth in the brain was benign or not. It appeared that it was something that needed serious treatment and Bryan recently underwent a series of radiotherapy; he will not know for about a month from now whether the treatment has been successful or not. He has met his circumstances with great fortitude and is so upbeat about it all, that I feel he can only be a shining example to us all! With his sight and slight speech impediments it has been difficult for him to undertake the many duties he has carried out in the past, but with the capable assistance of fellow ‘shipmate’ Jerry Vincent and good friend Sue, who is caring for him like a good daughter, he has managed to complete the many duties he took on in the past. His intention now is to live life to the full and attend the many functions that were booked by him over the past year. He looks forward to seeing his many friends from the Ceylon in April.

Terry.

Crossed the Bar: - **Roy Stanley Thorne** – member no 110. Roy joined the RN as a Boy Seaman at HMS St Vincent on 1st October 1947 and after a total of 15 years service left the navy and worked in London in the communications department of the Home Office. He made his home in Winchester and was soon very much involved in the RNA branches of firstly Basingstoke then Winchester. He was also very involved doing voluntary charity work for Age Concern and served on the committee of the housing complex where he lived; a truly dedicated man. He belonged to the following associations: - HMS St Vincent – HMS Ceylon – BKVA (D29) – Hong Kong Squadron – & ‘C’ Class Destroyers.

L/Sea Arthur Collins; - In the last issue we commented on the passing of Arthur, a 1st Commission man, who served in Ceylon 1943 to 1946. The details at the time were scant to say the least, but since then his son Martin has been in touch and I can think of no more fitting tribute to him and his shipmates, than to reproduce his reminiscences of his time in the ship; here in his words: -

“Having been drafted to Portsmouth, it was not long before I was transferred to RNB “Victory” to join up with others on draft to *HMS Ceylon* in Glasgow. We boarded a special train for a journey which was to take 48 hours, four times longer than normal because we had to avoid cities that were being bombed, in case the train was hit!

We soon settled down in ‘*Ceylon*’ (*it was nice to be on a brand-new ship, everything up to date*). After a month or so of ‘working up’, which included engine trials and endless seamanship and gunnery practices, we finally sailed for Devonport to have our aircraft hangars converted; one into a Cinema, the other into part Chapel, part Recreation Space. This work allowed us to steal a few more days leave to say our good-byes before leaving ‘Home’ for the next two years! Betty’s brother Vic was in the RAF and had recently been posted abroad (*India or Ceylon, the family weren’t sure*), but it was pretty obvious that we were heading for Ceylon, so it was thought I might just catch up with him?

After leaving Devonport, we headed south, through the Bay of Biscay, on into the Med and headed East for Port Said. The Suez Canal had been cleared and re-opened now that the Germans had been cleared from North Africa. It was a slow 12-hour journey through the canal to the Red Sea and it became really hot with the tropical weather continuing for the journey to Bombay. I didn't like Bombay one bit, if we went into shops we were badgered to buy something and it was so hot and smelly; we were amazed at the number of children found begging in the streets! We were there for a few days, storing and refuelling before heading for the island of Ceylon and our eventual arrival at Colombo.

I wondered if Vic was on the Island and once I got ashore I found a Services Advice Bureau which was very helpful. They informed me that he was indeed on the Island at RAF Ratmalana, about ten miles outside Colombo. My chum Tom Smith and I caught a local bus to Ratmalana Air Force base and were shown to his hut; what a surprise for Vic! We were to meet many times during our two years based at Trincomalee on the other side of the island.

'Ceylon' was the first ship in the new Eastern Fleet, which by war's end consisted of some 300 ships! Our duties were to support the 14th Army who were advancing south through Burma and on into Malaysia to drive out the Japanese. This joint operation (Army, Navy & Air Force) was known as South East Asia Command (S.E.A.C.) and was under the command of Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten; we were to serve as his flagship for about a year.

Apart from taking the Admiral to places he wished to visit, such as Ramri Island, Calcutta, Madras and other locations, we spent most of our time patrolling the Islands, mainly the Nicobar & Andaman Islands, making sure the Japanese made no landings. Our only real action was when the whole fleet went toward Sumatra to destroy the enemy occupied island of Sabang.

We did one trip to Australia, escorting an American troop-ship and our 10-day stay in Freemantle was very agreeable, being so close to the city of Perth.

In 1944 one of the turbines broke down and we spent three months in Durban (S A) while this was replaced and had two weeks leave in Johannesburg, which was most enjoyable!

When the war against the Japanese ended in August 1945 we sailed up the Malaysian coast to the island of Penang, which our contingent of Royal Marines was to occupy until the Army could take over (*they had reached Rangoon by this time*). With the surrender completed in Penang, we sailed south through the Malacca Straights to Singapore (*minus our Royal Marines*). We were allowed ashore in Singapore, but it wasn't exciting, there were very few things to buy, mainly silk materials or cameras; we discovered that cigarettes were the best currency.

Once the official 'Surrender Ceremony' was completed, we took on board twenty or so ex-Prisoners-of-War for transit to the U.K. These poor devils were in a sorry state, all skin and bones who had to be fed very small portions at first, gradually increasing these until we got home. Our first duty on leaving Singapore was to pick up our Royal Marines from Penang before proceeding to Colombo to say our official thanks for their hospitality and goodbyes! Vic was cheesed off because I was going home and he wasn't, but that sadly was 'one of those things'.

We were told to cruise at economical speed, about 16 knots, for the journey home! Our first port-of-call was Aden, where we re-fuelled before going through the Suez Canal to Port Said. After a short stay here, it was on to Valletta in Malta, where I had my first ever run-ashore on this island; it was the first time that I had even seen the Island, despite escorting numerous convoys there in earlier times. After this we headed for Gibraltar for our final re-fuelling and here I took the opportunity to go ashore and buy a large stalk of green bananas (*probably 2 or 3 dozen*); they would ripen nicely by the time I arrived home!

The last part of our homeward journey was most memorable, no sooner had we passed through the Straits and into the Bay of Biscay when we ran into a vicious gale; the worst sea that I had encountered in six years! The ship was doing a 37° roll and when I was on duty in the wheelhouse I found steering a true course impossible!

However we did finally reach our destination – Portsmouth.

Surfer's Section: - It has been very quiet since the last newsletter with just one enquiry coming through looking for old mates etc: - I received an e-mail from the grandson of a shipmate of the 2nd commission and it is to be hoped that someone remembers Richard Pearce; here is the e-mail -

Hi, my name is Nick; I am the grandson of Richard Pearce. He served in HMS Ceylon between 1950 – 1952, all around Korea. Do you remember him at all? I am trying to get hold of some of his old ship mates and friends as we are throwing him a surprise 80th birthday party in

early June. It would be great to get as many of you there as possible because I know the time he spent on the Ceylon was the best 2 years he has ever had.

Please reply if you remember him or would be able to help me find anyone else from the Ceylon from between the years of 1950- 1952.

Thanks in advance, Yours Faithfully, Nick Poffley.

(Nick further contacted with the information that Richard mentions belonging to 509 C S Squad?)

As you are probably aware, I am also responsible for keeping the membership database and producing the labels for the mailing of our newsletter. We have received some complaints re these address labels and I recently discovered quite a hiccup in the computer programme I use for this purpose. With the help of some of the other committee and quite a lot of time spent on crosschecking different lists, we believe we have now got it right? *Let us hope so anyway!* I would now like to ask you all please check that your address details are correct and if you find a problem, then do please contact me or someone on committee, who will make sure that it gets back to me; if I am not told then I will never know! Keep surfing.

Regards, Ron Boniface

HMS Southampton Bows Out: - On the afternoon of Thursday 12th February, five members of the Southampton Branch of the RNA went by invitation to Portsmouth Dockyard and attended the D90's de-commissioning ceremony. Thankfully the weather was fine, albeit a bit breezy and very cold, but the Navy had organised covered tier seating for those invited, which meant the proceedings went off with a degree of comfort to the spectators. Thanks must be extended to the RNA Headquarters staff at Semaphore Tower, who undertook to make sure our arrivals and the issuing of the necessary passes went smoothly; also for their pre-event hospitality in their reception room; this was first-class!

With a 'guard & band' doing a fine job, some of us 'old matelots' really felt that maybe those sailors in the guard might well have appreciated the wearing of blue jerseys (*no longer a kit item*) under their jumpers instead of white fronts? The band was from Her Majesty's Royal Marine's Portsmouth under the direction of WO2 Bandmaster Ashley Williams.

Principal guests were the Lord Lieutenant of Hampshire, Commodore Mrs Mary Fagan, JP and C-in-C Fleet, Admiral Sir Mark Stanhope, KCB OBE.

The ships final few months of service was in a lower state of readiness under the command of Lt/Cdr Rachel Maxwell, RN who in a very moving address gave a brief outline of the ships life, commencing with a 'midnight launch' in January 1979 at the Southampton Yard of Vosper Thornycroft. After fitting out she was finally commissioned in October 1981, with her final sea trials being curtailed by the outbreak of hostilities with Argentina in the Falkland Islands in 1982.

A special photographic session took place alongside the ship, when 12 of her former 'captains' posed for a photograph; this somehow seems to border on the unique.

A splendid de-commissioning cake was much admired by all and cut by Mary Fagan, being later served at the buffet reception held in the No 7 Boathouse Museum and Shop Complex.

Ceremonial Sunset was performed and as usual seemed to have an emotional impact on everyone there!

All in all, a very good day albeit somewhat sad; it now seems a new era is being introduced with the arrival of HMS Daring, the first of a new breed, now in the Portsmouth area champing at the bit to take over the duties of the old Type 42's.

For those 'old destroyer-men' among us who remember their 'boats' with a tonnage of somewhere between 1800 and 2200 tons, it does take some imagination to think of 'destroyers' with tonnages exceeding 7000 tons; heavier than light and medium cruisers of our day!

Southampton Branch RNA.

Well there we go for another newsletter, I detected a touch of spring in the air the other day, then winter came back with a blast! I look out quite keenly for the first time we register 16C on the thermometer. For those attending the reunion next month, I look forward to seeing you. Take care,

Yours aye Terry.