



HMS Bulwark Albion & Centaur Association
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EDITORIAL

Welcome to the summer issue which is back to our usual size and format. It would be nice to have coloured covers and A4 size each issue but unfortunately it would bankrupt us in no time.

I would like to thank those of you who attended the AGM not only for attending but also for voting me in as your Chairman I will do my very best for our association at all times. I am commencing a profile of one of our more senior members Captain Robert Franks.

Many will remember him as Captain of Bulwark on the 1960-61 commission.

It might be possible to develop this theme of a member's naval career whether it be senior officer or OD in future issues and I would welcome similar articles, there must be many stories to tell and also jog the memories of our shipmates, so please send them in.

Views and opinions expressed in the R08 are those of the contributors and unless stated are not necessarily those of the Association.

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**Your Committee
President
Vice Admiral Sir Patrick Symons KBE**

**Chairman
Mike Noonan**

**Vice Chairman
Mike Bridges**

**Secretary
John Truscott**

**Treasurer
Bob Cowan**

**Membership Secretary
Leigh Easton**

**Historian/Archivist
Mike Bridges**

**Editor R08
Mike Noonan**

Committee Members

John Finlay

Mick Toman

SHIP to SHORE
Signals from the “Island”
News News News

AGM/Social 2002

The AGM/Social for 2002 was held at the Victory Club, HMS Nelson, on 20th April. Thank you to Sir Patrick, Committee and all who made the event very enjoyable.

Welcome to our new Chairman, Mike Noonan and Vice-Chairman, Mike Bridges. Mike Bridges and Leigh Easton are confirmed in their original positions of Historian and Membership Secretary.

A very big thank you to Mick Dunnington our out-going Vice-Chairman and to Tim Holt our out-going Social Secretary.

Volunteers now required for Social Sec !!!

GOLDEN JUBILEE/TRAFALGAR NIGHT DINNER

All Members and Guests are welcome to our Association Dinner, on Saturday 19th October, to celebrate the Golden Jubilee and Trafalgar Night in style. Invited guests are expected from the new HMS Bulwark and Albion.

Sir Patrick and Lady Symons are attending as guests of honour.

BOOK YOUR PLACES & ACCOMMODATION NOW!

‘AWAY WEEKEND’ COMMITTEE MEETING/GET TOGETHER

As a reminder! - The venue for this event is confirmed as the Nautical Club in Birmingham, 5th October 2002, to which all members are invited. The Committee meeting will start at 1200hrs and the bar will be open! It is planned to have an informal get together at the Nautical Club in the evening. More details to follow.

COMMITTEE MEETING – JULY 02

The Committee meeting planned for 9th July is cancelled. An informal get together in the HMS Victory Guides Mess is being planned for 27th July and any member wishing to attend should contact the Secretary for details.

Sec says.....

AGM Minutes and Constitution Amendments

These are included with this RO8. The Full minutes and list of proposers and seconders can be obtained from the Secretary (As long as you give him some time!)

Those members that put forward proposals that were not agreed will be notified separately.

Accommodation

Those members who wish details of accommodation within the Portsmouth area should contact the Vice-Chairman, Mike Bridges for information.

Lost Pals

It was promised for this issue but I was unable to get it finalised in time so will appear in Xmas RO8.

And finally.....

Remember to have a go and view our wonderful Website

www.bulwarkassoc.plus.com AR.

Yours Aye.....

Sec

Constitution Amendments

ADD – Before Rule ONE

“ RESOLUTION

THAT THIS ASSOCIATION EXTENDS AND FOSTERS COMRADESHIP AMONGST ITS MEMBERS AND SERVING AND EX SERVING MEMBERS OF ITS SHIPS, HMS BULWARK, ALBION & CENTAUR PAST AND PRESENT”

ADD – To Rule ONE

“THAT SPECIAL REFERENCE BE MADE TO “HMS ALBION ASSOCIATION” AS A TITLE OF THE ASSOCIATION AND THAT ANY REFERENCE IN CONNECTION WITH HMS CENTAUR BE MADE AS THE “HMS CENTAUR ASSOCIATION”

ADD to Rule THIRTEEN

“THAT INCUMBENT COMMANDING OFFICERS OF HMS BULWARK (L15) & HMS ALBION (L14) ARE ENTITLED TO BE HONORARY VICE-PRESIDENTS OF THE ASSOCIATION.”

Dated 20/04/02

GOLDEN JUBILEE TRAFAGLAR DINNER

**SATURDAY 19TH OCTOBER 2002
VICTORY CLUB, HMS NELSON
PORTSMOUTH**

Guest Speaker

V/ADM Sir Patrick Symons KBE RN

Invited VIP Guests

Commanding Officers of New
HMS Bulwark and Albion

Traditional Trafalgar Night Menu

Welcome Tot of Rum or Sherry
Wine on the Tables
Entertainment ‘til Late

Grand Prize Draw

All members and guests welcome. An excellent opportunity to wine, dine and have fun.
Book early to avoid disappointment.

Tickets £30 per person

**HMS BULWARK, ALBION & CENTAUR ASSOCIATION
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2002
SECRETARY'S REPORT
FOR 2001/2002**

Welcome to my second AGM Report for the Association, for the period 2001/2002.

What a great year it has been! After the AGM in 2001 the Committee undertook to raise the membership total to well over 500 by increasing advertising. This has been a phenomenal success largely due to the unstinting efforts of Leigh Easton and Colin Taylor (208). A warm welcome to all of our new members.

The very successful visit to the launch of the new HMS Bulwark was a moving experience and a lot of fun for all those who attended. Thank you to all the members and guests who made the visit such a success.

With two ships in the water bearing the names of Albion and Bulwark, the Association can certainly look forward to an encouraging future.

Our affiliation with HMS Bulwark, now official, is steaming ahead and continues to grow. Early discrete negotiations are in hand with HMS Albion, which hopefully will expand on similar lines to Bulwark. We wish the ships well and offer them our support for the future.

As you can see the Spring Issue of the RO8, commemorating the launch of both ships, is a very well produced magazine. Mike Noonan has put an enormous amount of work into it; I hope that you have enjoyed it. Thanks Mike for your efforts.

www.bulwarkassoc.plus.com is here! A grateful thanks to Danny Siggers, Editor of the Royal Naval Communications Association (RNCA), for planning, setting up and continuing to support the website. Thanks also to Leigh Easton for his valuable input and support to both the website and Danny. Their efforts have produced an excellent site, which has drawn much praise from inside and outside of the Association. Well done to both and welcome to Leigh Easton as our "Webmaster". It is appreciated that not all our members are "on line", but members may access the site from public libraries or other venues. The site contains a wealth of info on the Assoc. and our ships including the contents of the latest RO8 and links to other sites. Have fun!

For his hard work and unwavering support of the website project, the Association extends our grateful thanks to Danny Siggers and has proposed an Honorary membership for his efforts.

It is planned to hold a committee meeting once a year at a different location to enable members, who cannot travel to Portsmouth, to participate in a committee meeting. This year it will be held at the Nautical Club, Birmingham on 5th October. There will be an opportunity for a get together in the evening. This is a new departure for the Association and I hope that as many members as possible can attend.

Following on from last year's highly successful "Trafalgar Night" social it is intended to hold a Formal dinner to celebrate HM Queen Elizabeth II, Golden Jubilee and Nelson's victory at the Battle of Trafalgar. It will be held at the Victory Club, HMS Nelson on 19th October.

In conclusion the Association has had an exciting and successful year. Our plans for the coming year are now being finalised and we expect 2002/2003 to be just as challenging.

Minutes of the AGM 2002
HMS Bulwark, Albion & Centaur Association

Attended by the President, Committee with 32 members and guests. With 18 apologies received. The meeting opened at 12:34hrs, with the following items under discussion:

1. The Vice-Chairman welcomed the President, Committee, members and guests present.
2. The meeting held a 2-minute silence in memory of HM The Queen Mother and Members no longer with us.
3. The minutes of the AGM 2001 were read out and agreed by those present.
4. The Committee presented reports. The accounts closing balance until 19th April was £1610.11, with subs totaling £3696.00 expected in 2002.
5. The following members were elected as officers and committee members as follows:
Chairman – Mike Noonan (Editor RO8)
V/Chairman – Mike Bridges (Historian)
Membership Sec – Leigh Easton
Historian – Mike Bridges
Committee – John Finlay
6. The V/Chairman handed over the meeting to the new Chairman who thanked all present for their support and brought the meeting to order.
7. The following items were proposed for consideration:
An Association Resolution
Vice President positions to be offered to the incumbent Commanding Officers of the new ships.
Special references when corresponding with new ships.
Honorary Membership to Danny Siggers for his work on the association web-site.
8. Mike Bridges proposed a vote of thanks to those who had presented commissioning books to the Association.
9. Mike Bridges gave a report on our membership of the Federation of Naval Associations (FNA).
10. A new Association badge design was presented to members. Changes were proposed and a refined design will be published.
11. Photos of the launch of the new HMS Bulwark and Albion were on show and available for sale to those present.
12. Ron Tigwell proposed that members would be able to save Association costs if they provided stamps for personal correspondence (voluntary).
13. Steve Foster proposed that a vote of thanks be given to Clare Pollard for all his hard work in promoting the Association.
14. The AGM 2003 is to be held on Saturday 5th April, in Portsmouth. Venue to be notified.
15. The President addressed the meeting and outlined a successful year for the Association and presented certificates to outgoing Committee Members and Danny Siggers. Flowers were presented to Jackie Truscott for her support.
16. The meeting closed at 14:44hrs.

From Leigh Easton :-

Commissions will now be shown in any future Membership lists e.g. C2A8BXI will indicate someone who sailed on Centaurs 2nd, Albions 8th and Bulwarks 11th and final commission. Inevitably there will be some additions and changes to record – all required amendments to the Membership Secretary please.

New Members

A warm welcome to all new members both in the flyer and included below.

1731

Taylor Michael “Llanedos” 13 Provene Gardens Waltham Chase
Bulwark 74 – 76 S/Lt Southampton S032 2LE

Bulwark 78 – 80 Lt

1732

Brown John (Buster) Heather Mount 104 Newport Road
Albion 1954 Ord.Telegraphist Ventnor IOW PO38 1BD

1733

Crouch Dennis 9 Gershwin Court Brighton Hill
Bulwark 57-59 ME1 Basingstoke RG22 4NN

1734

New George 4 Harnham Mead Salisbury SP28 JG
Bulwark 57(briefly) 59 – 61 Lt/Lt Cdr

n.b. The above will be included in the correct format in next issue.

Would the following members please confirm the e-mail addresses to me at:- bulwarks@lineone.net
654 Harold Iles, 1533 Bob Styants, 1580 Ian Thompson,
1608 Albert Woolard

Mike Bridges would like to hear from you if you have anything of historical interest, or if you have any queries on any of the three ships Mike will do his best to help.

e-mail MikeB6024@aol.com or 02392 386866

Your Letters

To All Members of the Bulwark, Albion & Centaur Association,
Way back in March 2001 John Truscott dragged me to one-side at the RNCA AGM and enquired about a small Internet Web Site for your association. Being in full sociable mode I agreed thinking to myself that it would be fun and shouldn't take that long! Almost 13 months later and after many many additions and changes including a change of site name the site was up and being used by not only existing members but also possible new members from around the world.

Being invited down to sunny Portsmouth to attend the 2002 AGM was unexpected but very much appreciated until that is Leigh Easton kept dropping hints about making a speech. Still I managed to wrangle a day off from work after many phones calls including a couple to John Truscott at home first stating I couldn't get down in time and then cancelling my cancellation. John's family provided a very warm & welcome place to stay and ferried yours truly around. The AGM was well arranged and seemed to go very smoothly. The members at both the AGM & Social event in the evening made sure that I was fed and watered throughout the whole day's events and considering most didn't know me from Adam I felt very welcome and always had someone to chat with.

The Honorary Membership is very much appreciated and I consider working on your site and hopefully promoting your association an honour and a privilege. I will look forward to attending the 2003 AGM. Finally, I have to once again express my thanks to all the committee members who worked hard to arrange the AGM & Social especially the outgoing Social Secretary who never seemed to sit down for more than 20 minutes at any one time, and all the members that attended who made my visit a pleasure -

even if they did laugh when I was hauled up in front of them all by the comedian and made to stand on a chair in the middle of the room!!!

Yours Aye

Danny Siggers (ex-LRO(T) - HM Frigates)

Can You Help

Tug Wilson would like to ask if anyone knows the whereabouts of Denny Jack.

They were on Bulwarks 63-65 R.E.M.(A)'s

in the EMR. He originated from Dundee.

Tugs email address is tottles1@activemail.co.uk

Marc Reeves wonders if anyone remembers his Father Frederick also known as Ken Reeves.

Unfortunately he passed away in 1983 but Marc knows he served on Centaur in the 1950s, (he was 17 in 1953) He was possibly on the second commission. Marc remembers his dad relating how he ended up in Pompey DQs after unauthorised driving of a train in Gib ?

Marc has only sent his email address which is: marcreeves@trinitysouth.co.uk

(I have no postal address ...ed)

CAPTAIN ROBERT FRANKS CBE DSO DSC RN (Rtd)



Robert Franks started his long Naval career in 1926 at Britannia College Dartmouth aged 13. In those days the college had approximately 550 cadets and was run by a staff of 20.

Four years later his term of 50 completed their time at the college and were divided up into different ships for their three years as Midshipman.

Robert was appointed to the cruiser “Shropshire” in the Mediterranean Fleet. At this time midshipman were paid five shillings a day, they lived in the Gunroom where they fed and sat. They slept in hammocks. Robert remembers he was allocated his first hammock billet immediately below a “police” light and above a steering engine but he soon got used to it. Mids could still get beaten at sea for such faults as not lashing up their hammock properly, or for allowing too much noise when bringing liberty men back from shore.

Robert looks back on his three years in Shropshire as sublimely happy ones.

At the end of three years he took an examination in seamanship, coming first and was promoted Acting sub-lieutenant. He then went to Greenwich to study physics and chemistry, and also plenty of rigger. There were nights out on the tiles and if adrift they had to climb over railings and into windows with occasional unfortunate results.

Following Greenwich Robert attended courses in gunnery, torpedoes and navigation in Portsmouth.

Opportunities for sailing from Whale Island began his love of small boat sailing. His enthusiasm for the Navy gained him five first classes which helped his future seniority.

By now it was 1930 he was 20 and anxious to join the China station. He was posted to a destroyer HMS Wren based in Hong Kong as Navigator. He soon realised he was a destroyer man and it became his ambition to command one. In the hot summer months the fleet sailed North to Wei-Hai-Wei near Shantung and he remembers the anti-piracy patrols.

Pirates would board coastal steamers as passengers, seize the bridge and demand money for any suitable hostages amongst the other passengers. On one occasion two naval officers Field and Luce (later 1st Sea

Lord) were taken by the pirates. Roberts's ship was involved in the rescue after the pirates sank the captured steamer and took off in a junk.

Robert took the motorboat away and remembers strapping on his pistol with a certain amount of bravado. They rendezvoused with other ships boats ready to storm the bay where the pirates had landed only to be told they had released the two officers as they did not relish taking on the British Navy especially when aircraft from the Eagle appeared.

Following an enjoyable year on the China station Wren redeployed to the Med for a further six months. Taking passage home in 1935 in Royal Sovereign, incidentally this was his only experience of a Battleship, Robert joined Scimitar an old and small destroyer based at Chatham with no armament and a reduced crew.

In January 1936 he joined the new destroyer Greyhound building at Vickers, she cost a third of a million to build.

After working up at Gibraltar they moved onto Alexandria carrying out patrols off Haifa to prevent arms getting in. This was followed by Spanish civil war patrols at the other end of the Med. Helping run refugees from East Coast towns to Marseille, on one trip they carried 122 people from 21 nationalities. In the September Robert was sent to Malta to relieve the 1st Lt of Searcher who had gone sick. Searcher was little ship similar to Scimitar and acted as attendant to the carrier Glorious, always berthing alongside her. On joining the CO gave Robert instructions for leaving harbour, getting the mast up etc. Their topmast was housed when alongside Glorious overhang. He was told "the only thing to be done as soon as they cast off was to step the topmast and get everything taut". As soon as they cleared Glorious Robert gave the order "sway away", up rushed the mast but a stay became entangled in the siren lanyard. Nothing seemed to clear it and the engineers could only think they wanted more steam – not less!" They departed Grand Harbour at speed with a drooping topmast and a wailing siren. Robert thought his career was probably finished, however he remained in Searcher until they exchanged to the more modern Comet carrying on the same task.

At this time Glorious was operating Blackburn Darts as torpedo bombers, Fairy IIIFs as recce with Hawker Nimrods and Ospreys as fighters.*(the Nimrods & Ospreys were in 802 sqn later on Albion at Suez).*

November 1937 and now aged 25 Robert was appointed as 1st Lt of Gipsy another destroyer in the Med. The ship returned to UK in June 1938 for a refit.

During this time he took flying lessons at Plymouth Roborough airport using Gipsy Moths and Miles Magister aircraft.

Back in the Med again they were in Palistine waters in 1939 looking for illegal immigrants instead of arms this time.

With the commencement of hostilities Gipsy returned to Plymouth and was soon on North Atlantic convoys followed by a move to Harwich. He remembers Gipsy shooting at a German aircraft, they did not hit it but someone else did and Gipsy picked up the German airman, returning with them to harbour they hoped for a night in but over supper they were ordered to sea. The CO told Robert to take her out whilst he finished his meal.

They left harbour followed sister ship Griffin . Robert clearly remembers the CO coming up to take over, and each of them steadying themselves by holding on to the binnacle one of either side. They were still in the outer harbour and discussing the new threat of magnetic mines when, woomph the explosion of one of these mines hit the ship and cut her in two. Both men were thrown in the air. Robert landed on his backside on B gun deck without a great deal of damage, when he picked himself up he realised the fore part of the ship was resting on the bottom of the harbour with the superstructure above water.

Unfortunately the CO landed on his head and did not survive.

Robert then had to organise the rescue of the ships' company, he often wonders why it was the Captain and not himself that was killed. He was given an OBE for this action and some sick leave.

During this leave he got married and also was appointed to his first command, HMS Scimitar his old ship in which he had already served two and a half years.

At 28 he was also the youngest destroyer Captain in the RN. Scimitar was based at Portsmouth from which they were later involved in Dunkirk.

Having been at sea for some time escorting troop convoys taking men to reinforce the BEF, Robert was out of touch with reliable news, thus when ordered to Dover at best speed they were unaware of the plight of the allied armies.

Joining up with HMS Malcolm they followed her across the Channel in the dark having no clear idea where they were. Malcolm stopped and ordered them to go a mile further on and embark troops from the shore. Proceeding slowly and taking soundings they anchored and sent the motor boat inshore. When the boat eventually returned an Army officer onboard was a little vague and said he thought there were about 600 men to come off. Robert thought this might be an exaggeration, but when daylight broke he was able to distinguish dark patches all along the shore which turned out to be thousands of troops. Embarking was slow work with only 6 troops in the motor boat and 12 in the whaler. On this first trip on May 29th they thought they were full when they had embarked 70 troops, however Malcolm ordered them to carry on taking troops, eventually they picked up 350 many packed in the boiler room.

Subsequently they carried 400, many with standing room only. Scimitar's final total of troops brought out of Dunkirk was 2,716, this effort earned him a mention in despatches, the gunlayer got a DSM for shooting down an enemy aircraft and a midshipman was awarded a DSC for his work in remaining in the ship's motor boat at Dunkirk and continuing the evacuation.

Following six return trips to Dunkirk the ship was in need of repairs and the crew some much needed rest. Following the repairs Scimitar joined the 22nd flotilla based at Portsmouth and was immediately involved in convoy duties. They took over as escort of one of the last daylight coastal convoys, mainly consisting of small ships, they were heavily attacked by dive bombers.

A big tanker was hit but did not sink whilst another seemed to disintegrate.

Later in the year they were fitted with depth charges which was needed for their role in the Western Approaches.

Before this work they joined up with sister ship Saladin and took a party of commandos to Guernsey. The main object was to attack the airfield, destroy any aircraft hangars etc, the whole scheme was thought up by Churchill to raise moral and go on the attack however limited. The landings were to be made from RAF rescue launches with Saladin leading Scimitar to a position off the SW point of Guernsey where the two destroyers separated,

Scimitar proceeded to the specified landing place and transferred the troops to the RAF launch. There was no alarm from the Germans and everything was quiet – too quiet.

Saladin had got her bearings wrong and in error put their party on Sark.

Following the raid Scimitar was back on coastal convoy duty.

The next two years were spent on North Atlantic convoys, there were various incidents but what Robert remembers most was the endless war waged with the sea. Day followed day of constant bad weather, constantly on the lookout for U – Boats and enemy aircraft, watching the ships of the convoy for stragglers, and keeping the ship in a serviceable condition.

The plus side was being based in Londonderry which Robert recalls as being a lovely place.

The sheer physical fatigue endured in these harsh conditions was fortunately limited to six or seven days at sea at a time due to the necessity of having to refuel.

The seas would sweep the deck from the break of the foc'sle and it could be dangerous to move on the upper deck. At mealtimes Robert would often watch from the back of the bridge, hungry but anxious as the steward made a dash along the deck with a plate of food wrapped in a cloth.

About every three months they would need a boiler clean, which gave them a precious week in harbour.

It was not until March 1941 that Robert saw his first U-boat on the surface in daylight. However despite racing towards it at full speed it had dived before they could make an attack. Later on during that convoy their companion escorts Walker and Vanoc sank two U-boats containing two of Germany's "aces" which made a great contribution to the allied side of the battle.

That April they were based for a period in Iceland, the convoys being routed North during the long daylight hours of summer.

Late in May she was with a homeward bound convoy when the news of the Bismarck being at sea was received. Scimitar was detached from the convoy to take a tanker into Iceland where units of the Home Fleet needed fuel.

As they cleared the 8 knot convoy Robert signalled the tanker "could you go any faster, there is something nasty over the horizon" to which the ship replied "Yes certainly - eight and a half knots". Scimitar was relieved when Hood and Prince of Wales appeared on the scene on a course between her and the likely direction of the Bismarck.

The relief was short lived when the leading telegraphist silently handed Robert a signal not long afterwards which said "Hood sunk."

In June Scimitar was part of a big escort under HMS Malcolm which joined a convoy which had already lost three ships, had two damaged and was being shadowed.

With perpetual daylight and a big escort they felt more confident. However at 0200 the SS Grayburn was torpedoed and sank at once. Almost immediately Scimitar got a contact on Asdic and attacked with 14 depth charges. Subsequent analysis showed this had not been a submarine.

Asdic conditions were poor and contacts appeared all over the place.

The five ships detailed to join in the hunt dropped hundreds of depth charges and at 0800 the U-Boat surfaced some way off. Malcolm being nearest and fastest got there first and began picking up survivors from the U-Boat which had scuttled. Scimitar managed to pick up one non-English speaking survivor with whom they proudly returned to Londonderry.

On two occasions Scimitar escorted the liners Queen Elizabeth and Queen Mary at the start or end of their voyages bringing thousands of American troops to Europe.

An unlikely task they were given at this time was to patrol Rockall that lonely rock out in the Atlantic, as it was believed that U-Boats might use it to fix their position whilst on passage. They kept on the move as Robert did not fancy Scimitar's chances if a U-Boat did show up.

In July 1942 when Roberts' turn came to hand over command they had steamed 80,000 miles, escorted 63 convoys and many single ships. Although on paper it appears they had spent the same number of days in harbour including refits and boiler cleans as they had at sea it seemed an illusion. The two years he spent in Scimitar mostly in the Atlantic seem in the memory to have been exciting times, mostly at sea were a young man had to pit his wits against the known danger of gales and the lesser known lurking horrors of the enemy.

Shortly after getting his half stripe Robert was appointed to command another destroyer, Hotspur in the Eastern Fleet.

He never reached there because as he was disembarking from a troopship in Mombasa he was diverted to Bombay. There he was ordered to take charge of some landing craft and their crews coming up from the operation to capture Madagascar.

He had never seen a landing craft, bitterly resented this posting and wrote complaining to everyone he could think of.

The ink was hardly dry when he was told that he would be taking these craft into action in Burma there followed six months of great adventure which he now thinks were the high spot of his naval life.

Socially it started well in Bombay where he lived at first in the Taj Mahal Hotel, but he was as restive as ever to get on with some serious action.

He settled in to learning about landing craft, which he enjoyed and learnt the valuable fact that when travelling dead slow at night they were extremely difficult to see.

In December 1942 he was ordered to proceed to Burma where he was to cooperate with the Army who were aiming to capture Akyab.

The craft did the first stage of the journey by ship to Diamond Harbour near Calcutta whilst the crews went by special train across India which took three days.

They took their own rations, mainly bully beef and bread, boiling water for tea was supposed to be laid on at stations but invariably was not. Consequently they found that by stopping the train they could get it from the engine. The Indian train drivers were very cooperative and allowed them to take out their fires to cook on. When the train stopped for a signal there was close competition to get to the engine first for a quick cook up.

Eventually they were surprised to find themselves on target to join up with their craft at Chittagong on December 31st. There they formed up into flotillas and training with soldiers started in earnest. They moved the landing craft down the coast under their own power to creeks and hide-outs in the Naf river. Robert had “acquired” the fine old river steamer “Yengua” and its Burmese crew as his headquarters and flagship. Plans were being drawn for a mixed armada of small craft. However the Army was held in its advance down the Arakan coast at Donbaik so the Akyab operation was postponed. Army HQ asked the Navy to intercept and interrupt Jap supplies. Crossing by night from Akyab to Augumaw at the mouth of the Mayu river. With Lieutenant Peiser the senior flotilla officer who was experienced in landing craft, Robert worked out the combination of tides, sunset, sunrises, moon and distances and navigation from the only small scale chart available. From this he realised the only suitable craft were the six landing craft support (LCS), slow and poor seaboats, but their Ford V8 engines were quiet and they carried a 20mm Oerlikon and two .5” machine guns. These were the most suitable craft due to their low silhouette, silent engines and high velocity guns, but they had limited endurance so a forward base near the entrance to the Mayu river was required.

to be cont'd

Spotted on the Internet

“Thank you for calling the British Army, but I am sorry all of our units are out at the moment or are otherwise engaged.

Please leave a message with your Country, name of organisation, the region, the specific crisis and a number at which we can call you.

As soon as we have sorted out the Balkans, Iraq, Northern Ireland, marching up and down bits of tarmac in London, and compulsory equal opportunities training we will return your call.

Please speak after the tone, or if you require more options please listen to the following numbers :

If your crisis is small and close to the sea, press 1 for the Royal Marines.

If your concern is distant, with tropical climate and good hotels and can be solved by one or two low risk bombing runs please pass # for the Royal Air Force. Please note this service is not available after 1630 or at weekends.

If your enquiry concerns a situation which can be resolved by a grey funnel, some bunting, flags, a damned good cocktail party, and a first class marching band, please write well in advance to the First Sea Lord,

The Ministry of Defence, London SW1.

If your enquiry is not urgent, please press 2 for the Allied Rapid Reaction Corps.

If you are in real trouble please press 3 and your call will be routed to Sandline International.

If you are interested in joining the Army and wish to be shouted at, paid little, have premature arthritis in both knees, put your wife and family in a condemned hut miles from civilisation, and are prepared to work hard daily risking life and limb in all weathers and terrain, both day and night while watching the Treasury erode your original terms and conditions of service then please stay on the line, your call will be passed over to a bitter passed – over Recruiting Sergeant in a grotty shop behind the railway station. Have a pleasant day and thank you again for calling the British Army.

OPERATION MUSKETEER

By Mike Bridges

PART II

Meanwhile, in Portsmouth, HMS Albion was about to re-commission after hurriedly completing her refit. Captain R.M. Smeeton MBE R.N. was her new CO. We packed our kit and went to join the ship that I had first seen so long ago. On arrival at the Dockyard it was an entirely different Albion from the one that I had remembered. In her coat of fresh paint and the bustle of movement onboard, she was ready to go to sea once again. And so it was, that on Saturday 15th of September 1956 we left our berth and sailed out into the English Channel where we embarked the Seahawks of 800 and 802, the Sea Venoms of 809 and the Skyraiders of 849 C Flight, before setting our course for Gibraltar.

Following a brief stop in Gibraltar, Albion continued her progress east to the waters off the island of Cyprus where she met up with HMS Eagle with the Flag Officer Aircraft Carriers, Vice Admiral M.L. Power embarked.

He later transferred across to Albion by helicopter to address the Ship's Company regarding the situation that was developing in the Middle East. Optimistically, he thought that due to diplomatic pressures being applied, that Albion might not after all be required, but that for the time being we would remain on station.

All throughout August and early October, Britain and France had set about building up a joint Anglo-French force, with RAF and French Air Force fighters and bombers flown to Cyprus and Malta in readiness should political dialogue break down. Additionally, Reservists were called up and an invasion fleet assembled together with a joint Naval Force under the codename 'Operation Musketeer'.

Should the planned operation be required, the objectives were to be – the neutralisation of the Egyptian Air Force by air strikes, followed by a joint air-sea assault on Alexandria extending through to the Canal Zone in preparation for an air and seaborne landing to secure the coastal airfield east of Port Said and to further secure the territory along the length of the Suez Canal.

Meanwhile, Albion now in company with the Eagle and Bulwark were continuing intensive flying exercises in the Mediterranean. On the evening of the 24th of October, a Seahawk piloted by the CO of 802 NAS, caught fire during the catapult launch and crashed into the sea. Together with HMS Daring, acting as planeguard, we began the search for the pilot.

On reaching the point where it was thought that he had gone in, it was clear that the aircraft had sunk and that there was no immediate sign of the pilot. After an anxious half hour search, Lt Cdr Eveleigh was spotted on the surface and picked up by our seaboat and returned onboard where Lt Paddy McKeown, 802's Senior Pilot was waiting with half the squadron and the 'Boss' was presented with a welcome 'tot. It appeared that when the aircraft hit the water, our CO had attempted to vacate the cockpit but found out that his dinghy strap was caught on part of the aircraft. He climbed back into the sinking aircraft to release himself before coming up to the surface. He then discovered that the light on his mae-west was not operating. Luckily he had a small torch in his flying overall that was still working and allowed him to be spotted.

The three carriers returned to Grand Harbour Malta to take on stores and a quick run ashore. On the 29th of October, there was quite a drama,

HMS Eagle hurriedly left the harbour, closely followed by Bulwark and the two older carriers Theseus and Ocean, with their flight decks packed with military equipment and vehicles. Shortly after this, we departed Grand Harbour, ostensibly for further flying exercises. It quickly became apparent that this was not going to happen, most unusually we were steaming in a straight line at full power. We were not entirely surprised when Captain Smeeton announced over the tannoy, that Israeli forces had invaded Egypt and that we too would be taking part in the hostilities. For the remainder of the day, we exercised 'Action Stations' and were issued with anti flash gear. 'Operation Musketeer' had commenced.

On the evening of the 31st of October, Eagle, Bulwark and Albion, together with many other warships, arrived in a position some ninety-five miles west of Port Said in an area that was known as operational area 'Alpha'. The British contingent consisted of, our three carriers plus Ocean and Theseus, four cruisers, 13 destroyers, six frigates and five submarines. Of these, one cruiser, HMS Newfoundland,

together with a destroyer and two frigates were positioned at the southern end of the Suez Canal, in the Red Sea.

The French Naval units operating further to the north of our position had two light aircraft carriers, two cruisers, four destroyers, eight frigates and two submarines. In addition to these fleets there were a number of support vessels.

Onboard the British Carriers there were a total 163 aircraft which included Seahawks Sea Venoms, Wyverns and Skyraiders. This was of course in addition to the RAF and French Squadrons operating from shore bases.

An ultimatum had been issued to the Israeli and Egyptian military units to withdraw their forces ten miles from the Canal Zone. The Egyptian forces ignored this ultimatum and at 0520 hrs on the 1st of November and 36 hours after the ultimatum had been issued, airstrikes commenced against the Egyptian forces.

Seahawk and Venom aircraft freshly adorned with their black and yellow identification bands painted round the wings and fuselage took off from Albion together with squadron aircraft from Eagle and Bulwark to attack the airfields at Almaza, Inchas and Cairo West, whilst further aircraft from the three ships flew Carrier Air Protection (CAP) for their own ships.

Albion's 800 and 802 Seahawks, together with Sea Venoms of 809 targeted Almaza, Eagle's squadrons went for Inchas, whilst those from Bulwark hit Cairo West. There was an awareness that the Egyptian Air Force was equipped with Russian MiG fighters and it was with some trepidation that Lt.Cdr Eveleigh CO of 802 watched a flight of these aircraft coming up from Almaza and flying straight towards his flight of Seahawks. Realising that they were no real match for these faster and more heavily armed aircraft, the CO ordered his flight to close up only to be surprised when the MiG's flew straight past them. He could only presume that they were being flown away to somewhere safe and not risk combat. (Shades of Saddam Hussein in the Gulf War).

Although the RAF had earlier bombed most of these airfields, the squadron pilots reported that there did not seem to be much damage, especially to the runways. At Almaza, several MiG's and a number of Ilyushins were spotted on the ground and attacked, as were the hangars and other airfield buildings. There was a bit more damage at Inchas which had just been bombed by the RAF when Eagle's squadrons moved in. Again, a number of MiG's were hit as were hangars and airfield installations. Meanwhile Bulwark's squadrons were destroying a number of Ilyushins, MiG's, a Vampire and a couple of Lancaster Bombers on the ground at Cairo West. All the squadron aircraft deployed on all three strikes returned safely to their ships. Pilots reported that there had been a fair amount of flak from anti-aircraft guns, but no serious damage. Throughout the rest of that day, strikes were repeated on those airfields virtually every hour. Wyvern aircraft from the Eagle attacked the old Fleet Air Arm base at Dekheila bombing the runway, followed by Seahawks from Bulwark



802 sqn Seahawk Landing on Albion with damaged droptank

attacking a small number of aircraft on the ground. Along with the strikes, squadron aircraft from 802 and 804 carried out photo reconnaissance flights over the airfields that had been targeted, to assess the damage that had been caused. That same evening down in the Gulf of Aqaba, HMS Newfoundland was on patrol when a contact was picked up of a possible enemy ship at close range. Sub Lieutenant John Finlay was on watch on Newfoundland's bridge at the time and recalls that when the enemy ship was ordered to stop immediately, the order was ignored. Newfoundland was by this time approximately 1800 yards away and port side on to the suspect vessel. The searchlight was switched on to reveal the Egyptian Frigate, Domiat, which was the ex RN HMS Nith which had earlier been sold to Egypt.

The crew of Domiat were seen to be running to action stations, so Captain Hamilton of the Newfoundland ordered his gunners to open fire. The Domiat received several direct hits but at the same time, Domiat returned the fire and the Newfoundland received a hit on what had formerly been the ship's hangar. One Chinese sailor was killed and five others wounded.

A seaman gunner on Newfoundland scored a further direct hit on the 4.5 gun turret of Domiat with the 40mm gun he was operating. Domiat began to break up and sank within minutes. HMS Diamond which was escorting the Newfoundland, moved in and picked up the survivors. John Finlay later heard one of the Officer survivors state, that they thought they were being targeted by an Israeli warship and had they known that it was instead a British Warship, they would never have opened fire.

That was the end of the action on the first day, the night was spent onboard the carriers in preparing the squadron aircraft for day 2 of the campaign and repairing the flak damage that some of the aircraft had sustained during the air strikes.

Before dawn on the 2nd of November, aircraft took off from the French carrier La Fayette to look for possible attacks from Egyptian warships in the area. Shortly after, the aircraft carriers of the British Fleet began their second day of strikes on airfields in the canal zone. Again, the main targets for the first wave of attacks were, Cairo West, Dekheila, Inchas and Almaza.

Further strikes were mounted, with a number of Egyptian aircraft being destroyed on the ground and hangars strafed. The pilots of 802 NAS again reported sighting Egyptian MiG's in the air, but none of them showed any interest in engaging, as was the case from the previous day. A Sea Venom of 893 NAS from Eagle, received flak damage to the underside of the aircraft and although the observer was slightly injured, the aircraft made it safely back to Eagle with a wheels up belly landing onboard..... *To be continued*

The RAF is the motorists friend

In the Scottish Grampian area a pair of traffic policemen manning a speed trap directed their speed gun at a Range Rover speeding towards the crest of a hill.

To their surprise their reading rocketed to 366 mph and jammed.

Shortly afterwards two low flying Tornados screamed over the crest of the hill.

What the bobbies did not know is that they came within an ace of being blown to smithereens. When their speed gun locked on to the fighters by accident, the tactical battle computer in the cockpit detected the radar lock and sent out the signal that jammed it.

It also automatically armed and targeted an air to ground missile. Had the Tornados not been on training exercises the computer would have let fly without consulting the pilot.

The consensus in the RAF seems to be that it is a shame these precautions exist !!

Armed Forces Pension Action Group

I have received a letter from Richmonds the solicitors acting for the above group informing me that that proceedings have been issued in the High Court, and that proceedings will be served on the Government within the next four months.

As you can see things are underway at last, there will be no more new members admitted to the group once proceedings commence. There was also an article in the Daily Mail on Wednesday 8 May in their

Money Mail section giving a full account of the progress of the group and the fact that an MP has tabled an early motion bill in the House of Commons with the backing of over 20 MPs including my local MP I am pleased to say.

If anyone has any questions about the group please contact Richmonds not me ! their address is 34A High Street Keynsham Bristol BS312 1DQ Tel:- 0117 9865715

Leigh Eastons' Memories Part III

Fifteen minutes passed and he came back, put a second knife down and disappeared. We looked at each other and did not wait for the third knife.

March 1961. Captain Morris had the entire Troop assembled in the lecture room.

"The OC is seriously displeased. You must salute all Officers".

We suspected (possibly erroneously) that there had been a complaint from a certain Medium Regiment. He then proceeded to read the Army Act. I don't think any of us had heard it before. The only bit I remember was that "buggery" was a serious criminal offence and would be dealt with unmercifully. Most of us hadn't a clue what he was talking about.

Troop exercises in the New Territories followed and I had a new responsibility - maintenance of the troops portable generators. Along with Ed Hudson I took a trip on the Kowloon to Canton railway - as far as Lo Wu anyway. We viewed China to the West and wandered through the local villages. There was a bit of an incident in one - an Alsatian with rabies, foaming at the mouth, shot dead by the local constable.

We were out with Major DR Francis, MC, RA, OC, at the Naval Gunfire Range. There was a beautiful azure sky and light blue sea. The blue/grey rocks with some brown scrub rose silently from the calm sea. A perfect day. Ship to Shore communications were established without a hitch. The Major would give a demo and then all the AOPAs would have their turn.

Co-ordinates passed to the ship. Was it really a Black Swan class frigate? "Fire" and the ranging round came down in the sea.

"Right 400" - in the distance a faint crump.

The shell screamed over. Nothing to be seen anywhere.

We all looked at each other. Where had it gone?

"Stop"

"What happened there?"

"Wait"

"What's happening?"

"Wait"

"Exactly what's happening?"

"Shoot terminated"

Apparently the gunlayer had made a 4000 correction instead of a 400 correction and had just missed a remote village. Fortunately no damage was done. An enquiry by the GOC and a report to His Excellency The Governor,

Sir Robert Black? Apparently not but a certain village suddenly received expert technical aid from the Navy.

I often wondered what happened to the gunlayer.

A promotion in the Troop - and a NS one at that. Bilko to L/Bdr. We all reckoned he deserved it, he spent his spare time bulling up the OCs Land Rover.

"Sure, but I don't know how you'll get back". I was in the American Legation, attempting to wangle a visit to Japan with the USAF. The Master Sgt continued -

"The normal return trip is via Bangkok and sometimes they're there for weeks."

I didn't think the OC would be too pleased if I disappeared off the scene in Bangkok. I left it for another day.

April 1961. Brigadiers inspection. An imaginative set-up by the OC. Some of the FOPs were lined up in full combat gear with equipment laid out, some in No 1s, some in standard Far East gear, some in sports gear, and some in our "walking out" gear i.e. Combined Ops blazers and flannels which some of our more affluent members had purchased for themselves. We all thought it was a terrific idea.

Feedback eventually came from the Troop clerk. The Brigadier was not impressed. We never understood why. Pity really, Major Francis was a real soldier, a real leader of men. We had great faith in him. Probably fair to say that some of us would have got our heads blown off for him.

Off to Macau on the ss Fatshan of the Yu On Shipping Co., with Ed Hudson. Yes - we got local leave as well. We descended at the Porto Interior and had our documents carefully examined.

First a tour round by tricycle rickshaw. Yes, we got the usual offers from the driver but declined. No Military Police in Macau to put establishments off limits. We had a look at the Portuguese guard at the Chinese border but were not too impressed.

Time to eat. We picked our restaurant carefully, couldn't figure out the menu but managed to pick salads. Then we noticed the spittoons at each table and the locals using them.

"Clearing the dragons from their throats" said Ed.

Still we managed to finish the salads. Then we selected our hotel. More offers, again declined. Off to the Casino. It was unusual - for us anyway - the money went up and down in little square baskets from the tables to the gallery above. I think we lost five dollars each, and that was too much on National Service pay, even with Far East allowance. Back to the Hotel. I'd never experienced bed bugs before but I certainly scratched that night. The other item I remember was fortunes told by rolls of rice paper shaken up in a bowl at the Kun Yam temple. It hasn't been far off the mark!

The cinemas were popular in Hong Kong due to the Air Conditioning - humidity could rise above 100%. This evening it was Tunes of Glory with Alex Guinness. Unbelievable - there it was - Stirling Castle, the square where I had paraded as a member of the High School ACF. Apparently the War Office had refused to sanction the Argylls for the film. Incredible - it all looked pretty realistic to me.

It was with the ACF it had all started - we had had a

week-end at Redesdale in Northumberland with the Royal Artillery and had manned an OP. HE, Airbursts, Smoke etc we really saw it all.

Exercises continued and in particular we acted as umpires for a FARELF exercise in the colony, including driving a General around. I managed a trip to Cheung Chow and Lan Tao. The interesting thing was as soon as you said "Chosan" to the old women ploughing the paddy fields behind the oxen - back came the reply in fluent English "Good Morning".

Week Ends saw us at Repulse Bay, Aberdeen, the China Fleet Club, even at European frequented Chinese restaurants. More than a few Tiger Tops and San Miguels were consumed. The Trams in Victoria were fantastic - almost as good as Glasgow.

May 1961. SEATO Exercise - Pony Express. Off again this time to North Borneo on HMS Cavalier. 42 Commando taking part from HMS Bulwark. We moved over various OP sites and lo and behold we were allocated an Australian Captain. This was different especially when he decided that we should dig in on the forward slope of a hill. He seemed to take a dim view of our protests which we made forcibly especially as the rock we were hacking into was pretty solid. Still, he must have been all right, since we never heard any more about it.

It rained constantly in sheets for 3 days. My hands puckered and turned bluish in colour. It must have been grim - the Commando RSM made his rounds with a tot of rum for everyone.

Next we were alongside US marines, their equipment was phenomenal, they even had one guy whose sole job was to pedal what in now called an exercise bike generating electricity. We sure were buddy buddy boys with them though, swapping our COMPO rations (five varieties of stew) for their tinned chicken and pineapple.

For some reason we'd lost the Australian Officer by this time and I have to confess a cardinal sin - I climbed the tallest tree I could find and used it as an OP. As far as I could make out there was no other way to see

the target. It worked though - we had shells on the ground from our ships - HMAS Queenborough and the forward turrets of HMS Belfast for 2 hours before the Yanks got through on their radio.

We left from White Rock Bay - passing Mount Kinabalu in the distance as I recall - it really did appear like Bali Hi in South Pacific with the clouds swirling about half way up.

Seagoing exercises for the Navy followed, particularly RAS - replenishment at sea. We took our turn behind HMAS Melbourne, RFA Wave Master and HMAS Voyager. It was all quite spectacular.

We also carried out RAS at night. This was an experience for one of the matelots. He took a hitch round one of the hatch securing clips, and as the vessels moved apart (there was a fair sea running) the line tightened, came off the clip and he was straight into the oggin.

"Man Overboard".

The RAS was suspended, searchlights came on and we were scouring the sea for him. He was there though, his lifejacket light flashing, and we got him back.

No more night RAS - that exercise anyway.

Gunnery target practice for Cavalier - perhaps I should have been enquiring about Fire Control - but I was quite happy to sit on deck and enjoy the display.

"Make Smoke" too was impressive - oil was sprayed straight into the boilers. Sadly sometime later I learned that Melbourne had sliced into Voyager off the Australian coast with quite a few casualties.

"Private Easton requests permission to take the wheel"

"But I'm not a private"

"If I say anything else the old man won't understand"

"Permission granted".

And that was it - I was driving a C Class Destroyer in the South China Sea. A good day.

The skipper was known as "Hard over" Pritchard. Lower deck had their meals approximately one hour after the Wardroom. Sure enough you just sat down, there was a sudden lurch and the South China Sea was streaming in through the air scoops.

However I was really getting organised now. Instead of a hammock in the mess I acquired a camp bed and slept under the chippie's table on the Squid Mortar Deck. Once again some really beautiful nights and if it did rain the chippie's table was all I needed for a roof.

Part II orders.

Almost simultaneously there was an offer of £230 for National Servicemen to sign on and volunteers were required for our NGSFO Party on HMS Bulwark. It occurs to me now that I could have done both but at the time I decided to jump at the Bulwark offer.

Are you OK for para drops said Bdr McNaughton.

Er.... Yes (Info at Poole was that it was the next best thing to a jump). In any case I was certain I'd get kicked out the aircraft if I showed any hesitation. "Right, you'd better draw your Green Beret" said Bdr McNaughton. Made it at last!

July 1961. Life in Mess 4NP Outer on Bulwark. We went down to Singapore and then made our way up to Karachi.

"You can't do that"

One of the bootnecks in an adjoining mess was addressing me.

"er... why not?"

"If any of the officers spot that they'll have to debug the whole ship"

- having found myself scratching at night I had managed to acquire some debugging powder. After Macau I was an expert.

I hurriedly finished. No more bed bugs though.

Lunch was always marvellous. Nothing to do with the tot which was our daily issue. Serious business on Bulwark though when it was my turn to fetch it for the mess.

I found that the issue was presided over by a Sub/Lt

I still have my boarding card which you placed in a board before going ashore. Sure enough it shows Grog not Temperate. ... *To be continued*

Guy Ledgard, 80 Havilland Road, Thornaby, Stockton-on-Tees TS17 9JL (01642 - 764353) has written to enquire if there are any car sharing arrangements in his area for Bulwark Functions as he would be interested in this. There was one chap volunteered his car at the AGM but I cannot remember any details, if any of you live in the same area and are interested why don't you get in contact with other members in your area, don't forget we are in Birmingham for the September meeting.

BRASS MONKEY

In the heyday of sailing ships all warships and many merchantmen carried iron cannons. The cannon fired iron cannon balls. It was necessary to keep a good supply near the cannon, but prevent them from rolling about the deck.

The best storage method devised was a square based pyramid with one ball on top, resting on four, resting on nine, which rested on sixteen. Thus a supply of thirty cannonballs could be stacked in a small area right next to the cannon.

There was only one problem – how to prevent the bottom layer from sliding/rolling from under the others.

The solution was brass plate called a “Monkey” with sixteen round indentations. If this plate was made of iron the iron balls would quickly rust to it. The solution to the “rusting problem” was to make Brass Monkeys.

Few landlubbers realize that brass contracts much more and much faster than iron when chilled. Consequently when the temperature dropped too far, the brass indentations would shrink so much that the cannon balls would come right off the Monkey.

Thus it was quite literally “Cold enough to freeze the balls off a brass monkey. And all this time you have had dirty thoughts havn't you ?

OBITUARY
DAVE PETERS
Leading Telgraphist

Dave died unexpectedly on 11 August last year.

He served in the Andrew from 1952 -1960, joining at Ganges as a boy. Ships included Concord , in the Far East Theseus during the Suez campaign and Bulwark from January 1958 until December 1958. He was put aboard the Melika as radio operator during the salvage operation of that ship.

He left the Navy as a killick sparker ,LRO(G) for the modernists. I knew Dave and his wife Shirley very well when I lived in Farnham, Surrey in the sixties , he was well known in the town and well liked.

+++++

If anyone learns of any of our shipmates crossing the please let me (the editor) know with an obituary if possible, thank you



As I do not appear to receive much material from Centaur members I have included the above photo to show you are not forgotten.

Subs reminder

Please remember to send your subs direct to our treasurer Bob Cowan at 10 Hereford Road Southsea PO5 2DR and not to any other committee members.

Dear Fellow Members

As some of you will be aware, after four years I am standing down as Social Secretary. Two reasons really, firstly due to some recent ill health and secondly, after four years I thought it was about time we had some “new blood” injected into this post. I enjoyed our social events and hopefully, those of you who attended did too.

Although numbers were very disappointing at our AGM social this year, I think those who came enjoyed it and the food, entertainment and venue proved very good.

A couple of points, having spoken to Billy Grier and Tony Vella of the Victory club, they send their apologies for the duff(sweet) which never materialised. This was an oversight and the sweets remained in the fridge until I spoke to them two days later. They were very embarrassed and have refunded £220 being the cost of the sweets and an amount they overcharged us, and have kindly offered another £220 towards the entertainment at our next social at the Victory Club. A very acceptable and kind gesture.

My only other point is to mention the lack of support from our local membership. We have approximately 200 members in the Portsmouth area and it is fairly disheartening when the majority do not support our Association by attending some of the socials. In fact we have more support from members living as far away as Scotland, Tyneside, Birmingham, Walsall etc. They know who I am talking about and I would like to thank you for your support during my time as social secretary.

If you could all take some time to explain what you as members would like in the way of events, socials etc or how we could raise awareness and promote our events(as one or two of you did at the AGM) I know the committee would be pleased to hear from you.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank my partner Shelagh, who has helped me throughout my time on the committee. Also a thank you to the committee members who have given me a hand at the socials, John, Jackie, Mike and Frank, and Bob who has kindly deciphered the receipts, reports and monies at the end of each event.

Once again thank you to all those members who supported me. I will still be “in the wings” for the committee if required and good luck to whoever my relief may be.

Hope to see you all at our next social event.

Best wishes

Tim Holt

Thank you Tim and as a reminder to everyone, as well as a committee meeting in the Nautical Club Birmingham October 5th and the Jubilee/Trafalgar night in Portsmouth October 19th we are hoping to hold a **social evening onboard HMS Victory on Saturday July 27th**, if not onboard the ship it will be in the Victory Guides mess alongside the ship and will include a private tour of the ship. This was arranged at short notice just prior to going to print.

All welcome, details from the secretary for all of these events.

Please return your flyers as soon as possible but no later than 2nd September.