



THE H.M.S. HOOD ASSOCIATION

(Official Website www.hmshood.com)

Message from the Chairman

Shipmates, Ladies and Gentleman,

I trust you all had a very happy Christmas and New Year.

Our Remembrance Service last November at the Naval War memorial on Southsea Common was very well attended in spite of the usual high winds. Our Chaplain, Ron Paterson, who organised and conducted the event, welcomed those present with his normal friendly style. Music for the hymns was provided by Dennis Rudd of The Salvation Army.

A delegation from the Association has been invited by Herve Grall to attend the Mers el Kebir Association Reunion in Brest, France, this July. Commander Keith Evans has kindly offered to represent us. We have also been invited to the Bismarck Association Reunion in Hamburg on 27th May. If any member wishes to attend either of these functions, please contact Paul Bevand, our webmaster for further details.

A brief reminder from history. Following the occupation of France on 17th June 1940, the harbour at Mers el Kebir on the Algerian coast contained some 11 French naval ships with a further 11 including 4 submarines close by at Oran. Hood led the force to prevent these ships being acquired by the German Navy. When the battle concluded on 5th July, in excess of a thousand Frenchmen had lost their lives in the attack.

Don't forget our forthcoming AGM and Reunion Dinner. Unfortunately, this year we have had to increase the ticket price to £20 per person, but I am sure all will agree this still represents excellent value. Last year there were 86 participants, I hope we can improve on that figure this year. To those of you who have not attended previously I am sure you will enjoy the event and an opportunity to chat to other members and Hood veterans. Following the very positive feedback I received last year, this year's menu will be very similar. An application form for tickets is enclosed with this Newsletter.

Membership numbers at the end of 2005 were 223 of which 23 live abroad. This represents a pleasing recovery on the figures last reported in September. During 2005 we welcomed 30 new members to the Association.

In conclusion I wish to thank the Committee members for their continued commitment and particularly to Ken Clark who is now back at full steam looking after membership, accounts, Reunion tickets and sales etc., albeit without any computer assistance and to Derick Collins who very competently produces these Newsletters.

Finally, may I remind you, that membership renewal is due on 1st May, £5 per year for UK residents and £10 for those members living abroad.

God bless you all.

Peter Heys

Important Events for 2006

AGM/Reunion Dinner: 1600/1830 on 20th May at Royal Sailors Home Club, Portsmouth
Memorial Service: 1100 on 21st May at St George's Church, Portsmouth
Boldre Church Service: 1100 on 28th May
Remembrance service: 1100 on 11th November at the Naval War Memorial, Southsea.

The Hood Building

In 2004 the Association was fortunate to have the Medical Centre in H.H.S. Collingwood dedicated in memory of the ships company of H.M.S.Hood, which was mainly due to the then Commodore of the establishment, Commodore Wilcox. The photograph below shows Ted Briggs being greeted by the Executive Officer Commander Andrew Stewart on the anniversary of the opening of the centre. The Roll of Honour lists all 1418 men lost on that fatal day 24th May 1941.

*Webmasters Report*

Our Web team Paul Bevand and Frank Allen regrettably have been plagued with bugs on the system that has caused delays in updating the site. Having overcome the problems they are now hard at work re-organizing the site to make it more user friendly to access the data. There is now a database available that has been taken from Hood's ships logs, listing where she was on each day during her 21 years of service. The website is www.hmshood.org.uk/database/shipAtSearchDatesNumbers1.htm. This is a date range search, regardless of what it says at the top of the page data is held for all dates.

Crew photographs are still coming in, there are now 581 with the aim to achieve as many as possible. Would members who may know friends or acquaintances ask them if they would provide details and a photograph if possible and forward it to Paul Bevand. We are now aiming for 700 which would be marvellous if it could be achieved and greatly appreciated.

Ebay There have been a few instances when items have been on sale that caused concern. These items are not from the association and therefore we are doubtful whether they are genuine. **Editor**-I am sure that all members would like to thank Paul and Frank for the enormous amount of work and effort that these two put into the website on our behalf. Thank you, it is very much appreciated.

Training Ship Hood, Coboconk, Ontario, Canada. Lt (N) Douglas Melbourne was Commanding Officer of TS Hood 1990 – 93 and XO thereafter until retirement in February 2003 and his wife Margaret was the Administration Officer during the same period. At the 2005 Annual inspection the Reviewing Officer was Douglas and the photograph shows him presenting "Douglas and Margaret Melbourne" award for the best Petty Officer to PO Devon Hewitt



Commander T K Evans R.N. (Rtd) – 'Heroes Return' Sri Lanka October-November 2005

I was both delighted and privileged to have my application approved for a £2100 grant from the Big Lottery Fund for a 'Heroes Return' 2 weeks visit to Sri Lanka after a gap of more than 60 years. In 1944-1948 I was Secretary to Commodore A.L.Poland R.N. in overall command of the Destroyer Flotillas of the East Indies Fleet, serving in H.M.S. Woolwich based in Trincomalee in what was then Ceylon.

After a comfortable 12 hour flight to Colombo and accompanied by Richard Chapman a friend and my 'carer', where we were greeted by Kamil our Sinhalese driver and guide for the whole of our visit and an air conditioned car, we spent 2 nights at the Mount Alvernia Hotel a few miles south of Colombo. From there we visited Galle, a former Dutch settlement in the south of the island, passing some of the devastation of the Tsunami on Boxing Day 2004 resulting in the loss of many homes, particularly the fishermen, and the killing of members, young and not so young, of many families – very sad and distressing.

In Colombo we called on the senior partner of Ford Rhodes and Thornton, Chartered Accountants (my late grandfather was A.J.Rhodes in the London office); we also sought out the 'Wrenery' and our favourite night club the Silver Fawn (although the Navy had somewhat ruder name for it) but both establishments in the Bullers Road had been 'closed' when the Services left the island soon after the war.

Other visits included to Habarana where we rode elephants and from where we visited Polonnaruwa an ancient city, lunching in the Reat house where the Queen stayed in 1954. We did not climb the spectacular citadel of Sigiriya (known as the Lion Rock) which rises some 200 metres above the surrounding countryside (I had in fact done this some 61 years ago). We spent the best part of a day in Trincomalee, the wartime naval base with its splendid natural harbour, fortunately the Commonwealth War Cemetery, containing the graves of men lost in the 'Cornwall' and 'Dorsetshire' sunk by the Japanese to the west of Ceylon in 1942, was intact, yet to the north and south the Tsunami had caused havoc. Trincomalee is not the safest place because of the Tamil influence (they are mostly Hindu religion) which spreads down from Jaffna in the north of the island. We did however visit places I remembered namely Fort Frederick, Dutch Bay and Marble bay (where we used to bathe) and of course China Bay, which in 1945 I witnessed the battleship 'Valiant' collapse in the floating dock. We were not allowed to visit the Naval Headquarters. For me this was the most nostalgic day because Frances, my first wife (we were married in Portsmouth in 1943, she died of cancer in 1966) was in 1944-1945 serving on the staff of Commodore-in-charge Trincomalee as a Third Officer WRNS.

We stayed in Kandy for 2 days where we visited the Temple of the Tooth (without shoes), the Royal Commonwealth War Cemetery, the feeding of elephants at their orphanage prior to their being taken up river for bathing, and the Royal Botanical Gardens where Lord Mountbatten had his headquarters as Commander-in-Chief South East Asia Command in the war. From Kandy we took a 4 hour train journey – marvellous scenery to the hill station of Nuwara Eliya – we lunched at the famous Hill Club. On the following day by car up a poor surface road to the Horton Plains, now a national park at an elevation of over two thousand metres, covering a wild stretch of bleak high altitude moorland. In misty cold weather we did a 7 mile trek to the world famous World's End where the escarpment falls sheer for the best part of a kilometre to the lowlands below. At the Rest House (now a museum) I had stayed with my wife in 1945.

At the hotel in Bandarawela we were given a very warm welcome as I was able to produce my personal diary (which during the war I probably should not have kept) for the same day in 1945 when we (my wife and I) had stayed in the hotel. Unfortunately our visit coincided with that of one of the two candidates for the Presidential election which was shortly to take place and thus prevented our trip to wartime services leave camp at Diyatalawa, now the headquarters of the Sinhalese Air Force from which the candidate was flying in and out by helicopter.

On our penultimate day we visited a tea estate on the way back to Colombo where we spent our last night at the world famous Galle Face hotel.

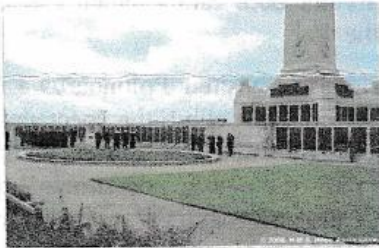
It was a very memorable 13 days, interesting, good fun and for me very nostalgic. We had excellent accommodation in first class hotels, good food mostly, the weather was warm to hot with bursts of monsoon rain. Times of course changed since the island gained independence from Britain. The traffic in the towns is awful – there are miles of good sandy beaches and some lovely countryside.

Wages are low by European standards. The Sinhalese people are very friendly and welcoming – and the fair sex, particularly the younger element very attractive. I can recommend a holiday there.

The anti malarial tablets (a 7 week course), which I had been advised to take, were nauseating in the extreme, and were in no small way responsible (so I have been told by the doctors) for an illness which I incurred some two and a half weeks after returning home. This resulted in a 4 day stay in a Guildford hospital, where I caught a nasty infection, but I am glad to say I have made a good recovery.

Remembrance Day Services November 2005

On Remembrance Day, Friday 11th November 2005, members of the H.M.S.Hood Association gathered at the Portsmouth Naval War Memorial on Southsea Common. They were there to conduct a service of remembrance for their comrades, family members and friends lost in the sinking of H.M.S.Hood on 24th May 1941. The service commenced at 1030, conducted by our padre Reverend Ron Patterson. The association President, Ted Briggs, laid a wreath on behalf of the association and at 1100 a 2 minutes silence was observed.



Rear view of the War Memorial



Ted Briggs (back to camera) Anthony Middleton (holding Standard)
Lord Hood, Association Chaplain Ron Patterson and Keith Evans



Left to right

Roger Toombs, unknown, unknown, Alan Plant, Anthony Middleton, Rev Ron Patterson
Ted Briggs, Dick Turner, Alex Kellaway, Frank Pavey, Derick Collins, Peter Heys

Editor

I have been informed that our treasurer Ken Clark's wife Gladys has been in hospital for the past 4 weeks and recently had a fall that has put back her recovery. We wish her well and a speedy recovery.

Anyone who wishes to forward items for future editions of the Newsletter please send them to Derick Collins, 6 St James Way, Bierton, Aylesbury, HP22 5ED Any contributions will be greatly appreciated.