



THE H.M.S. HOOD ASSOCIATION

(Official Website www.hmshood.com)

Message from the Chairman

Shipmates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As I reported in the last Newsletter, Ron Paterson who had been our devoted Chaplain for some three decades is now no longer able to take our services due to his fall last year and subsequent illness. We are all sad that Ron has had to come to this decision as he has been a major mainstay of the Association over the years. The unique style in which he conducted our Memorial and Remembrance services will be remembered with affection by us all. I first met Ron when he conducted the service of re-dedication for my ex-BR locomotive, No. 50031 'Hood', to those who lost their lives in Hood. The occasion was televised and broadcast by Median television and became the standard which similar ceremonies attempted to aspire to. We will all miss you Ron and hope that you will be fit enough to attend our functions in the future.

Archdeacon John Green, Chaplain of the Fleet and based in Portsmouth, has kindly volunteered to be Chaplain to the Association. We are delighted to appoint him as our Chaplain particularly as he is a serving member of today's Royal Navy. Those of you who attended last year's Memorial Service will remember Archdeacon Green when he graciously offered to stand in for Ron. We welcome Archdeacon Green to our fold and look forward to the services he will conduct on our behalf in the future.

Arrangements are now progressing for the installation of the memorial stone, with inscription and crest, alongside our tree at the National Arboretum in Staffordshire. The Committee has agreed the design, which will be constructed in granite as we have been advised this material is the most long lasting and will not require regular cleaning. A contractor has been identified and as soon as the Arboretum Curator has given his agreement a quotation will be sought and the contract placed. When the work is completed, it is the intention to hold a dedication ceremony at the site and members will be encouraged to attend. We estimate the timing for this event will be August/September this year.

Enclosed with this Newsletter you will find an application form for Reunion Dinner tickets. Unfortunately, we have had to increase the price to £22 per person this year but it still represents very good value and is well subsidised from our funds. The function will take place at the Royal Maritime Club (formerly known as the Royal Sailors Home Club) and if accommodation is required I suggest you book this **immediately** as there is another function taking place at the Club on the same evening. The telephone number for accommodation bookings is **02392 824231**. As usual the AGM will take place at 1600 in Brocks Bar. Please make every effort to attend. Your request for Dinner tickets must be sent to Paul Bevand who is now handling membership administration (his address is on the form).

Finally may I remind those of you who have not already paid, your subscription for membership is due on **1st May**. The fee remains at £5 per person for UK and Channel Islands residents and £10 for those living abroad. Subscriptions should be sent to Paul Bevand and your cheque/PO made payable to the HMS Hood Association. Alternatively, you may pay by Bank Standing Order or PayPals as previously advised.

For the 2007/8 membership year, at the time of writing we have 222 members, a reduction of 20 from the same period last year.

God bless you all,
Peter Heys

Important Events

- **2008 AGM/Reunion Dinner:** 1600/1830 on Saturday 24th May at Royal Maritime Club, Portsmouth.
- **2008 Memorial Service:** 1145 on Sunday 25th May at St George's Church, Portsmouth.
- **2008 Boldre Church Service:** 1100 on Sunday 1st June.
- **2008 Remembrance Service:** 1045 on Tuesday 11th November at Southsea Naval War Memorial
- **2009 AGM/ Reunion Dinner:** 1600/1830 on Saturday 23rd May at Royal Maritime Club, Portsmouth

A Hood Remembrance: Cousins

When my father died in December 1969, three British sailors, PO Robert 'Robbie' Abrams wartime cousins, took the train from Hartlepool on the North Sea, down to the picturesque countryside of Sussex. They were there to remember my father and 'keep an eye' on my mother. There was Harry, who served in Warspite who was known as 'Dempsey' for his boxing prowess. Tommy who served in the Merchant Marine and lost his plumbing during a convey strafing. Alan was also a Merchant Marine, serving as an engineering officer in oil tankers.

When Robbie's cousins arrived, the mood in our family lifted. They hugged my mother and asked for a cuppa. My mother immediately set about the task, including extra thick ham sandwiches. Robbie's cousins noticed the photograph on the mantelpiece of a smiling young RCN (R) officer cadet and gave it short shift, for which I was grateful: I had no place in that company. They did give their attention to a merchant ship's clock mounted on the wall, salvaged by Robbie's father, Lt Cdr Ernest Abrams, RNVR, deep sea diver and frogman, who carried out classified operations in preparation for the Normandy landings. Talk moved easily over strong tea and sandwiches, inevitably settling on Robbie. First, as was ritual, came praise for the Hood, loved around the world by military and civilians alike. They talked of her great power from any harbour view, and her lovely lines. They talked soberly of the political machinations that denied her the refit that might have changed the course of sea warfare. A favorite story for us is 'Robbie and the Doillies'. Serving as a steward in Hood's wardroom, Robbie on his own initiative bought doilies for the officer's meals. There was much lifting of plates to examine them. Asked why he had done it Robbie replied, "My mother always used them when serving her meals". The hat was quickly passed. Family rumor has it that Robbie pocketed far more than his doily outlay

When war broke out Robbie phoned his sister, Mary (member of HMS Hood Association). Mary cautioned him to take care of himself and he replied "Don't worry, Luv, I'm on the safest ship in the world.

During my father's funeral service Harry, Tommy and Alan sat in the pew behind me. I am ashamed to say that I did not know the prayers. But from behind me came the rich resonant voices of men tested and true, and I thought of Robbie who should have been there, whose voice would have delivered equal faith and confidence. My hesitant prayers for my father were borne on the strong voices of British sailors, my surviving cousins, and on the abiding memory of another.

In 1959 an uneasy RCN(R) Probationary Cadet faced the board for promotion to Officer Cadet. I was floundering when I saw my chance. Asked why I wished to join the RCN(R) I told the board that I came from a seagoing family, in fact I had lost a cousin on Hood. To this day I feel the guilt of having traded on a fine sailor and a fine ship. But I also remember the board's reaction at the mention of HMS Hood, the sunlight streamed into the sudden stillness of the conference room.

My American daughter grew up on stories of the Hood's loss and of my cousin, PO Robert Abrams. She told me the other day that she would hand down our family stories to my grandchildren, and that she would take care of my photos, Hood Association newsletters, and the merchant ships clock salvaged by Robbie's father, which for now hangs on my den wall. I thanked her and got back to work, memories of strong voices singing, now stilled, and family stories of a gallant ship that will last.

Robert Middlemiss, Marietta, USA.

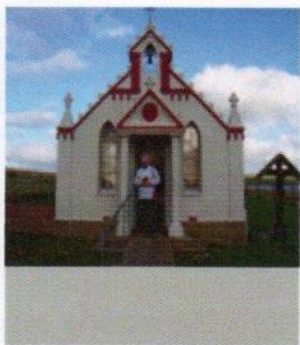
The Search for Hood Stones.

Many years ago there was a letter in a "Hood Newsletter" from a lady who lived in Tongue in the North of Scotland. She said (if I remember correctly) that when she and her husband drove to Durness to shop, as they drove around Loch Eriboll, if they looked up, they could see stones spelling HOOD. I never forgot this and thought one day I will go and see these. As we live near Portsmouth it was a long way to go, and with a young family it was impossible to drive all that way. Many years later, our youngest son came to live in Edinburgh. We have visited him many times, and last year asked if he would like to come on a very nostalgic journey with us. He jumped at the chance, and so on August 30th, my wife and I flew to Edinburgh.

On September 1st we set off, with our son driving us we made the long journey to John O'Groats. Very easy going as traffic jams are not very common, and although travelling on the main A9 road we often had the road to ourselves. We arrived at our hotel in time for the evening meal. I had pre-booked all the accommodation in advance and this made life very easy. The next morning we were up early and along to the ferry to take us to the Orkney Islands. It was only 40 minutes crossing and the sea was good to us, my wife is not a good sailor. The local bus come tour coach was waiting for us and took us on our tour. We went across the Churchill Barriers, which link the islands together and looking to the west saw Scapa Flow. Although we could not see it, we were shown the position where the Royal Oak lay. Other memorable feature of the day was the 'Italian Chapel'. This was made of two Nissan huts put together, and fashioned into a chapel by Italian prisoners of war, using whatever they could find, it has to be seen to be believed. We went to Skara Brae Neolithic village which is the best preserved prehistoric village in Northern Europe, then back to

the capital Kirkwall. In the cathedral there is a beautiful memorial of the Royal Oak. We arrived back in John O'Groats in time for our evening meal after a very enjoyable day.

The next day saw us driving right across the very top of Scotland from North East to North West. The weather was very kind and we saw some magnificent scenery. At about 3.30pm we came to the eastern side of Loch Eriboll, where all eyes were peeled on the mountainside on the other side of the loch looking for the Stones. Well, we drove right the way around and saw nothing. We were very downhearted as we made our way back to our accommodation. We asked the lady of the house if she could tell us where to look. The next day back we went back and parked where she told us too. With binoculars we eventually found them and several other ships names were there also. Although some of the stones had been painted by the local school children, it wasn't the turn of Hood this year. I think the lady who wrote the letter had a very vivid imagination or exceptional good eyesight. However, we thank her, as without her writing that letter, we would not have known of their existence, and would not have visited one of the most beautiful parts of our country. We had the most perfect weather throughout the journey.



Mrs Wannerton outside the Italian Church



Royal Oak Memorial

Author, Harry Wannerton is the son of Leading Seaman Henry James Wannerton who sadly lost his life on The Mighty Hood. His widow who never remarried and was left to bring up four young children is 102 years old. God Bless you.

[From Stormer Seas to Calmer Waters Published by Brewin Books](#)

Commander Tony Pearse RN (Rtd) has been a great supporter of the Hood Association, he has been responsible for organizing the annual remembrance service at Bolde church for many years. He has written a book of his working life spanning 52 years. Entering the Royal Navy at the age of 18 and experiencing the Japanese War in the Far East, being hit by new German radio controlled weapons at the Salerno landings, and convoy protection and submarine in the Atlantic.

His ship torpedoed in peacetime by a British submarine, he became involved in fiery politics in Malta, and was appointed to head a Training team in Kenya whilst on loan to President Kenyatta as Commander in Chief of the emerging Kenya Navy – and in the time of the Cold War finding himself entertaining the Russian Admiral in command of a visiting missile squadron. His book of personal tragedy and outstanding success is a colourful illustration of the excitement and satisfaction which can be obtained by 37 years in the Royal Navy and 15 further years in commerce.

Publication is scheduled Mid March 08 price £7.95 from Brewin Books. ISBN 978-1-85858-427-0.

[Remembrance Service 11 November 2007](#)

HMS Hood Association members, family members and guests gathered at the Naval Memorial around 1030 hours. This year we had just three veterans at the service: Ted Briggs, our association President and last survivor, Vice President Keith Evans and former Stoker Alec Kellaway. Much missed were Ken 'Nobby' Clark who was awaiting admission to hospital and Association Chaplain Ron Patterson who has been in poor health for a number of months.

This year's event was especially notable due to the fact of the 11th falling on a Sunday. Because of this, there were a larger than usual number of people at the memorial (perhaps as many as 100) President Ted Briggs laid a wreath on behalf of the Hood Association. Following this, at 1100 hours, the field gun was fired signaling the start of the two minutes silence. Our own service then commenced. In Ron's absence, prayers and readings were led by several Association members, Ted Briggs, Peter Heys, Lord Hood, Keith Evans and Paul Bevand. At the end of the service our own two minutes silence was held. Keith Evans thanked everyone for their attendance and participation.

After taking time to pay respects to the fallen men, some members of the group visited the Royal Maritime Club to chat and have a drink.



Foreground Left to Right
Ted Briggs, Lord Hood
Peter Heys, Keith Evans
Alan Plant



Association Members standing
in front of memorial panels



Hood Veterans Left to Right
Keith Evans, Alec Kellaway
Ted Briggs

Association Chaplain

We are pleased to report that at an informal luncheon with the Chairman Peter Heys and Vice Chairman Keith Evans at the latter's home, Archdeacon The Venerable John Green, Chaplain of the Fleet, has accepted an invitation to be our Association Chaplain.

Paul Bevand MBE

We offer our warmest congratulations to Paul Bevand a committee member and Website Reseacher on the award in the New Years Honours as a 'Member of the British Empire'. Paul is employed in the Government Department of Works and Pensions at Worcester.

Contact with the French.

Contact is being maintained with Herve Grall, President of the Association Amicale des Ancien Marins de Mers-el-Kebir et des Familles des Victimes at Brest, who members will recall, was a guest at our Reunion dinner last year.

Difficulty is being experienced in arranging for the repatriation of the remains of those French sailors who lost their lives at Mers-el-Kebir on 3 July 1940 and whose graves were desecrated in Algeria, for reburial at Brest. The situation in Algeria has deteriorated due to the threat of the Al Quaida and the diplomatic authorities have recommended French people to avoid travel to that country. Research is being undertaken to identify the families of the five French sailors lost in Hood on 24 May 1941. It is Herve Grall's intention to arrange a ceremony at Pointe St Mathieu some 20 kilometres to the west of Brest in Brittany to which a H.M.S.Hood delegation will be invited, which was the case on 3rd July 2006 being the 66th anniversary of Mers-el-Kebir when Keith Evans Vice Chairman led a small delegation of veterans.

Flight of H.M.S. Hood Blazer Badge Aboard Space Shuttle Discovery on Mission STS-124

On April 24th, 2008, a piece of the H.M.S. Hood Association will fly in space. The U.S. Space Agency, NASA, has graciously agreed to fly a Hood blazer badge as part of the Official Flight Kit on space shuttle mission STS-124. Commanded by U.S. Navy Commander Mark Kelly, the space shuttle *Discovery* and her crew of seven will be delivering the second component of the Japanese Space Agency's Kibo laboratory module to the International Space Station

Working with NASA officials at Johnson Spaceflight Center in Houston, TX, H.M.S. Hood Association friend, U.S. Navy Lieutenant Commander Bob Adamcik, with concurrence of Association President Ted Briggs, made the necessary arrangement to have the badge flown on the flight of *Discovery*. Upon the successful conclusion of the mission, the badge will be authenticated by NASA, and put on display at the Royal Maritime Club in Portsmouth.



The Crew of STS-124, shuttle *Discovery*

(From Left to Right: Gregory E. Chamitoff, Michael E. Fossum, both STS-124 mission specialists; Kenneth T. Ham, pilot; Mark E. Kelly, commander; Karen L. Nyberg, Ronald J. Garan and Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency's (JAXA) Akihiko Hoshide, all mission specialists



The Mission Patch for STS-124