



## THE H.M.S. HOOD ASSOCIATION

(Official Website [www.hmshood.com](http://www.hmshood.com))

### Message from the Chairman

Shipmates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with deep regret I have to report the deaths of four of our veterans: Dick Turner on 2<sup>nd</sup> May, Eddie Goggins on 29<sup>th</sup> August, Cecil Honour in September and Dixie Dean in October. They will be sadly missed. Dick, who was a stoker on HMS Hood, had been a member since the early days of the Association and had been the Minutes Secretary at all our meetings and Master of Ceremonies at our Reunions. It is also regrettable that I have to report the passing away of our Secretary's wife, Gladys, who was a staunch supporter of the association and for many years opened her home for meetings and supplied the refreshments.

I also have to report our oldest member and Hood veteran Bill Stone (106 years old) fell at his home in Watlington on 15<sup>th</sup> October and was taken to the John Radcliffe Hospital in Oxford where a broken femur was diagnosed. After the operation to support the break with metal plates he had another fall and its effects are being monitored. At the time of writing, Bill was making steady progress and had been moved to the Community Hospital in Wallingford where he is likely to stay for some weeks. Bill is believed to be the only surviving regular serviceman who served in both World Wars.

This year's AGM and Reunion Dinner were very well supported. Twenty-eight members attended the AGM and there were 94 participants at the Reunion Dinner. The Dinner attendance is the largest we have experienced for some years. Our Guest of Honour was Sir Harold Walker KCMG who after serving in the Royal Engineers had a distinguished career in the diplomatic service before retirement. Sir Harold is the son of Admiral Sir Harold (Hooky) Walker KCB who commanded HMS Hood from mid 1938 to early 1939 in the Mediterranean Fleet.

Next year, a party of cadets from TS Hood, St. Austell, are intending to attend our Reunion Dinner. There is a possibility of as many as 20 cadets attending together with their Commanding Officer. The last time a contingent from TS Hood came to our Dinner was some ten years ago and included their present Commanding Officer who at that time was still a cadet. We look forward to welcoming them and trust they will enjoy the experience.

If any members living outside the Portsmouth area intend to come to the AGM/Reunion next year, I strongly advise them to book their accommodation at the Home Club as soon as possible to avoid disappointment many had this year.

A delegation from the Association attended the Mers el Kebir Association reunion in Brest, France, in July. Paul Bevand and veterans Ken Clark, Robert Philpott and Percy Price accompanied Commander Keith Evans, who officially represented us. Our group were looked after very well by their hosts during the visit and were provided with accommodation and transport to all the events, which took place over two days. A report by Keith Evans appears later in this Newsletter.

In early December, three members of the Committee are to visit The National Arboretum in Staffordshire to make arrangements for a tree and plaque to be dedicated to the memory of those who lost their lives in HMS Hood. We have talked about this for many years and it is now nearing fruition.

Our membership numbers have again taken a tumble this year and currently stand at 143 of which 10 live abroad. So far this membership year we have welcomed 18 new members to the Association.

In conclusion I wish to thank the Committee members for their continued efforts and commitment on your behalf.

God bless you all,

Peter Heys

### Important Events for 2007

- **AGM/Reunion Dinner:** 1600/1830 on 26 May at Royal Sailors Home Club, Portsmouth.
- **Memorial Service:** 1100 on 27 May at St George's Church, Portsmouth.
- **Boldre Church Service:** to be announced.
- **Remembrance Service:** 1100 on 11 November at the Naval War Memorial, Southsea.

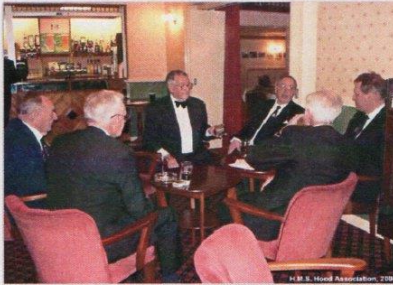


31<sup>st</sup> Reunion Weekend- AGM and Dinner

The weekend was held at the Home Club, Portsmouth, starting with the AGM at 1630 Brock's Bar with 28 members present. The dinner had 94 in attendance with our guests of honour Sir Harold Walker and his wife. Sir Harold was the son of Captain Hooky Walker captain of HMS Hood from mid 1938 to early 1939. Sir Harold was presented with a framed photograph of Hood and Lady Walker a bouquet of flowers. Due to the bad weather our normal march to Saint Georges church was cancelled and members were bussed to and from church on Sunday.



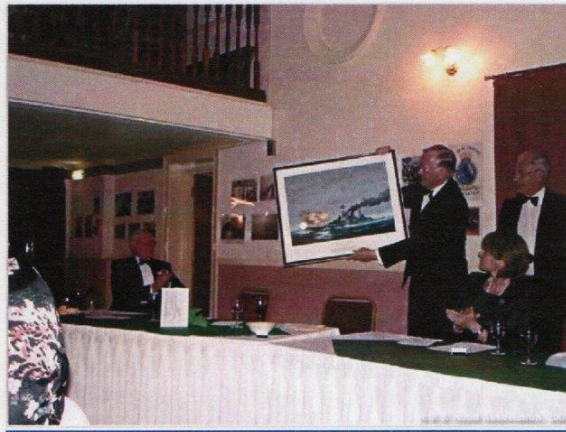
Cy & Mrs Thistleswaite



Ted Briggs and members having a social chat in the bar



Annual dinner held in the Home Club banquet hall



Sir Harold Walker receiving a framed photograph of H.M.S.HOOD

Portsmouth War Memorial- Remembrance Service

Our Annual service took place on 11 November, which was well attended, and a number of passers-by stayed for it. As always the service was conducted by our Chaplain Ron Patterson. The weather was kind to us this year, dry but cold.

HMS Hood – Remembrance Service MV Saga Ruby

I have received this letter from Association member Fred Rockey, which was from his friend Sandy.

Dear Fred,

HMS HOOD – Remembrance Service – MV Saga Ruby

At Christmas while on a cruise in MV Saga Rose I picked up a book about "Bismarck"- her story from keel laying to her final destruction. There was a description of the action in the Denmark Straits and the final position of the Hood. We had booked a cruise for August 2005 visiting Reykjavik, Greenland, Canada .USA returning to Dover. I realized that we would pass close to Hood's position on the Reykjavik Greenland section and thought something should be done. As it happened a memorial service had already been arranged for those lost on the Artic Convoys. It was agreed that Hood should be included.

A service of remembrance was held on Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> August at 0900. The service was taken by Captain Alistair McLundie, Master of MV Saga Ruby. After a two minute silence a wreath was dropped. It was a lovely, calm, sunny day with a slight swell. – Very emotional.

Yours Aye  
Sandy

Editor – I sent a letter to the Chief Executive of Saga asking him to convey our appreciation to the Captain of the Saga Ruby Captain Alistair McLundie for incorporating in the remembrance service H M S Hood and her ships company. I also sent a letter to Sandy thanking him for his thoughtfulness during his cruise.



Vice Chairman Keith Evans

Commemoration at MERS –EL-KEBIR on 3 July 1940

After the fall of France in May 1940 major units of the French fleet were based at MERS – EL-KEBIR and ORAN in Algeria. To prevent them from being taken over by the Germans and Italians they were fired on by units of the British Navy under the command of Vice Admiral Sir James Somerville flying his flag in the Battlecruiser H.M.S.HOOD, with the aircraft carrier ARK ROYAL, the battleships VALIANT and RESOLUTION, the cruisers ARETHUSA and ENTERPRISE and eleven destroyers. Other options such as scuttling or sailing under escort to a British port were unacceptable to the French service chiefs such as Admiral Darlan.

Lieutenant Ted Briggs MBE Royal Navy, President of HMS Hood Association was an Ordinary Signalman at the time, on the flag deck of H.M.S.HOOD and he described the anguish on the Admiral's face at having to carry out an operation of which he and the men under his command did not fully approve. It was of course a political decision.

The action caused the destruction of the battleships BRETAGNE and PROVENCE, of the two battlecruisers DUNKERQUE had been beached and the STRASBOURG escaped to Toulon where she eventually blew up, and the death overall of some 1300 French sailors.

On 3 July this year, 2006 being the 66<sup>th</sup> anniversary of what was known as Operation CATAPULT, a series of commemorative events to which the H.M.S.HOOD Association of which I am the Vice-Chairman was invited, were held at BREST in BRITTANY. I was privileged and honoured to lead a delegation of 4

Veterans comprising Robert Phillpott, Percy Price, Ken Clark and myself, all in our late to mid 80s, and Paul Levand our Website Researcher. Robert was also a member of HOOD's Ships Company on 3 July 1940.

It was a busy day. After an hour long service at St Louis Church there was the official commemoration of Mers-El-Kebir at Kerfautras Churchyard at which were present some 300 relatives and friends of the victims, the French Admiral, a French Navy contingent and band, and the Mayor of Brest. Also present were the British Ambassador to France Sir John Holmes and the British Naval Attache Captain Nicholas Butler Royal Navy. With other representatives I laid a wreath, and there were speeches by Sir John Holmes who conveyed a message from Admiral Sir Jonathan Band, First Sea Lord and Chief of the Naval Staff, also by Herve Grall our host and Vice President of the Association de Ancienmarins et des familles des victims Mers-El Kebir and by myself on behalf of the HOOD Association.

In my speech I referred to the welcome I had always received from local people on many visits to France over some 65 years and to Operation CATAPULT by which the action at Mers el Kebir was known. In expressing the deepest sympathy for the relatives and friends of those who lost their lives on that sad day 66 years ago – the father of our host Herve Grall was one such victim as Engineer Officer of the Battle cruiser DUNKERQUE – I hoped for a close rapport between our two Associations in the years ahead.

After the Mayor's reception at the Hotel de Ville, with my wife Heather I attended a luncheon give by Vice Admiral d'escadre Laurant MERER, Commandant la zone et la region maritime Atlantique-Manche du Nord, at la Residence.

In the afternoon we were at St Mathieu Point some 15 kilometres to the west of Brest where there is a monument to all French sailors who died during two world wars, including the five French sailors who joined the Royal Navy, assumed British names, and were lost on H.M.S.HOOD on 24 May 1941. There were 3 further speeches from Sir John Holmes, Herve Grall and myself, the laying of wreaths, the Last Post and the French National anthem.

In my speech I said how honoured we were to have been invited to today's ceremonies, and our special thanks to Herve Grall and his late Mother. Our thoughts were for the sailors of all Navies, especially for the 1415 lost in H.M.S.HOOD including 5 Free French sailors, for the Navy of France, and indeed for our enemies who lost their lives in the service of their countries, and sympathy for all their families. For the future we in the H.M.S.HOOD Association looked forward to a close rapport with our opposite members here in France.

**It was an emotional day and one which we will long remember**



Keith Evans Percy Price  
Capt Nick Butler  
Robert Phillpott Ken Clark



Memorial at St Mathieu's Point  
Commemoration of 5 Free French  
members of H.M.S.HOOD's Crew



Memorial to French Seafarers at  
St Louis Kerfautras Churchyard



Vice Chairman Keith Evans speaking  
on behalf of the Association



Remembrance of HMS Repulse & HMS Prince of Wales

We have received this letter from an Association member Barry Roberts the Master of Caledonian Victory.

To:- Members of HMS Hood Association,

I have spent the last 18 months in China standing by the building of four ships. On delivery of each ship I have to then sail them to Singapore to hand over to the sailing crew. Each voyage South brought me within 40 miles of the wreck sites of HMS Repulse and HMS Prince of Wales. I had already discussed with my employer the idea of permission to divert on the last delivery to each site to lay a wreath. I am glad to say they saw no problem in this. Having had many discussions with Paul Bevan I thought it might be a good idea to lay wreaths on behalf of the Association.

On delivery of "Caledonian Victory" in Yanti, China we proceeded south towards Singapore. On the 1<sup>st</sup> October 2006 at approximately 3pm we approached

Latitude 03 degrees 37.3 minutes N and Longitude 104 degrees 20.6 minutes E.

We brought the vessel to a stop over the site of HMS Repulse where 513 men lost their lives. On a signal from the bridge the wreath was thrown into the sea. After a minutes silence we sounded a long blast on the whistle and proceeded towards:-

Latitude 03 degrees 34.2 minutes N and Longitude 104 degrees 27.8 minutes E

Once again brought the vessel to a stop, this time over the site of HMS Prince of Wales where 327 men lost their lives. On the signal from the bridge we again threw the wreath into the water. We again gave a one minutes silence and a prolonged blast on the whistle before proceeding on our voyage to Singapore.

I must thank the Association for allowing me the opportunity to do this gesture on their behalf. It was both an honour and a privilege for me to pay tribute, on HMS Hood's behalf, to the 840 men who lost their lives on 10<sup>th</sup> December 65 years ago.

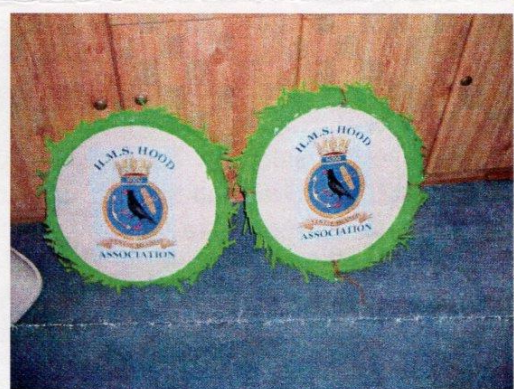
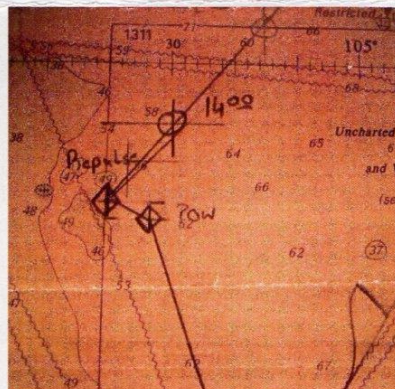
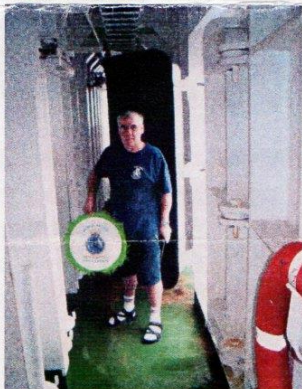
The Chinese have no idea about wreaths and we struggled for weeks prior to sailing to try and get the type we wanted. We eventually got the best available and with the Association Crest made it as respectable as we could. I apologise should anyone be offended.

As a final point the cook onboard informed me as we stopped at the Repulse site that his Father-in-Law was on Repulse. This made it even more poignant for both him and his wife.

I look forward to meeting you all again in May 2007.

Best Regards

Barry Roberts, Master.  
Caledonian Victor



Barry Roberts onboard his Vessel "Caledonian Victory"      The chart showing positions of HMS Repulse and HMS Prince of Wales

The two wreaths which were placed at sea over the positions of the ships

On behalf of the HMS Hood Association the membership thank Barry for his thoughtfulness and greatly appreciate all he has done on our behalf. We look forward to seeing him at our next Reunion week-end.