



THE H.M.S. HOOD ASSOCIATION

(Official Website www.hmshood.com)

Message from the Chairman

Shipmates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with regret I have to report the passing of four of our veterans. George Walker, membership number 140, died in Aberdeen Royal Infirmary on Boxing Day last year, George Donnelly, membership number 173, died in Burlington, Ontario, Canada, more recently, Robert Philpot membership number 146 died 20 April 2009 and Fred Rockey number 119 in June, all had been members of the Association for many years.

2009 has been a very sad year as all three remaining veterans of the First World War living in the UK have crossed the bar. Our own member William Stone died on 10th January aged 108, and then on 18th July Henry Allingham aged 113 followed by Harry Patch on 25th July aged 112. William's book '**Hero of the Fleet**' published by Mainstream Publishing was released on 21 September on HMS Belfast and will be available in October.

On a brighter note, this year's Reunion Dinner, which took place on 23rd May, was attended by 76 participants including the contingent from TS Hood, St Austell, Cornwall. The Association President Rear Admiral Wilcocks attended the Dinner and was accompanied by his wife. Unfortunately, our planned Guest of Honour Cy Thistlethwaite was unable to attend due to his wife's illness, but Hood veteran Alec Kellaway took his place at the last minute. I wish to thank Alec for accepting our invitation. I would also like to thank Barbara Petrie who organised and ran the raffle, which achieved a worthwhile profit of £184. Barbara has offered to take over responsibility for the raffle/auction for the future.

At the AGM Ken Clark was elected a Vice President in recognition of the large amount of work he has undertaken as Treasurer since the Association was formed in 1975. No one appreciates more than I the long hours he has dedicated over the years in keeping the accounts, membership renewals and records, organising the slops activities and producing and distributing the newsletter. I believe Ken who is 93 years old is the only member still with us from the original veterans who formed the Association. Because of his extensive knowledge of the work and development of the Association, the Committee wishes him to remain a Committee member as long as he is fit enough to continue.

We are still looking for a volunteer to take over the Treasurer's responsibilities and become a member of the Committee. If any member would like to take on this position please contact me at the address on the back of your membership card. Committee meetings are currently held in Winchester about four times each year on Fridays at 1030. You must of course be able to travel to Winchester. A computer loaded with the necessary software for record keeping and reporting will be provided.

The Royal Maritime Club has asked me to advise our membership that the new General Manager, John Alderson, has reinstated the 'Midweek Three Night Bargain Break Offer'. The Offer includes three nights' 3-course dinner in Horatio's Restaurant, bed and full English breakfast at the special rate for 2009 of £135 per person and is available for any three consecutive nights from Sunday to Thursday inclusive. Please mention the HMS Hood Association when booking and quote our membership number 2050.

At the last count we had 174 members, of which 13 live abroad. 15 new members have joined so far in this membership year.

God bless you all,
Peter Heys

Important Events

- **2009 Remembrance Service:** 1045 on Wednesday 11th November at Portsmouth Naval War Memorial
- **2010 Boldre Church Service:** 1100 on Sunday 16th May
- **2010 AGM/Reunion Dinner:** 1600/1830 on Saturday 22nd May at Royal Maritime Club, Portsmouth.
- **2010 Memorial Service:** 1145 on Sunday 23rd May at St George's Church, Portsmouth.

Vice Admiral Sir Louis Le Bailly

Served in Hood twice as a Midshipman in 1932 and as Lieutenant Engineer in 1939

I first joined HMS Hood in 1932 and, in the course of the following year and because I had won the Navigation Prize at Dartmouth I became the navigating officer's 'Tanky' and so responsible for winding the chronometers weekly. I was also Midshipman of Hood's Second Picket Boat (the fastest in the Fleet) and expended much of my 5 shillings per day on Brasso. Petty Officer Tandy was the able Coxswain who taught me that in the small Tangier Harbour that if one went in at full speed and put the wheel hard over the thrust of the propeller and the, rudder would enable us to finish up alongside facing the exit. This he explained saved a lot of 'backing and filling when overfull' wardroom officers arrived to catch the last boat (2315) after an evening's carousing. But at night particularly, until one got the hang of it, it was a nerve wracking couple of minutes.

As a cadet one of my responsibilities had been to polish the Gunroom brass door handles and doorway lintels. The Gunroom was between the quartermaster's lobby and the quarterdeckmen's messdeck. So I was the butt of many of the latter's inhabitants, their humorous comments helped me to get to know many of them.

On promotion to midshipman I and my three term mates had thickish gunroom plates broken over our heads and our pay rose from 3 shillings & 6 pence to 5 shillings mentioned above. General drill on Monday mornings was always an ordeal but I had been advised that if I kept running when any senior officers were about everyone would believe I was carrying some crucial message. And so it was.

One evolution was "Out Collision Mat" and the quarterdeck men were responsible for draping a 15ft square piece of reinforced canvas secured by chains at two points over Hood's bows and dragging it aft to the alleged point of collision. When Hood went to war in 1939 I was serving in her again as a Lieutenant (E) and Upper deck Damage Control Officer. It was a strange coincidence that on 26th September 1939 a bomb exploded on the precise spot that had been chosen as the collision point seven years before.

One eye having fallen below standard I had to leave Hood at the end of 1933 and I was not therefore on the bridge when, on an exercise on a sunny day off the Spanish Coast HMS Repulse was ordered to join Hood then 18 miles away. She did and rammed Hood just above the starboard outer propeller. Both the captains and the Admiral were Court Martialled. The Captain of Repulse was dismissed his ship, but changed into plain clothes and continued to live onboard. The Admiralty quashed his sentence, but I think he retired soon afterwards. The Admiral was relieved of his post and the Captain of Hood was acquitted. During the Court Martial proceedings my successor as Tanky was cross examined as the timing of various signals was considered significant. The rather unpleasant Barrister referred to his evidence in biting words "Are we to rely for this prosecution on a midshipman's watch? My successor said "Well it is a Rolex, Sir"

Our new Captain Binney and Admiral 'Bubbles' James (Bubbles because as a child of three with lovely curly hair he had become the advertisement for Pear's Soap! (I'm for ever blowing bubbles) required that Hood should become 'Cock of the Fleet' at the forthcoming regatta in Scapa Flow. The Mid's Gig's crew race for the Battenberg Trophy being the day before the main regatta, success or failure would be regarded as an Omen.

Once the Fleet reached Scapa the tension became acute. Binoculars were continually trained on rival crews and even rangefinders used to gauge their speed over a measured distance. We won, and the next day we also won the All Comers. Much money change hands. Our triumph was due to the enthusiasm of our Stroke Oar, Midshipman Beckwith. I am glad that his Gig's oar and mine hang in TS Hood at St Austell. I have added an account beside his oar of his heroism in WW2.

A survivor from HMS Prince of Wales, where he was second (G), he was put in command of a large motor boat, already loaded with sufficient fuel to take its 40 women and children to Australia, while Singapore surrendered. They nearly made it, but as dusk was falling a shot across their bows from a Japanese Destroyer stopped them and he was ordered on board. He was in uniform and he was offered his life as a prisoner of war but he declined, realising what the Japanese had in mind. He rejoined his small craft which the Japanese blew to pieces. There were no survivors. The facts were found after the war from the destroyer's log.

David Day has forwarded this article and has asked for help on some outstanding facts.

I spent my first 16 years of my life at Portsmouth where at an early age and of no particular reason I fell in love with the battleship Vanguard, dragging my sisters or Mother around every possible Naval Days. I suppose the reason could have been the attention my sisters, and hence I, received from the sailors. Imagine my mortification at the age of 13 when she was scrapped, but fortunately around the same time the film 'Sink the Bismarck' came out and after seeing it 5 or 6 times I transferred my affections to her. They've stayed with her ever since, involving a large collection of books and models. I do, incidentally, credit the scenes in that film of trapped men drowning for both putting me permanently off joining up and for an aversion to being in water as opposed to on it, which I love. The following is

both a bit of a story and a bit of a mystery, on which I hope members may be able to shed light. Some Ten years ago I helped out occasionally as a volunteer at our local mental hospital, and I often noticed a chap who either said nothing at all or shouted out naval-type exclamations. One day whilst he was doing this, a nurse said to me ‘that’s Albert’, he was one the Hood’s survivors and has been out of his mind with guilt ever since. Now of course we know that only three survived which are well documented and Albert was not one of them. The nurse’s knowledge was limited to what she told me, except that she was quite adamant that a few years earlier some senior officers had come up from Portsmouth and made a presentation to him. Intrigued, I went to his ward and asked nurses there, to no avail. Nothing was on his cabinet – unsurprisingly- and of course I could not rummage in his things, so there the matter dropped. I just put it down to distortion caused by a considerable lapse of time.

However, a year later I went to our local theatre to see John Pertwee’s one-man autographical show. Thoroughly entertaining, but I was more than a bit astonished to hear him say he’d been on Hood in 1941, and that he and about a dozen other young seamen had been put off by the captain only a few hours before the battle, to save the waste of their young lives in what obvious would be a tough fight. I did hope to see John in the bar afterwards, but of course he was surrounded by dozens of fans signing photos etc, so I resulted in writing to him at his agent. Unfortunately he died a few months later. However I did get his autobiography ‘Moonboots and Dinnersuits’ In it he repeated his story, including a pretty inaccurate account of the subsequent battle, and gave the name of the ship they were evacuated to as the ‘Dunluce Castle’

I have always been a fan of John Pertwee and I didn’t want to suggest he is lying but I have never seen it mentioned elsewhere. Obviously I have no wartime experience but it seems a somewhat extraordinary thing for a captain to do, albeit perhaps laudable. Also it occurs to me that t the age of 21 or 22 I think, there would have been a large number of even younger sailors on Hood. Could Albert have been one of the evacuated dozen? If so, what a sad contrast, one man going on to a brilliant career entertaining millions, the other spending his life in a home, racked by guilt because he survived. Does any member have knowledge of this or similar incidents or even what the presentation to Albert may have been? Incidentally the bits in John’s book dealing with his Naval Career are both funny and interesting. If you have any information please contact me at:- David Day, 33 Pelican Road, Pamber Heath, Tadley, RG26 3EN

Presentation to The Royal Maritime Club

Those of you who receive the Navy News will have read that the Association presented a print of the Hood together with a ships crest on 5 June 2009, to commemorate the naming of the committee room Briggs Bar in recognition of Ted Briggs’s long association with the club. Ted was liked by everyone at the club and would have been pleased and proud to have this honour bestowed upon him. It was fitting that the association should present these mementoes to the club.



Peter Heys presenting a picture of HMS Hood at Scapa Flow to the General Manager John Alderton



Veterans Keith Evans & Alec Kellaway presented HMS Hood crest to the club

HMS Hood Association Clothing Order Form

New arrangements have been made for ordering items of clothing directly through a company Image Scotland Limited, an order form has been enclosed. Orders can also be made by Fax or on the Web, full details are listed on the order form All items listed are dealt directly with the company, any other items Teis, Blazer Badges etc available are through Alec Kellaway.

Memorabilia

Time is passing by and there are probably many items of memorabilia which need to be saved and could be made available for all to see. The Royal Naval Museum Portsmouth has kindly agreed to hold and display items which

members are prepared to donate. Any items can be forwarded to Mr D Collins, 12 Coghlan Close, Fareham PO167YF

Robert Phillipot

Robert crossed the bar at his home in Surrey on 20th April 2009. He was a staunch and active member of the Association. He served in Hood as a boy seaman and left the Navy after his parents arranged for him to become an Articled Clerk. When the war broke out he was called up and after training returned to Hood much to his delight as he enjoyed his first stint onboard. His experience of operation Catapult on 3 July 1940 when the fleet was ordered to destroy the French Fleet at Mers-EL-Kebir always remained a sad experience for him. He had a varied career retiring as a Lieutenant Commander. His experiences on Hood are documented on our Website.

New President of the Association

After the passing of our president Ted Briggs across the bar last year the chairman asked Rear Admiral Philip Wilcocks CB DSC who has retired for the Royal Navy, if he would consider being our next Association President. We are delighted to report that he has accepted the position of President.

Association Meetings.

It has been a tradition since the Association was formed in 1974 that meetings have been held in the Portsmouth area. The committee are investigating the possibility of holding some meetings in the centre of the country, possibly at the Arboretum, Staffordshire.

E- Mailing Newsletter

To try and reduce costs it would be helpful if anyone who has access to E Mailing and would like the newsletter in this way please E Mail Paul Bavend www.paul@hmshood.org.uk

Keith Evans Vice Chairman

I recently attended the interservices cricket competition at Lord's and by chance had the opportunity to talk to Chief of the General Staff General Sir Richard Dannatt where I raised mine and many others concerns regarding the state of the armed forces both shortage of equipment and the way that they are treated. I also said I admired the way in which he has voiced aloud our concerns publicly. On returning home I thought I had over stepped the mark so I wrote and apologised. I received the following reply.

Dear Commander Evans

Thank you for your letter of 8th August in which you thanked me for my work as Chief of the General Staff and for the way in which I have addressed some of the challenges of the past 3 years, though I do honestly feel that I have done no more than what is expected in my role. It has been a hugely rewarding- though occasionally frustrating-experience and I will take away many treasured memories of my time here.

It has been a tremendous honour to both command and represent our young soldiers who bear the brunt of so much of our operational activity. I am delighted that they now enjoy a more prominent place in the national consciousness – something for which we are all deeply grateful. I am constantly humbled not only by the initiatives to support our people, through parades and similar marvellous high profile events, but it is often the gestures that cost nothing that are the most appreciated-a friendly greeting in the street, a prayer in church, a reference in the local paper or people such as yourself offering their support to those still in operational theatres or those working on their behalf. The activities that you and fellow members of the HMS Hood Association undertake in order to ensure that the courage and sacrifice of those who gave so much on our behalf are never forgotten are very much appreciated-and also do much to maintain public awareness of the welfare of our people.

It only remains to express my profound gratitude for your sentiments and continued support, and my thanks once more for taking the time to write.

Letter from Admiral Sir Jonathon Band

Dear Keith,

It was good of you to write as I approach my handover and many thanks for your kind words. It has been my pleasure to be able to support the activities of the HMS HOOD Association over the past few years and I wish you and the Association all good wishes and success for the future; with Philip Wilcocks as your new President you will be in good hands