



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 Dennis Finden has crossed the bar since the last Newsletter was written. Den was one of the original veterans who started the Association in 1975 and had been Standard Bearer until he stood down due to failing health some ten years ago when Anthony Middleton offered to replace him. He was also Chairman for a short time during the 1980's prior to John Williams taking over. Also David Johnstone who crossed the bar on 20 February who lived in Stubbington, Hants and was a close friend of Ted Briggs

This year's Reunion was again very successful with 77 attendees including cadets from TS Hood, St Austell. The Guest of Honour this year was Surgeon Rear Admiral Curr, Chairman of the Management Committee of TS Hood in Cornwall. His wife accompanied him and he was presented with a framed picture of HMS Hood entering Malta Harbour. Although the Dinner was well attended, the AGM only attracted some 12 members. Over the years the attendance at the AGM has been falling. Please make every effort to attend in the future as your support is essential.

At the AGM George Wronski was elected Treasurer of the Association and is in the process of taking over all the responsibilities of managing our bank accounts, book keeping, production of end of year accounts and payment of all bills etc. The computer software associated with these duties is being transferred to him. George has now become a member of the Committee.

The event held jointly by our Association and the Neptune Association at the National Memorial Arboretum on Friday 9th July was well supported by representatives of the allied navies, our members and their guests. Our Chaplain, Arch Deacon John Green, conducted the Service of Commemoration, which was held midway between the Hood and Neptune Memorials. Keith Evans, our Vice Chairman, gave a welcome speech to the assembled guests on behalf of the Hood Association. Derick Collins carried our Association Standard. The Arboretum supplied lunch in the Refreshments Marquee. It is regretted the contingent from London, which included cadets of TS Hood, London, were delayed by an accident on the motorway and missed the Service. However we were able to welcome them with lunch.

As a result of discussions at the recent Committee meeting, we have agreed to hold future events of this nature as exclusively HMS Hood Association.

Jean Heys has decided to stand down as Secretary and Committee Member as she is unable to devote sufficient attention to these duties due to the pressure of other commitments. The Committee wish to thank her for her contributions and producing meeting minutes over the last twelve years or so. The Committee are now seeking a replacement who additionally may be asked to undertake some publicity duties. If any member is willing to take on this position please contact me for more details.

At the last count we had 231 members, of which 22 live abroad. The membership includes 11 veterans and 12 veteran's widows. 27 new members have joined so far in this membership year.

God bless you all,
Peter Heys

Important Events.

- **2010 Remembrance Service:** 1045 on 11th November at Portsmouth Naval War Memorial.
- **2011 Boldre Church Service:** 1100 on Sunday 15th May
- **2011 AGM/Reunion Dinner: Monday 23rd May at the Royal Maritime Club, Portsmouth**
- **2011 Memorial Service: Tuesday 24th May Royal Naval War Memorial, Portsmouth.**

These changes are for 2011 only to enable us to commemorate the 70th Anniversary on the appropriate day. A full programme of events will be published in December.

Service of Commemoration at St John the Baptist Church, Boldre.

The annual service of Commemoration was held on 16 May 2010 at St John the Baptist Church Boldre. In attendance was our Association President Rear Admiral Phillip Wilcocks, Chairman Peter Heys, Vice Chairman Commander Keith Evans, members of the Association and the Commodore of H M S Collingwood, Commodore Steve Kirby. There was a contingent of sea Cadets from H.M.S.Collingwood and a Marine Bugler who played the Last Post and Reveille.

The service commenced with the presentation of Standards. The service was conducted by the Priest in Charge Reverend Neil Smart who opened the proceedings with a warm welcome to all. Our Vice Chairman Commander Keith Evans was invited to make an introduction on behalf of the Association. In it he thanked the Vicar and the PCC for continuing to hold this memorable annual service and to Nigel Henley for arranging it all. Since last year he announced the passing of William Stone who was 108 and was very well liked by members of Boldre and Ken Clark 92 our long standing Treasurer. There are now nine veterans two of which were in attendance Alec Kellaway 93 and Keith himself 90, both spritely and still going strong.

The service continued in the normal pattern with Commodore Steve Kirby reading the First Lesson and Commander Tony Pearse, who organised the proceeding for many years, read the Second Lesson. The sermon was by Reverend Bill Mathews who served as a Padre in the Royal Navy 1991-2001. It was a humorous sermon relating to his experiences in the service but with the message that God was forever present and we can rely on his support in good as well as bad times. The Act of Remembrance was carried out by Commander Keith Evans and the Naval Prayer was said by our President Rear Admiral Phillip Wilcocks.

After the service light refreshments were available in church as the inclement weather prevented the usual social gathering outside.

Annual General Meeting & Reunion Week-end 22-24 May 2010

Association members gathered at 1600 hours on Saturday 22 May in the Royal Maritime Club's "Brock's Bar" for the Annual General Meeting. Chairman Peter Heys reported that the Association has, in the past 12 months lost both serving Vice Presidents. Hood veteran and stalwart of the Association Ken "Nobby" Clark, who was elected as a Vice President at the 2009 AGM, had sadly crossed the bar on 20 October 2009. He was much missed by all who had the honour of knowing him. Our other Vice-President, Joanna Warrant, had decided to retire on health grounds as she felt that she could no longer attend regularly the Association functions. We send our grateful thanks to Joanna for her services to the Association and our best wishes to her for the future.

Another stalwart of the Association who sadly crossed the bar on 16 December 2009 was our association's Chaplain Ron Patterson. He was a boy seaman on Hood 1933 and had a distinguished service career. He entered the Priesthood after WW2, a gentle man who was loved by all and is sorely missed.

After many years as Secretary Jean Heys had decided to retire due to other commitments. The committee thanked her for her years of service and wished her well for the future.

Peter Heys, who has been acting as Treasurer as well as Chairman for several years, presented the Financial statement. Paul Bevand, Membership Secretary was able to report that the membership was holding up. The Association has 240 members of who 22 live overseas and there are 12 known veterans. The suggestion made by Stuart Tamblin at the 2009 AGM to introduce PayPal through the Website as a means of making it easier to join the association was taken up and introduced in December 2009. Since then we have had 14 new memberships in that way which is very pleasing. Paul also reported that the Website has had a refresh of the design to keep it looking up to date. The Facebook page has also been started to tap into people who use what is one of the most popular sites on the internet. He was particularly pleased to have a new assistant Steve Lovelock, who lost a relative on Hood, to help him. Steve has agreed to take on the work of adding details of men who served in the ship to the crew section of the site.

Members of the committee were all prepared to stand for re-election and were duly re-elected. The position of treasurer has been vacant for several years we were delighted to have George Wronksi volunteer for the position. George gave a short presentation and was duly elected. We are delighted to have him join the committee.

The next AGM will be held on 21 May 2011.

Meeting closed at 1735.

Reunion Dinner

The reunion dinner commenced at 1900hrs. This year the ballroom was decorated with actual surviving Hood flags provided by John Oakley. We also had our usual display of photographs of the ship, the crew and Association event provided by Frank Allan, Paul Bevand and Commander Keith Evans. As always, the most important element of the photo display was the large display of roughly 765 photos of men lost in Hood. This display occupied the southwest corner of the ballroom along with our Roll of Honour.

There were 75 people in attendance representing a wide range of connections and interests in our ship. We were delighted that our President Rear Admiral Philip Wilcocks C.B. D.S.O. was able to join us despite having a family

wedding the same day. It was also good to welcome our Patron Lord Hood and his wife. There were also 4 veterans who were able to attend and it was a delight to see them in fine form.

Also this year was the author Lain Ballantyne, Lain has written a book "Killing the Bismarck" which is due for publication soon. Many members of the association had been to the Royal Naval Museum during the afternoon where Lain and Captain Peter Hore (who writes naval obituaries in the Daily Telegraph). The presentation gave a fascinating insight into the determination – both political and naval – that the loss of the Hood could only be avenged by the destruction of the Bismarck. Peter's approach was to tell the human side of the story and had several new sources from which he had drawn to achieve his aim. Lain concentrated on the more technical aspects of the battle and particularly on a controversial photograph which was originally thought to show the magazine exploding in Hood as viewed from H.M.S. Prince of Wales. Also present at the dinner as well as at the earlier talk was Antonio Bonomi who had flown in from Italy to join us. Antonio is a regular on the forum of the association website and has an encyclopaedic knowledge of the battle. We were delighted to welcome him and to hear that he is working with Peter Hore to clarify further details of the loss of Hood and the pursuit and destruction of the Bismarck.

We were also happy to welcome Patrick Wales-Smith, nephew of Vice-Admiral Holland, Andy Godfrey who has been such a help to us in filling gaps in our records of men lost with the ship, Jean Winter and her party and Duncan MacDonald-Heaney who was able to update us on the tremendous progress being made by the Battle Cruiser Hood, South east London Memorial Group. Sadly, we were unable to welcome our web master Frank Allen and his family this year. Frank, whose work over many years has been such a boast to the Association, was planning to be with us but sadly bad weather near his home delayed his local flight to New York which meant he missed his transatlantic connection. The ash cloud, caused by the eruption of the Icelandic volcano, had led to many cancelled flights earlier in the week that meant that no standby flights were available. Frank was sadly missed by all his friends hopefully we will be seeing him next year.

Special mention, of course, must go to the veterans who were able to join us at the dinner. There were two who had not been with us last year, Fred Borrow, who had served as a seaman in Hood from February 1938 to March 1939 came with his family and Roy Foster, who served as a Midshipman in Hood from 1939 to June 1940 and now lives in Twickenham came with his son Mike. It was wonderful to see them and we hope that they will return next May for 70th Anniversary commemorations.



Veterans

Keith Evans, Alec Kellaway Fred Borrow & Roy Foster



Photographic Roll of Honour

This year our Guest of Honour Surgeon Rear Admiral and Mrs Curr accompanied by our President were piped aboard to the dinner by a TS Hood cadet. Surgeon Rear Admiral Ralph Curr has been linked with the Association for a number of years now both through his attendance at the Reunion weekends and his links with cadets T S Hood St Austell, Cornwall. We were delighted to welcome him and his wife as well as a delegation of cadets from T S Hood.

After dinner toasts were as usual made and this year we had a glass of port with which to make them. Vice Chairman Commander Keith Evans proposed the toasts to absent friends. Those who we remember included our Vice President Ken 'Nobby' Clark, our former Chaplain Ron Patterson, former Standard Bearer Den Finden, and four veterans Fred Rocky, George Donnelly, George Walker and Fred Ogilwy. We also remember Ivy Wannerton, widow of Leading Stoker Henry Wannerton who was lost in Hood. We believe that Ivy who died in November 2009, aged 104, was the last of the widows of men killed in the loss of the ship. Keith also took the opportunity to congratulate our Chaplain Arch Deacon John Green C.B., Q.H.C., on his award in the New Year's Honours List of C.B. – Companion of the Order of the Bath. Following the toasts our Chairman Peter Heys introduced our Guest of Honour Surgeon Rear-Admiral Ralph Curr. Ralph in his address remembered his long and varied connections with the ship and especially on one occasion in his naval service when, after watching the film 'Sink the Bismarck' he was able to turn to Ted Briggs and ask "Well Ted, was it really like that?" He also expressed his pleasure at seeing the cadets from T.S. Hood in Cornwall and expressed the hope that such a visit would be repeated in the near future to further cement relationships between the two organisations. Afterwards he was presented with a gift – a framed photograph of Hood in the mid-late 1930 and Mrs Curr a bouquet of flowers.



Surgeon Rear-Admiral & Mrs Curr



Surgeon Rear Admiral Curr with TS Hood Cadet St Austell

St Georges Church Service

This year the weather was excellent as members gathered outside the Royal Maritime Club at 1115 to march to Saint Georges church Portsea along with the cadets of HMS Collingwood, TS Tenacity and TS Hood, St Austell. Our service was lead by Association chaplain and Chaplain of the Fleet, Archdeacon John Green, CB, QHC, who was assisted this year by Reverend Max Miller representing Canon Karina Green. Miss Tracy Dean again played the piano for us. The service opened with the presentation of standards.

Archdeacon Green's address this year again focused on the men who gave their lives in Hood. A miniature Roll of Honour displayed standing in sand bays was positioned in front of the church which provided a focal point for the service. At the opening of the service, the congregation were asked to come forward and light a candle and focus on a name from the Roll of Honour, placing it in a sand bay relevant to the name on the Roll of Honour. This allowed us to focus on an individual nature of the sacrifice made by each of the 1415 men we were here to remember. This was followed by the Bidding prayer read by Keith Evans. The reading from the Acts of the Apostles was read by Anne Davidson, daughter of the late William Stone, and prayers were led by the Cadets. The Standards were then returned before the Act of Commitment by Derick Collins and the Exhortation by Peter Heys. There followed the Last Post, the Silence and Reveille. Our service concluded with the National Anthem and Blessing from John Green. Following the service members returned to the Royal Maritime Club led by the TS Tenacity band and TS Hood Cadets.



Members Placing Candles



Completed Display of Remembrance Candles

Memorial Service – National Arboretum

A combined memorial service was held at The National Arboretum Memorial Park, Alrewas, Staffordshire, on Friday 9th July 2010 for the ships companies who lost their lives on HMS Hood, HMS Neptune and HMS Kandahar. The service was conducted by the Fleet Chaplain, Archdeacon John Green C.B. There was a large gathering of 170 people both members from respective associations, invited guests and representatives from navies of Australia, New Zealand and Canada. Standards were presented from Hood, RNA, British Legion and others, in all 8 were present. After the service wreaths were laid at the respective memorials. Following the service everyone was relieved to get into some shade from the blistering sunshine which caused some discomfort for many. A buffet lunch was served in the marquee. It was very disappointing that a contingent of T.S. Hood cadets London were delayed due to a major accident on the motorway so they did not arrive until after lunch. Apart from this major disappointment the day went very well and enjoyed by all.

Chaplain of the Fleet Archdeacon John Green

Our Association chaplain is retiring from the Royal Navy and his last service is being held in Saint Ann's church, Portsmouth Dockyard on 31 October at 1000. Anyone wishing to attend contact Derick Collins on 01329 825965

Vice Chairman Commander Keith Evans – H.M.S. Hood delegation to 70th Anniversary of Mers-el-Kebir at Brest, France.

Operation Catapult – Mers-EL-Kebir 3rd July 1940

After the fall of France in May 1940 units of the French fleet were based at Mers-EL-Kebir 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-Force H under the command of Vice Admiral Sir James Summerville flying the flag in 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 the H.M.S. Hood Association until his death in 2008 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.

This action caused the destruction of the battleships Bretagne and Provence, of the two battlecruisers Dunkerque had been beached and Strasbourg escaped to Toulon where she eventually blew up with the death of 1297 crew.

On Saturday 3rd July this year being the 70th anniversary of Operation Catapult a number of commemorative events to which the H.M.S. Hood Association were invited, were held in Brest in Brittany. Our delegation was Rear Admiral Philip Wilcocks CB DSC, Commander Keith Evans who served in Hood as a Midshipman in 1938-39, Anne Davidson daughter of William Stone who served in Hood 1922-24 and Michael her husband, Rob White President of the Discovery Channel Documentary which produced The Mighty Hood and Susan his wife, and Paul Bevand MBE website researcher and Membership Secretary.

We were accommodated for 2 nights at the Cercle Naval at Brest. Their entire visit was hosted by Herve Grall, President de L' Association des Anciens Marins et des Familles des Victimes de Mers-el- Kebir.

The programme for the 3rd July was as follows:-

'Messe du Souvenir' at St Louis church. Private ceremony at Kerfautras graveyard (Monument de Mers-el-Kebir and Tombe du Marin Inconnu de Mers-el-Kebir). Lunch at Cercle de la Marine. Reception of personalities and delegations at Point Saint Mathieu some 20km to the west of Brest. Official ceremony speeches and laying of wreaths. Reception at Plougonvelin.

There were speeches by Herve Grall, Sir Peter Westmacott British Ambassador to France, Admiral Pierre-Francois Forissier of the French Navy. After the laying of wreaths and the French National Anthem there were speeches in memory of survivors and victims including a very emotional one of Andre Jaffre, Quartermaster Armourer of the Cuirasse Bretagne read by his son. Andre had been a guest at our Reunion in Portsmouth some 3 years ago. Some 200 persons were present for the ceremony. We were made very welcomed throughout our visit by Herve' Grall and members of his Association.

Our delegation returned by air to Southampton on 4th July after an emotional yet enjoyable visit.

The following are extracts from letters.

From - Herve' Grall
To - Rear Admiral Wilcocks.

'Since the last 5 years , we have started a reconciliation process in close collaboration with H.M.S. Hood Association and we wish sincerely to continue that comradeship relation which leads us to a necessary appeasement, and will certainly contribute to strengthen friendship between our both countries and our both navies, without forgetting our sailors sacrifice.

From - Admiral Sir Mark Stanhope KCB OBE ADC First Sea Lord
To - Keith Evans, Vice Chairman, HMS Hood Association

It was with delight and some humility that I read your letter providing details of the H.M.S. Hood Association. The significance of the history of your Association represents is of course well known to me, but it is always a delight to get it 'First Hand'. By any uncanny coincidence your letter arrived on my desk the day I returned from an official visit to Algeria where the events of Mers-el-Kebir had been discussed at length with my hosts.

Recognising your poignant point that many of your colleagues had 'Crossed the Bar' it struck me how busy the agenda of the Association remains. I wish you well for your visit to Brest on 3rd July and your engagements at the Arboretum on 9th July. My thoughts will be with you.

Many thanks for your kind invitation to join you at one of your events in the future. I will instruct my staff to liaise with you to see if such an opportunity can be found.

From – Sir Brian McGrath GCVO

To – Commander T.K. Evans, Vice Chairman H.M.S. Hood Association

The Duke of Edinburgh has asked me to thank you for your letter of 25 July.

His Royal Highness was very interested to hear about the Service held on 3 July, west of Brest, to commemorate the lives lost at Mers-el-Kebir.

Prince Philip was particularly pleased to hear of the reconciliation's with the H.M.S. Hood Association and that representatives of the Association were at the Service

Many thanks again for your trouble in writing.

Memories of Mers-el-Kebir 3rd July 1940
Andre Jaffe
Quartermaster Armourer Le Cuirasse Bretagne

How long have I been here? I just don't know.....what can I do? In the darkness of the smoke, with a strong smell of fuel oil, I can't make anything out. Try lifting my arms...? My hands scrape against electrical circuits, insulated cables, all the equipment fixed to the deckhead of the turret. I hold on to something, I pull myself up- it takes my weight. I'm getting somewhere...I can feel that my feet aren't touching the metal deck of the compartment. I steady myself and move forward very slowly, desperately clutching with both hands at anything that will support me. Luckily, I don't weigh much. I'm breathing as shallowly as I can. Moving like this, I manage to get into Magazine No11. Only just in time, because now the shells in Magazine No13 are exploding. The blast is devastating. I feel as if my insides are being torn out. Like a giant blowtorch, the flames consume everything in their path. I'm squashed like a pancake against the shell lockers. My face hurts terribly, I've been burnt by the flash, I'm bleeding. I can make out bodies lying near the guns. They struggle, they writhe...but the flames devour them. I don't pass out, despite the pain I'm in, I'm still fully conscious. I'm so scared, but I want to live, I don't want to die, I'm only 18.

The battleship Bretagne with her keel in the air, was slowly sinking below the surface of the waves. With a great hissing, steam shoots out of holes in the wrecked ship. Survivors who can't swim or don't know how, keep trying to make it to her upturned hull. They are half crazy with fear, panicking. Suddenly a huge explosion rends the air. The hull of the Bretagne is being blown apart. Dismembered bodies are flung into the sky in a bloody whirlwind of flesh and metal, thick black smoke and blazing oil. Shreds of what were once men rain down on me, along with fragments of steel. I am forced to dive down under the water again, so I am out of danger for a moment or two. I swim for as long as I can underwater towards the shore, then I come back to the surface. There goes the battleship Strasbourg! After getting under way, she races towards the harbour mouth of Mers-el-Kebir, guns blazing. The lucky devils! I'm so envious of the men onboard this superb ship. At least they're fighting back, they're doing everything they can to get out of this trap! But the screws of Strasbourg are turning at full speed, and a few poor souls, sailors swimming for safety from Bretagne, are right in her path. They're sucked in by her propellers, cut to pieces, swallowed by the waves none come back to the surface, it's over for them.

I keep swimming, I'm only 18 years old, I want to live, to live.

H.M.S. Hood's 70th Anniversary 24th May 2011

The 70th Anniversary of the sinking of H.M.S. Hood on 24th May 1941 will be next year 24th May 2011. Normally we would hold our reunion weekend on 21/22 May as previously published. The committee felt that 70th Anniversary should be suitably commemorated on the appropriate date therefore the reunion weekend has been changed and will now be held on Monday 23rd and Tuesday 24th May 2011. The Annual General Meeting will be at 1600 on 23rd May with the Dinner at 1830. We are currently in negotiation to hold the parade at the Royal Naval War Memorial, Southsea on 24th May 2011 with guard and band. It is hoped that a full programme of events will be available soon and will be published in the December newsletter. The committee are working hard to make this a memorable occasion and are looking forward to members and guest attending. To save any disappointment a number of bedrooms have been reserved at the Royal Maritime Club for the night of 23rd May. Those who require accommodation state the type of accommodation required, a Double room, Single room or Twin room. Please write to Mr D M Collins, 12 Coghlan Close, Fareham, Hampshire. PO16 7YF to reserve a room.