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HMS DIDO Association

Newsletter number 5

Summer 2010

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TORQUAY 2010

SHEP WOOLLEY, DARTMOUTH BOAT TRIP, NEW ARTEFACTS, and more



the view from the Livermead Hotel

The Annual Reunion keep getting better and better. This year's extravaganza was held in Torquay and, despite it being a second choice after the decision was taken to cancel Gibraltar, the whole weekend turned out to be one of the best reunions so far and included many memorable highlights.

Carmen's story

When I was in the WRNS, I and 15 other females travelled to Portsmouth to join *Dido*, all very excited about being the first ever females to go to sea on a warship. We were told it was top secret, and we were not to say to anyone about joining the ship and what we were doing. I suppose we were all a little naïve compared to today's women who call themselves sailors. We were told we would be making history.

So, we were spread out to different departments on the ship and, being a radio operator, I ended up working with the communications section, which was very interesting. We didn't sleep on the ship. On the way out we sailed to Dieppe in France and were put in a hotel near a cemetery... we ate our food in the wardroom and were told "if there is a sailor coming towards you, you must stand back and let him pass; it's his ship you are only visitors on board". It was very difficult at times to follow the instructions (especially as I was put on washing up duties after one of the meals. Ever tried washing up and not touching anything that someone else is holding? (totally impossible!)

We arrived outside Dieppe harbour in thick fog, the ship was unable to go in (enter harbour I think the expression was) and the transport had decided we weren't arriving and had left, so when we finally got in we stood on the deck with our kit on the empty quay side; after frantic phone calls to someone or other, an assortment of vehicles turned up to give us a lift to the hotel. Catherine, Ros and I ended up taking a lift from a little fat guy in a uniform of some sort, who had other ideas about where he was taking us. He drove his car over the top of a roundabout and in his hurry to get to the hotel (with Catherine shouting at him in French) we managed to get to the right place, jumped out of the car and ran like hell. We all had to share not just rooms in the hotel, but beds as well. Good job some of us knew each other! I shared with Moyra (her son David was a baby tiff on board) and we put a bolster down the centre of the bed and laughed about it. So we couldn't be naughty if we wanted to! In the evening quite a few of the crew came over to the hotel and we had a pleasant evening with them. The next day, some went to Paris, I went to Lisieux, somewhere I had always wanted to go and so they took me to the train station, said 'bye and see you at tea time. An exciting train trip into the unknown and not one word of French to my name. On the Sunday, Moyra and I walked to Honfleur and back where there is a little museum half way up a hill. They did not have a Union Jack so we got one from the ship and walked back and presented them with it with a group of naval people.

Surely there must be people from the 70's who remember us being with them? So where is everyone now, you ask?

DIDO Snippet

Summary of the Annual General Meeting
held during the Plymouth Reunion

Well, Ros came from South Africa and went back, Catherine wed a Naval Officer from Chatham and Moyra still lives in Edinburgh and still comes down to Plymouth, when we remember that week away. By the way, on our return journey we slept in the wardroom (don't know where the officers went, well we never really asked). Janet died and we have lost track with some of the others. When I left the Navy I joined the Reserves, and served on the *Broadsword* and the *Bronington* just before Prince Charles joined her. I actually steered her back into Dartmouth, after being out at sea, with the captain standing close by, saying the last female to steer this ship hit the rocks, with me thinking please God, don't let me do that. But it was ok, we got in safely, trying to think what other ships we went on and at our association meetings we often remember your ship. The female side of the navy is different now. At one time, if a Wren got married, you had to leave, and to get pregnant was dismissal and we all wore skirts and were taught how to be feminine :-)

When I left the Navy, I became a cashier in Safeways and stayed there for 10 yrs. In between time I was an Akela, totally enjoyable, slipped and fell and sued Safeways for slippery floors, hurt my leg, and haven't been able to stand for too long, but it's getting better now. I have a son.... well someone has to! he is a Head Chef and is working in Germany up on the Dutch German Borders with the Army (not actually in the Army, just as a civilian with them). He has been there 6 yrs. I thought he might have joined the Navy, as his Dad was in the Navy, as well as me. Sid was the last Sailmaker to come out of the Navy; he was on the *Ark Royal* most of the time.

But all that is a long time ago now and, as I said, to tell you everything would be very X rated. :-))



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Caps, Polo Shirts, Lapel pins, mugs and Association ties, all unique with our crest

TESTIMONIALS FROM HAPPY SHIPMATES



The ships'
bells and the
honours
board

The Deputy Mayor of the City of Plymouth
addressing the assembled members

REUNION PICS

The Chairman
presenting a
photo of the ship
to the Mayor of
Plymouth

The ladies mustered

ASSOCIATION ACCOUNTS

Balance Brought Forward	£2,238.16	
INCOME		
Subscriptions 2008	£1,030.00	
Donations	£195.00	
Sale of Picture	£10.00	
Raffle	£222.00	
Reunion	£12,379.00	
Subscriptions 2009	£2,354.00	
Raffle	£400.00	
	<u>£16,590.00</u>	
EXPENSES		
Flag Pole	£80.00	
King Charles Hotel	£593.10	
Entertainment	£350.00	
DVD Royal Visit	£223.25	
Longshoot Hotel	£60.00	
Chester City Coun.	£78.00	
D.Salisbury for Post Office	£54.00	
Raffle Prizes	£300.00	
Wreath/Bolton	£10.00	
Reunion Toast	£134.50	
Tamar Cruising deposit	£100.00	
Reunion Video	£1,150.00	
Copthorne Hotel deposit	£1,200.00	
Plymouth City Coun.	£190.00	
	<u>£4,522.85</u>	
Bank balance as at 6th April 2009		<u>£14,305.31</u>
Owing 6th April 2009		
Copthorne Hotel balance owing	£12,488.00	
Entertainment	£300.00	
Tamar Cruising balance owing	£1,115.00	
Interflora	£35.00	
		<u>£13,938.00</u>
		<u>£367.31</u>

I joined up in 1955, the last recruitment to have cap boxes! I was drafted to Harrier for R.P. training, the first class to be trained prior to going to sea. My first ship was the *Ark Royal* 56 -58. Visited U.S.A. and involved in the Lebanon crisis. Was drafted briefly back to *Harrier* then I joined the *Chaplet*, a minelaying destroyer. We had fun doing fishery protection where we rammed the gunboat *Odin*! She was in dock for 6 months and we lost a bit of paint. In 1960 I flew out to join the *Alert* for an 18 month foreign – fantastic! We visited Singapore, Hong Kong, Kobe & Yokahama, then to Bangkok, then up the Mekong to Phnom Penn and Saigon. We were fired on whilst returning down the river and forced to anchor for a few hours before making a run for it!

We then went to Borneo - Sarawak, Kuching and another small port in the area. We returned to Singapore for an A.M.P prior to going to the Maldives. We flew home and I was drafted to *Dryad* for my R.P.2 course. Then back to sea for 2 years on the *Rothesay* under the command of Captain Godfrey Place V.C. This was a tough 2 years with 9 months in the Far East and visits to Scandinavia.

My reward was a ship to ship draft to the *Russell* with the Derry squadron - great! After a few months in reserve fleet I was drafted to the *Caprice* in Rosyth as trials crew. 6 months later I was back in *Dryad* for my R.P.1 course after which I joined *Dido* in March 1967; I was senior R.P. and had the boat party; in April I was made up to P.O. *Dido* was great; we sailed for the Far East but Suez was closed thanks to the 6 day war and we ended up



HMS Chaplet D52

in South Africa.

We then did the Beira patrol, had a break in Mombasa and then the withdrawal from Aden with a big task force. We ended up in Sydney. I had passed a selection board for S.D. and left *Dido* to hitch a lift in the *Triumph* to Singapore. I flew home and commenced S.D. training, being promoted in Jan 1970. I served in the *Dundas* and my last job was the *Hampshire* refitting. I 1972 I retired and I worked in Social work and also as a sailing instructor for the R.Y.A. I took my last class in 2003 and now potter around in an old 30ft sloop! Yup the anchor is finally swallowed!