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HMS DIDO

Newsletter number 4

Summer 2009

Committee Members

President	Mike England
Chairman	Ralph Price
Founder & Secretary	Colin Bates
Treasurer & Membership Sec	John Bouchier
Vice Chairman	Dave Salisbury
Asst Sec / PR	Alan Pickthorne
Welfare	Dave Eivers
Editor	Bill Matthews

ANOTHER FANTASTIC

PLYMOUTH 2009

REUNION!

Thanks to the negotiating skills of our Founder Colin, the 2009 Reunion was a great success, held for the first time in Plymouth on the weekend of 17th-19th April in the Copthorne Hotel. 123 members and their partners attended and the events included a boat trip up the River Tamar, the informal Friday night dinner and of course the Saturday night banquet. As usual, the opportunity was taken to hold the Annual General Meeting of the Association, the minutes of which are available for all to view on the website. Also on the website are a number of photos of the events, which clearly show what a terrific weekend was had by all.



the boat arriving at Calstock

All the Reunion goss on Page 4!

BIRDIE'S BIOGRAPHY

I was born in the sleepy Suffolk town of Woodbridge on the 22nd of April 1945 and stayed there until I was five and a half years old. Attended New Street primary school which I can remember very little about. The only thing I can recall is the fact that I got upset because I

was unable to tie my own shoelaces or tell the time.



We moved to a small village, (Sutton) where we were miles from anywhere. The nearest house was a mile away. My two sisters and I had a great time roaming over the lovely Suffolk countryside, climbing trees, hunting, fishing and catching rabbits for the pot.

We left Sutton in March 1952 and moved to Little Bealings where I went

to the local village school. The Headmistress was a stern lady who pushed us very hard but I really enjoyed the school and did reasonably well there. At the age of eleven I went to Kesgrave Secondary Modern school where I played football and boxed for the school teams. I left just before my fifteenth birthday with no qualifications and worked for a number of local firms (all dead end jobs) until I was nineteen.

I applied to join the RAF and was accepted, the waiting time in those days was six months to a year. A school friend who was in the Royal Navy came home on leave and persuaded me to join his mob because they would take anybody within a few weeks, like an idiot I listened.

I joined HMS Raleigh in May 1964, it was the first time I had been out of Suffolk. I actually felt sea sick on the Torpoint ferry, not the best start to a Naval career. After training, which I really enjoyed, I was sent to HMS Vernon for a sonar basics course and then in April 1965 joined HMS Dido in Chatham dockyard. We did the Far East run and I left in March 1967 to do a "two's" course in HMS Vernon.

DIDO Snippet

Did you know that the ship's crest adorns the dry dock in Simonstown? The cruiser was repaired there during the war and it is a tradition that the chippies paint the crest of any warship which has been in the dry dock and renovates two others at the same time. Also in Simonstown, the name is used to mark the last resting place of many matelots in the Dido Valley Cemetery, which enjoys beautiful views across the bay and which is maintained by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.



tions. Figures of £15 and more were proffered but eventually we decided on £12 for next year. The President, Mike England, also mentioned a little known fact, that many members of the committee do not claim legitimate expenses for items such as travelling for reunion advance visits, a situation which could not be expected to continue for ever, and that even £15 would not be enough as a subscription if that should happen.

During the meeting both Colin and Ralph were required by the Articles to stand down as Secretary and Chairman respectively and were duly re-elected afterwards. Mike England paid tribute to their hard work over the years and said how delighted he was that they had decided to stand again. He did emphasise that this could not be expected to continue into the future and hoped that other members would come forward to sit on the committee.

Summary of the Annual General Meeting
held during the Plymouth Reunion

As usual, the AGM was held during the Reunion, this year at the Copthorne Hotel. Ralph presented the hotel manager with a photo of the ship as a memento. He went on to summarise the year's activities, the VE Day in Bolton, which four members of the committee attended, the Veteran's Day event and Remembrance Day, also in Bolton, all of which demonstrate that we are now accepted as a 'proper' association. He thanked Eric Williams for the donation of the crucifix to hold the ship's painting, to Des Cage and Mike England for helping him when he started and also to Deanna for managing the Slops so brilliantly.

Colin said that the Plymouth Reunion had been the biggest so far, with 123 attending and costing a total of £15,000, with only £8-50 remaining in the kitty! He discussed next year's in Gib and also 2012, which he suggested should be held in Copenhagen. The cruiser Dido accepted the surrender of the German fleet there in 1945, so we have links, and we could go by cruise ship. We now have 264 members, of whom 133 are fully paid up, the remainder being Associate Members. We need more, so pass the word to all your old oppos and tell them to join!

There was an interesting discussion on the floor about annual subscrip-



HMS DIDO 1939-1957



From there to HMS Centaur which was glued to the dockyard wall in Pompey. This was a great draft, no watches and long weekend every weekend, I quite liked that draft.

I joined HMS Andromeda in 1968 at the house in Pompey dockyard and left her in December 1970, I really enjoyed my time on board (even Beira patrol) the only exception being the stopping of the rum ration, (didn't like that much).

Back in civvy street I joined the Post Office Research later to become the GPO then BT and now Adastral park. I worked in the engineering section under a great guy who taught me engineering as I had no skills at that time. I attended the Suffolk college to get my parts 1,2 and 3 City and Guilds and passed all with distinction. I remained at the college for eight years in all to get as many "bits of paper" as I could. I was put in charge of the department until it closed in 1995. I moved on to the Facilities management side until I took early retirement in September 2000.

On retirement I purchased a computer and that was the start of getting in touch with old HMS Dido shipmates. Initially I wanted to find as many from the 3M Port mess as I could because that was a great messdeck to be in. It would be good to see a few more from my commission at the next reunion, we live in hope.

Des (Birdie) Cage.



Visit our Slops Shop at www.hms-dido.com

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

TESTIMONIALS FROM HAPPY SHIPMATES (mostly)

My first reunion - thoroughly enjoyed it. Thanks to all involved in the organising and it was nice to meet so many others connected with the Dido.

Brian Donnelly

I am so sorry at the way some members appear to have behaved. From my observations the committee did a great job and I for one appreciate it. Regret can't do Gib as we would not be long back from 3 months in Spain. Thanks again for the lapel pin. Was good to meet you.

Brian (Thomo)

Really great weekend and so nice to meet not just you and your lovely family but all the those 'old hands' Great job you and the committee.

David Lack

We would like to thank you and the committee for another excellent reunion. The hotel and the river trip was most enjoyable. Also thank you very much for taking the time to ensure that we were on the same table as my old shipmates as requested. No complaints from us, we were too busy having a good time, haven't laughed so much in ages! All your hard work is much appreciated.

Ian & Anne

Well done all those involved in organising the reunion, another great weekend.

Roy Baylis

Sorry never got to say farewell this morning, but we had to be away as we are on the 7 pm ferry to France tonight, great weekend again so well done to you all again, will be in touch when we get back

Regards Roger / Liz

Many, many thanks for yet another great weekend. Although the service was not good and the function room a bit small it was a lovely weekend. Well Done

Steve Hawkshaw



The President and the Chairman explaining how the honours board and the bells came to be saved



Both watches!

Spare a thought and a few ickies...

The Australian bush fires cost the country over 173 lives earlier this year and made many people homeless. Police suspect that over 400 fires were deliberately set by arsonists. ex-Dido shipmates down under have asked for our help by donating to the **Australian Bushfire Relief Fund** at the website below:

http://www.nab.com.au/wps/wcm/connect/nab/nab/home/About_Us/15/351/



1973

Congratulations on a really great weekend. Every year we say the next one can't be as good as the last one but have always been proved wrong. Plymouth will take some beating, it was a fantastic weekend enjoyed by all and the weather turned out great for us, I bet the committee organised that as well. Anyway, thank you once again, All the very best,

Des (Birdie) Cage.



*They didn't
even pipe
us!*

Passing HMS Monmouth
in Devonport Naval Base

Just a quick note to congratulate you all, and the Committee, on another splendid annual reunion. We thoroughly enjoyed the whole weekend and appreciate the amount of effort that went into making it run smoothly. Needless to say, we are delighted that Ralph and Colin agreed to continue in their respective roles (even if Deanna and Karen have reservations!), and very pleased that some excellent Committee members have been recruited to back them up. We look forward to meeting up with you all next year, hopefully in Gibraltar, and await more news about that in due course. Very Best Wishes and many thanks to you all,

Richard and Angela Smallwood

testimonials continued.....

Another smashing reunion - you should be so proud of your achievement in creating such a vital and close knit association! I wanted to meet up with Dennis Swann in Guz and his name was down as an attendee but I couldn't find him. Now an Email I sent him has been bounced back. If you can't let me have his current Email could you please do me the favour of letting him know I've tried to get in touch? Thanks shippers,

Robert Black

Thanks for a brilliant night. I was able to rekindle friendship with four old ship mates but was gutted that I didn't get to speak to the Cruiser Guys. I was very wary with it being my first one but am defo up for next year. I hope that we will be able to secure child care from the in-laws so that Sam can attend too - bring it on. I trust that you had a safe journey home. My Sincere Regards to you, your Committee and Members,

Steve Lewis

Janet and I would like you to know how much we enjoyed our weekend in Plymouth. Thanks to your excellent organisation the whole thing went off really well, including the choice of hotel, the boat trip, and the evening entertainments. And of course it was good to meet old friends, and to make new ones, too. We are looking forward to seeing you in Gib next year. Yours aye

Steve Heather

I was blissfully unaware that there were any problems over the weekend. Myself and guests thoroughly enjoyed the event, especially the evening meal on Saturday. Thank you for the hard work you put in. Looking forward to Gib..... Rough numbers for me so far.... Me + 3 guests (and counting) I would like to see what price you could come up with before total commitment though, but my first choice would be through your organisational expertise! J. Speak soon.

Larry Lloyd.

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
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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>
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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>

£367.31

JOHNNY'S BIOGRAPHY



Steve Mathis a.k.a. "Johnny" and before you think it - I'm the wrong colour and can't sing !

I grew up in Pompey and always had a fascination for the sea, my 5th year in school was a mixture of school and on Southsea Sea Front watching the warships either from the RN or foreign navies enter and leave the harbour, I had always wanted to join the RN.

At 16, I left school and signed up for 9yrs, the 4yr term had just been introduced, I chose to do the full 9yrs. Commencing training in *Raleigh* in 1969 (Part 1 & 2) before being drafted to *Dryad* as an RP Basic.

My first ship was *HMS Ark Royal* (4WA0 Mess), the old "Ark", I remember the last day of the "tot", I spent 2½ years on her, after which I was drafted back to *Dryad* in 72 for an RP2's course. "Drafty" gave me a choice then either 2½ yrs on *Hermes* or *Keppel* in Gib, I jumped at the latter, and spent 6 months out there on an AMP doing her up to bring her back to "Chats" and stick her in mothballs. Arrived back in "Chats" and was then drafted to *Torquay* which was the Navigation Training Ship, I hated it and swapped draft to *Dido* joining her in Faslane in 74, my first good ship. I joined her as the Ship's Butcher, someone really thought that out very well because I eat very little meat. Everyone enjoying the sun in Gib and I was freezing my rocks off in the fridges. I was then moved to Boats Party and eventually left *Dido* in 75' in Guz to go back to *Dryad* as Ship's Company.

HMS Redpole



Six months there in *Redpole* and I was drafted to the Coastal Survey ship *Fawn*, 2yrs on her, then another 2yrs on another good Gun Leander *Juno*, leaving her in Xmas of 79. Drafted to *Raleigh* Ship's Co on loan to

Dryad for an ADAWS 5 Course, then back to *Raleigh* for a stint in the Seamanship School and "concrete RAS point ". Drafted to the Ikara Leander, *Arethusa* in 80-83, my worst ship ever and it helped me decide that I had had enough of the Pusser. I left *Arethusa* in 83 and *Nelson* in 84.

Moved to South Birmingham where I got married, finally getting rid of the Mrs on EBay in 97. I worked on the track in Longbridge (Rover) for 12yrs, followed by a bit of Security work, then was working out on the ramp at Birmingham International Airport throwing - yes throwing - passengers' luggage into aircraft holds until just after 9/11. Lost my job when the air travel took a slump. I then signed up with the same company but in Elmdon Airport and did 5 years in Airline Cargo, followed by jobs in Exel, Wincanton and until recently Team-Leader for an Industrial Cleaning Co in Unipart in Nuneaton.

I'm a very slow learner as its taken me 23yrs of being in the Midlands to realize that the sea doesn't get to Nuneaton, so as I've done my time up here I want to go back south to live.

I might be able to attend the next Re-Union if my old pal Ronnie puts me up - "buddy - mate - oppo - Good Egg".

A sad farewell must be said to **Maurice Day**, a member of our Association since December 2006 who has crossed the bar.

Maurice and his friend Bernard attended our reunion in Portsmouth in 2007 and made many new friends. The funeral took place on 22nd May at Horley, Surrey and was very well attended. Maurice had no family, but Bernard Newton and his family who had become close friends in recent years, carried out his final wishes and ensured that he was given a dignified and caring farewell, which included the horse drawn hearse Maurice had requested. There were refreshments at the local hostelry and an album of the 'young Maurice' and his war time decorations for all to see. Wreaths were from Bernard and Family and HMS Dido Association. Maurice was a highly decorated war hero, although he never said very much about his part in WWII. The Association was represented at the funeral by John Bouchier. Maurice will be sadly missed.