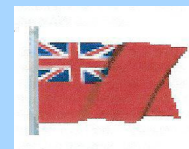




Merchant Navy Association (Wales)

Newsletter



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

2010

Wednesday February 10th

Regular meeting at RAFA Club,
Ely, Cardiff at 2.30 p.m.

Wednesday March 10th

Regular meeting at RAFA Club,
Ely, Cardiff at 2.30 p.m.

March

St. David's Day Service. Details
to be announced at regular
meeting.

March

Seafarers UK Annual Concert.
Details to be announced at
regular meeting.

Wednesday April 14th

Regular meeting at RAFA Club,
Ely, Cardiff at 2.30 p.m.

Wednesday May 12th

**Annual General Meeting
(AGM) at the RAFA Club,
Ely, Cardiff at 2.30.p.m.**

Saturday May 22nd

Annual Parade and Service,
Cardiff Bay at 11.00.

Wednesday June 9th

Regular meeting at RAFA Club,
Ely at 2.30. p.m.

Saturday June 26th

Armed Forces Day ,Cardiff



*Happy New Year Shipmates.
Best wishes and plain sailing to you
and yours for 2010*

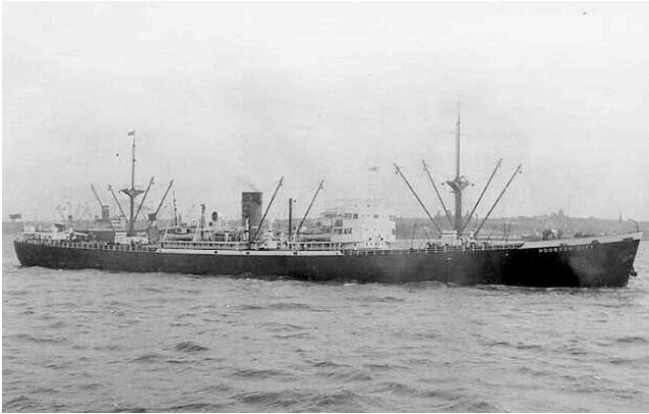


So far this year (since the AGM) members have attended 24 events. Average attendance is 18 per event which is not too bad, however, we could do with some new faces showing up as it seems to be the same members attending every event. If you would like to attend but have difficulty with transport etc. then let us know and we may be able to help.

November was a very busy month. John Mumford and Brian Hammett represented us at the St. Davids Hall Remembrance Service and Muster, with Harry Parry stepping in at the last minute to make the numbers for the muster. Harry also planted a cross for the Merchant Navy at the Garden of Remembrance and laid a wreath at the National Memorial in Cathays Park, Cardiff. Captain Ray Newbury planted the cross on behalf of the Merchant Navy in the Remembrance Garden, St. Johns Church, Cardiff.

Our service down the Bay was very well attended. The Rev. Canon Graham Francis and the Rev. Monica Mills who, as you know, are our regular "presenters" at these services were unable to attend because of prior engagements, so the Rev. Malcolm Davies, Honorary Chaplain to our Barry Branch stepped into the breach and was superb. Rev. Monica had a change of circumstances at the last moment and was able to attend with Rev. Malcolm. This service was her last as she is leaving Cardiff in January 2010 for pastures new. Rev. Monica has been Chaplain for Cardiff Bay and Lightship 2000 since May 2005 and has been a strong supporter of the Merchant Navy during her time in Cardiff. We will miss her and wish her well in her new adventure.





Houston City 1942 - 1968

Brief Encounter
by
Commodore Oliver Lindsay

The Houston City GRT 7,262 tons, sailed from the River Clyde on the 13th April 1943 under the command of Captain Henry Paul and joined a North Atlantic Convoy bound for Halifax N.S.. Twelve days later off the Grand Banks of Newfoundland with a calm sea but with fog conditions, sea temperature about 30F extensive ice with bergy-bits were encounter, consequently the ships were proceeding at slow speed having regard to the existing circumstances and conditions. The convoy was scattering, the contact with other ships was by whistle/siren signaling their convoy numbers. Fog buoys towed by the ships were either being destroyed by contact with ice or being run down by the ship following astern, convoy position keeping under the prevailing conditions being hazardous. On the Houston City watches were doubled up. At about 2300 hours moonlight showing through the fog, sea conditions calmed by ice, the lookout on the forecastle head reported iceberg blink ahead. From the bridge through the fog the grey outline of a berg was sighted and there was a noticeable drop in the temperature. The Master, Captain H. Paul ordered hard a starboard and sounding her whistle. On the ship steadying on her new course the lookout reported an object, possibly a vessel close to port, suddenly from ahead in the fog a klaxon screamed, simultaneously there were alarm bells ringing, German voices shouting. On our bridge the Captain, Officer and Apprentice, whilst on the monkey island the DEMS gunner



sighted at the same time very close to our port bow a U-boat which passed down our port side within feet so close that on our bridge we were looking down into the U-boat's conning tower and its Captain and Officer apparently endeavoring to steer clear. Captain Paul shouted out "give me a shackle to throw and I will brain the B---d". On the monkey island the port side oerlikon gun could not be depressed far enough to be of any use and there was insufficient time to alert the 4 inch gun on the poop house before the U-boat disappeared from sight into the swirling fog. Visibility at the time estimated at approximately 200 feet.

For whatever reason the U-boat was operating on the surface one can only surmise, she was obviously as surprised as we were on the Houston City.

A very brief encounter.

Eventually the visibility improved and most of the ships from the dispersed convoy proceeded to a predetermined rendezvous and the convoy reformed and proceeded to Halifax N.S. arriving there without incident on the 29th April 1943.

Commodore O.J. Lindsay

Ed's note: Houston City survived the War and after five changes of name (the last being Goodwin), she was broken up in Hong Kong on 15 October 1968.

If you have any comments, articles, stories or photographs you want printed in the Newsletter and Web site please send them to:

Byron Jones, 20 Beech Drive, Hengoed, CF82 7JP

Or e-mail them to

byron@blackranger.plus.com

Please keep your entries short if you can. Photographs and articles will be returned if accompanied by a S.A.E. (or at monthly meeting)

CROSSED THE BAR

Sadly the following members have crossed the bar since the last Newsletter

Mr. T.P. Martell of Rhooose - July 09

Mr. D.E.B. Evans of Porthcawl - July 09

Mr. W.N. Clemo of Barry - August 09

Mrs. June Germon of Barry - September 09

Mr. L.C. Deacon of Cardiff - November 09

Their sailing hath ended

NEW MEMBERS

The following new members have signed on:

Mr. Alfred Brody of Barry - May 09

Mr. William James Harding of Aberdare - Oct 09

Mr. Robert John Pearson of Barry - Nov 09

Mr Brody was at sea between 1947 and 1958 serving as an Assistant Steward and later as a Fireman/Greaser. His last ship being S.S. Camito.

Mr Harding served as an Engineer between 1974 and 1989. His last appointment being Second Engineer in M.V. Rathdown.

Welcome aboard

New Books

The Cruel Sea Retold by Bernard Edwards.

The Truth Behind Monsarrat's Epic Convoy Drama

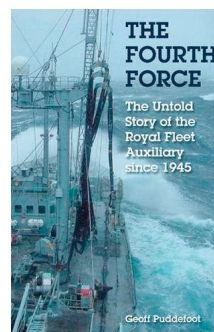
Published by Pen & Sword Books Ltd. at £19.99 hardback. Nicholas Monsarrat wrote The Cruel Sea, a novel set in World War Two and concentrates on three actual Atlantic Convoys, OG71, DG73 and HG76. The Cruel Sea Retold looks into each of these convoys. It gives a thorough insight into the danger, conditions and tactics of the time and if you served on any of these convoys this is a must have book.

Ropner's Navy by Billy McGee.

Published by Cormorant Publishing Hartlepool at £7.99. It details the history of the Ropner family and the Ropner Shipping Co. from 1874 to 1997. There is fleet list of some 284 ships owned and managed by the Company 1866-1997, detailing date & yard built, tonnage, name changes and eventual demise. There are details of all 70

WWI & II losses due to enemy action detailing cargo, convoy, how and where lost & casualty figures. It is also a reference book detailing where all the WWII Log Books & Crew Agreements files are held at Kew for each ships war service for those wishing for a more in-depth research. The final part is a Book of Remembrance and details the individual names of the 736 men lost from Ropner ships registered with the CWGC (80 from WWI, 656 from WWII). There are also 66 black & white photographs dating from 1889 to the 1990's. It is hoped WH Smith will sell a small number. The book will also be sold direct from Cormorant Publishing as well as the Author himself.

The Fourth Force by Geoff Puddefoot.



The untold story of the Royal Fleet Auxiliary since 1945.

Available from Amazon at £17.50

Eligible for FREE super saver delivery.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Members are reminded that the AGM will be held on Wednesday 12th May 2010 at 2.30 p.m. at the RAFA Club Riverside Ely. This is an opportunity for those wishing to serve on the Committee or as an office holder to put their names forward. Nominations should reach the Secretary on or before April 21st – 3 weeks prior to the AGM. **The Membership Secretary reminds all members that subscriptions for the year 2009/2010 are now due. The annual subscription for 2009/10 is £8.00**

UPDATES

Heroes Return 2

The Heroes Return 2 Scheme will provide Lottery funding to help World War II veterans who saw active service overseas with or alongside the British and Allied Armed Forces and are resident in the U.K. or Republic of Ireland, to take part in Commemorative visits (within the U.K. or overseas) to mark the anniversary of events that lead to the end of World War II.

A number of you have already applied for funding, and have been successful. Remember the deadline for applications is January 2011. So if you don't want to miss out get that application in.

If you have any general questions about the scheme and whether you are eligible, ring the application helpline 0845 0000 121.

Seafarers Link

Sue Robinson from Community Network joined us at our June meeting to talk about Seafarers Link which is a free fortnightly telephone conference that links retired seafarers.

A telephone conference social group has been established for members in the Barry area and according to the Organiser, Mr. Malcolm Mort, everything is going very well.

If you are interested in joining a group please contact the MNA (Wales) Secretary who will pass your details on to Malcolm.

Pierhead Building

Work on upgrading the Pierhead Building is still ongoing. However, completion is expected in March 2010. An opening ceremony is being planned to which we will be invited.

Re-enactment Freedom of the City of Cardiff

As you know this event was scheduled for Friday the 25th of September 2009 but had to be postponed because we were unable to get a band to lead the parade. A new date of Wednesday 24th March 2010 has been agreed with Cardiff Council. Further details will be provided when available.

Association Web Site

A Roll of Honour of Welsh Merchant Seafarers who lost their lives during World War II will be added to the site. So far the list contains over 1500 names and the intent is list losses by the month, along with details of the ship. The following is an example of an entry on the list:

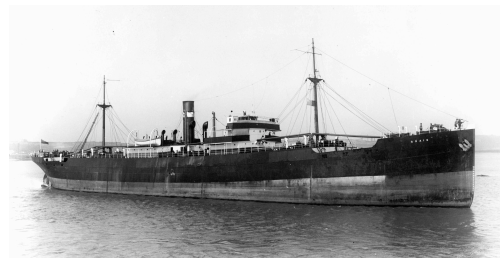
ANDREWS, Frederick. Age 24. Assistant Cook, S.S. Dayrose (Cardiff), lost 14th January 1942. Son of Frederick and Helen Andrews; husband of I. Andrews, of Riverside, Cardiff. Tower Hill Memorial Panel 34.

The first list will be entered in January 2010. The main list will be upgraded as new information is obtained. If you have any information you think might be helpful please contact the Secretary. Our web site address is;

www.mnawales.org.uk

Correction

How many of you spotted my "deliberate" mistake in the July article about the first trip of Frederick Norman Jenkins? The eagle eyed amongst you, and there were a couple, will have noticed I posted a photograph of the wrong S.S. Graig.



This is the S.S. Graig that Norman sailed in. She was built in 1924 for I. Williams & Co and lost when she was wrecked on Egg Island, 28nm East of Halifax Nova Scotia on the 4th May 1940. The other Graig was built in 1950 as the Sherborne and was renamed Graig in 1952. She was finally broken up in Kaohsiung in 1977. Sorry Norman.