



Merchant Navy Association (Wales)



This year marks the 75th Anniversary of the D-Day landings with commemoration events held at Barry and Newport. Sadly nothing was arranged for the Cardiff area. The same applies for Armed Forces Day with the nearest event taking place in Pontypridd. I hope this is not the shape of things to come. However, Llanelli RBL and Veterans Association held a parade and drum head service on the 29th June which was attended by one of our west Wales members, Mr. Tom Davies from Aberteifi. Well done Tom. Our service down the Bay



was very successful with a magnificent turnout of 16 Standard Bearers although we could have done with a few more “bums on seats”. Our thanks go to all those who attended and to the NAW for their support in helping to stage the event. A big plus was the return to the Eli Jenkins Pub for refreshments afterwards. We were unable to make use of the facilities in November 2018 as the pub was under refurbishment, but they certainly made up for it in May with an excellent buffet which was appreciated by all who attended.

Sadly our membership is on a downward slope and now stands at 49. Time and health issues are taking their toll and many of the members who were regular attendees at meetings and events are no longer able to attend. We need new members to keep the Association alive. If you have any ideas or know any ex or serving Merchant Seafarers etc. please let the Secretary know and maybe we can encourage them to join us at the Canton Liberal Club and swing the lantern. Remember if you have a story to tell now is the time to tell it. All too often I have heard people say “I wish I’d written that down”. I get loads of enquiries from people asking for information on relatives who have served in the Merchant Navy. How much easier it would be for them if they had the story in front of them in the words of their relative. Some of the youth of today are struggling to understand the role of the Armed Forces so what chance the Merchant Navy. Do they even know that we have a Merchant Navy???? We are slowly losing a lot of our Maritime Heritage, let’s not lose the history of the men, women and youngsters who have served this Nation so well over the years. Tell your story - once you are gone it is gone forever. If you need any help let me know and I’ll give you any assistance I can.

“THE CARDIFF POOL”

The Seaman’s Registry (RSS) was transferred from the Board of Trade to the Ministry of Shipping in 1939 and to the Ministry’s successor, the Ministry of War Transport in 1941. In the same year it moved from London to Cardiff. The Essential Work (Merchant Navy) Order 1941 created a Merchant Navy Reserve Pool. To ensure that seamen would always be available to man vessels, the Government paid them to remain in the Reserve Pool when they were ashore.

I’ve been trying to find information on the Seaman’s Registry (RSS) in Cardiff. I checked back in our MNA minutes when the Association was formed in the 1990s and found



reference to a plaque that was proposed by the members to commemorate “The Pool” which was initially in part of the Chamber of Commerce (Exchange Building?). The installation of a plaque was approved but couldn’t be put on the outside of the Building as it is a listed building, but approval was given for its installation inside along with a photograph of the MNA members at that time. However I couldn’t find anything in the minutes that tells me the plaque was installed. Of course the Exchange Building is now the Exchange Hotel so we would be hard pressed to find it now. Although the Chairman and I did visit the

building and the General Manager showed us around the areas that have been upgraded. Unfortunately there was no sign of the plaque. A lot of the building has yet to be upgraded and one of the Directors will make enquiries to determine, if possible, which part of the building housed the “Pool”.

This is what was proposed for the plaque:

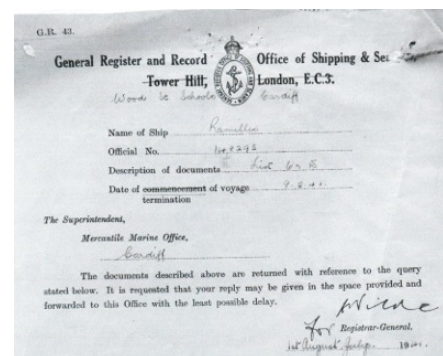
“PLAQUE AT FORMER POOL OFFICE, CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, EXCHANGE BUILDING - 1997”

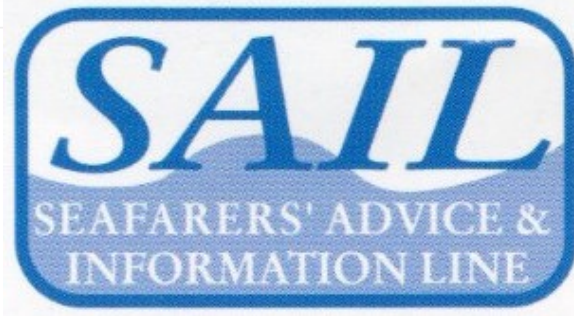
Known more simply as The Pool, the Exchange Building was the site of the British Shipping Federation from 19xx to 19xx. This plaque is to commemorate the men of “the Pool” the thousands of Merchant Seamen from the towns and villages of Wales who in war and peace were lost at sea. Lest we forget.”

The dates are probably 1941 to 1946 when the MN Pool was operational.

There was also talk of the Pool being moved to the “GPO buildings” and I found a document where the Tower Hill address for the RSS has been struck through and Wood Street School, Cardiff inserted. Perhaps there was more than one “Pool” in Cardiff??

If anyone can shed a light on whether or not the plaque was installed in the Chamber of Commerce and, if so where? and, if there was more than one “Pool” in Cardiff, where were they located? I would be very grateful.





NEW CONTACT DETAILS: SAIL
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Open 10.00 to 4.00 p.m. Monday - Friday

email: advice @sailine.org.uk

Dates for your Diary

Regular meetings are held on the second Wednesday of every month at the Canton Liberal Club, Cowbridge Road East, Cardiff, commencing at 14.30.

Raise the Red Ensign ceremony, County Hall, Llandrindod Wells, 3rd Sep at 1500

Raise the Red Ensign ceremony, Mansion House, Cardiff - to be arranged.

Swansea MNA Service, SA1, Sunday 8th September at 1045

MNA (Wales) Service, Cardiff Bay, Sat Nov 9th at 1100

You will be notified of events as dates and times become available. Notification will be provide at our regular meetings and via email and our web site below if you are on line. Those of you who can't make the meetings or are not on line and would like to be kept up to date, please contact the Secretary and he will make sure you are notified.

JOE NORTON

Joe served at sea in the Merchant Navy between 1943 and 1951 in the Catering Department, joining his first ship the S.S. Scandia on 5th May 1943. Many other ships followed and his last ship was the S.S. Otranto, which he left on 4th April 1951 to take up employment ashore.

The Merchant Navy Association (Wales) was formed in the Spring of 1995 and one of its early members was Jim Greenway of Barry. Jim set up the Barry Branch of MNA (Wales) in 1996 and Joe was invited to join. This he did and became a member of their Committee. He and Jim represent the Barry Branch on the Committee of MNA (Wales). Jim sadly crossed the bar in 2016 but Joe continues to represent the Barry Branch to this day.

What some of you may not know is that Joe is also a member of the Royal British Legion Barry Branch and I recently received this message from Teresa Goodwin their Vice Chair:

I just wanted to write to you about the Royal British Legion Barry's oldest member..... your very own Chair of MNA (Barry) Joe Norton.

We are so very fond of Joe who epitomises everything we in the RBL stand for.



In April this year the Deputy Lord Lieutenant Colin Jones presented him with a 5 year award for services to the Annual Poppy Appeal.

Joe is one of our most popular collectors, and so respected for refusing to sit down throughout a 4 hour collecting shift in a supermarket.... I tried shortening his shifts to three hours this last year and he grumbled that I thought he was old !!!

Joe never misses a Legion meeting, attends all funerals when our presence is requested, is the life and soul of most of our social events but above all takes his role in Remembrance very seriously.

He was recently described by an observer as ' a gentleman who is a supreme example of the generation who gave so much so that we could live the lives we do today'.

Joe has proved that at local level there is a real place for the Merchant Navy within the RBL . He is loved and respected by everyone in the Branch.

We are very proud of him, and I hope you are too.

Teresa

We certainly are Joe and very well done.

