



Merchant Navy Association (Wales)



MAY 2019 - APRIL 2020

As you are all aware our “year” commences with our AGM which is held on the second Wednesday of May. Annual reports are submitted by the Officers of the Committee and a new committee is elected. Sadly in March the World was hit by the Coronavirus bombshell which meant we had to cancel our monthly meetings, starting from April, and our service down Cardiff Bay in May. Reports on some of our activities up to December 2019 are included in the previous Newsletters. Up until the “lock down” we managed to attend the Holocaust Memorial Service at City Hall, Cardiff in January, the Lord Mayor of Cardiff’s St Davids Day Service at St. Johns Church in Cardiff and the Commonwealth Flag Raising Ceremony at the Mansion House, Cardiff in March. We were scheduled to commemorate the 25th Anniversary of our Association in May 2020 along with the 75th Anniversary of the Victory in Europe. But these events along with many others had to be cancelled due to the “lock down”. On a sad note we attended the funeral of Reverend Canon Graham Francis in January. Fr. Graham supported us at all our services down Cardiff Bay until he retired in January 2016. At the time he was the oldest and longest serving cleric in the Church in Wales. He became Vicar of Cardiff St. Mary in 2002 and during his time in the parish he had been honorary chaplain to the Port of Cardiff, the Cardiff branch of the Mission to Seafarers and the Merchant Navy Association (Wales). He will be greatly missed.



Sadly our membership is on a downward slope and now stands at 45. Our average attendance at meetings is 7 whilst the average attendance at events is down to 4. Based on information I have, the average age of our members is 80 with six members in their 90s. The oldest being 95 and the youngest 29. It is sad to note that we now have only 6 members who saw active service during World War Two. There must be members who have been involved in other conflicts since that time but unfortunately I do not have their details. If you are one of them please let me know.

Stay safe in these trying times. Keep in touch and if you think we can help in any way please do not hesitate to contact us and we will see what we can do. Keeping yourself busy helps, so now is the time you should be writing down all those stories of your time at sea whether it be war time experiences or the places you have visited and the people you have met onboard and ashore

CROSSED THE BAR

Sadly the following Members have Crossed the Bar since the last Newsletter

MR. MALCOLM MORT.

Malcolm died in October 2019. I had been trying to contact Malcolm for some time with little response. He lived in the Willie Seager Memorial Homes in Penylan Cardiff so I contacted them and they gave me the sad news.

Malcolm served at sea between 1967 and 1975 as a Third Engineer/Electrician. One of the ships he sailed on was the M.V. Chelsea Bridge. A report of one of his voyages was featured in the July 2018 edition of the Newsletter and can be found on the Swinging the Lantern page of our Website.



Malcolm was a strong supporter of MNA (Wales) at one time holding the post of Minutes Secretary and the honorary role as Welfare Officer. He was also a case worker for the Royal British Legion and an avid writer of letters to the newspapers.

MR. DAVID FARNHAM



David, who was the cousin of our shipmates Des Farnham, David Sheen and the late Horace Farnham, died in April 2020. Apparently he had an accident and was taken to hospital where he contracted the Coronavirus. David served at sea in the Engineering Department from 1977 to 1979 and again from 1984 to 1987. His funeral was held at Barry Crematorium on Tuesday the 5th May 2020. Sadly with the travel restrictions due to the Coronavirus Pandemic we were unable to attend. However, we arranged with our shipmates from Barry Branch for the coffin flag along with a Merchant Navy wreath to be delivered to the Funeral Director.

We will Remember them.

COLIN MANNINGS - FIRST TRIP

I was born in Wales, lived with my family in Teeside and undertook my sea training at Ingham Hall Norfolk in the Prince of Wales Sea Training School in 1940 where we watched the Battle of Britain.

My total career at sea spanned 11 years and I served in the North Atlantic, South Atlantic, Mediterranean and India.

On my first trip we nearly ran out of coal dodging the Bismarck following RN instruction. The trip ended badly when at 1740hrs on the 29th June 1941 the S.S. Rio Azul was torpedoed and sunk by the German submarine U-123 about 200 miles southeast of the Azores whilst on voyage from Pepel via Freetown to Middlesborough with a cargo of iron ore. She broke in two and sunk within a minute. The Master, 31 crew and one gunner were lost. The survivors, 6 crew and 3 gunners were picked up from rafts by HMS Esperance on the 14th July and taken to Scapa Flow, Orkneys. The following are extracts from the log of time on the rafts written up on HMS Esperance:



There was no opportunity to lower the lifeboats so we had to jump for it and hope to pick up one of the rafts. By nightfall 18 men had managed to climb onboard the 2 rafts. Shouting was heard but no other survivors could be found and rescued. One of the rafts was badly damaged and one of the supporting drums at one end had come adrift leaving a sloping surface. Food supplies consisted of a tin of molasses, tin of egg substitute and a tin of coca and one and three quarter gallons of fresh water. Flares and distress signals had been destroyed at the time the raft was launched. Tins of cigarettes and tobacco were salvaged but there were no matches. On the fourth day a ship was sighted but failed to see the signals from the rafts which included flashing of cigarette tins in the sun and the waving of a flag on an improvised pole. The first of the survivors died on July 11th followed by 6 more before we were rescued by HMS Esperance. One more died before reaching the Esperance



sick bay. Photograph taken from HMS Esperance shows the survivors about to be rescued. Without a doubt it was the flashing of the tobacco tins which drew the attention of the lookout on the Esperance and led to their rescue.

I had to leave the MN following the sinking as I developed Asthma which became worse after spending 15 days in the sea clinging to a raft. After some time in hospital I was given a 100% pension but this was reduced and later stopped, as I had not made myself available for further medical examinations. I had become bored being at home and had gone back to sea. I joined R. Ropner Co. as an apprentice.

I was in Malta in 1943 on S.S. Fort Cadotte when we were informed all ships in harbour had to get to sea as quickly as possible as the Italian fleet was making its way towards Malta. We were in Malta for repairs and the boiler was shut down which in a steamship means it takes hours to get sufficient steam up to move. Fortunately the Italian fleet surrendered before it reached Malta.

Whilst in Bari, again on S.S. Fort Cadotte, on the east coast of Italy, the Sam boat in front of us carrying a cargo of high explosives blew up. This shattered the harbour, which was out of commission for about three days and badly damaged the ship I was on and we had to go into dry dock in Alexandria and so we missed the second front.

Then we were sent to India.

RUSSIAN JUBILEE MEDAL 75 YEARS OF VICTORY



The Russian Government will be awarding the Jubilee Medal to Citizens of the Russian Federation and foreign nationals who served during World War Two, to commemorate the 75th Anniversary of the Victory in Europe. This will include veterans of the Arctic Convoys.

Sadly we now have only one member who took part in the “worst journey in the world” in the words of Prime Minister Winston Churchill, and that is Commodore Oliver Lindsay. We lost our other two members, Con Connelly and Bill Tuck, in November last year (2019).

In May 1941 Oliver sailed as an apprentice with the Reardon Smith Line of Cardiff. On the 2nd May 1942 his ship S.S. Botavon was sunk en route to Murmansk. He was one of the survivors and was taken to a transit camp where he remained until July 1942. They started distributing the medal on the 22nd April 2020 and I am delighted to inform you that Oliver has received his medal.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Regular meetings are normally held on the second Wednesday of every month at the Canton Liberal Club, Cowbridge Road East, Cardiff, commencing at 14.30. But due to the current “lock down” all meetings and events are cancelled until further notice. With luck we may be able to hold our Remembrance Service in November which is scheduled for Saturday 7th November at 1100.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS

The Membership Secretary reminds all members that subscriptions for the year 2020/2021 are now due. The annual subscription is £10.00. Please advise the Secretary (01443 815013) of any sickness or bereavement which may come to your notice.

MR, BRYAN FOLEY

It is with great sadness that I have to announce the death of Mr. Bryan Foley of Barry on Saturday 6th June 2020. Bryan was not one of our members but a greater supporter of the Merchant Navy, and the Merchant Navy Association (Wales) in particular, would be hard to find.



He had a varied career after leaving Barry Comprehensive School which included working as an Assistant Manager for H. Samuel, Mortgage Consultant for Mortgage Force and a Bus Driver for Cardiff Bus. He was a Group Scout Leader with the 11th Barry Sea Scout Group, Community First Responder, Heartstart instructor, a Committee Member of the Tall Ships Youth Trust and a member of the Royal British Legion Barry Branch Poppy Appeal committee, where he championed Merchant Navy interests. He was also our “go to man” if we wanted help. In June 2018 we supported our Barry Branch shipmates at the Armed Forces Day event at Barry Island. Bryan arranged for a gazebo, table and chairs to facilitate our MN display. In September the same year we arranged a trip to Swansea to support our Swansea shipmates at their Remembrance Service. Bryan not only arranged the transport he drove it as well. Nothing was ever too much trouble for him and his enthusiasm for everything he was involved in was tremendous. Not one to lie back and accept the status quo he was always looking for ways to improve the way things are done.

He carried the Barry Standard with pride and dignity at numerous events throughout his time with us, and fought the cause for recognition of Merchant Navy veterans not only in Barry but the wider community of Wales. He will be a great loss to the Merchant Navy (Wales), Barry Branch and the Barry community. As a tribute to Bryan the Barry Memorial Hall changed the lights on the Cenotaph to red, white and blue for the 8th to the 12 June. His light will shine brightly over Barry the town that he loved.

TO CHEER YOU UP AFTER ALL THAT SAD NEWS

A Highway patrolman pulled alongside a speeding car on the freeway..

Glancing at the car, he was astounded to see that the blonde behind the wheel was knitting!

Realising that she was oblivious to his flashing lights and siren, the trooper cranked down his window, turned on his bullhorn and yelled, "PULL OVER!"

"NO!" the blonde yelled back, "IT'S A SCARF!"

A Group of guys, all turning 40, discussed where they should meet for lunch.

Finally it was agreed that they would meet at Wetherspoon's in Cardiff because the waitresses had big breasts and wore mini-skirts.

Ten years later, at age 50, the friends once again discussed where they should meet for lunch. Finally it was agreed that they would meet at Wetherspoon's in Cardiff because the waitresses were attractive. The food and service was good and the beer selection was excellent.

Ten years later, at age 60, the friends again discussed where they should meet for lunch. Finally it was agreed that they would meet at Wetherspoon's in Cardiff because there was plenty of parking, they could dine in peace and quiet with no loud music, and it was good value for money.

Ten years later, at age 70, the friends discussed where they should meet for lunch. Finally it was agreed that they would meet at Wetherspoon's in Cardiff because the restaurant was wheelchair accessible and had a toilet for the disabled.

Ten years later, at age 80, the friends discussed where they should meet for lunch. Finally it was agreed that they would meet at Wetherspoon's in Cardiff because they had never been there before.

Morris, an 82-year-old man, went to the doctor to get a physical.

A few days later, the doctor saw Morris walking down the street with a gorgeous young woman on his arm.

A couple of days later, the doctor spoke to Morris and said, 'You're really doing great, aren't you?'

Morris replied, 'Just doing what you said, Doc: 'Get a hot mamma and be cheerful.'

The doctor said, 'I didn't say that. I said, 'You've got a heart murmur; be careful.'