



GUARDIAN ENSIGN

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NEWSLETTER OF THE FEDERATION OF NAVAL ASSOCIATIONS

by **Robbie Robson**

That's one more year come and gone and here we are into 2015. It is not too far into the future and another AGM weekend is nigh, which, as has been promulgated, is on 8-11th May at the Grand Burstin, Folkstone. There was a short period of two weeks last year when the use of the Hotel for the boarding of immigrants was in the news. This, as said, was for those mere two weeks only and that situation is well and truly in the past and done with. It is assured that it is most certainly not the cast now, nor will it be, most certainly, whilst we are there. Point being here is that if anyone has held back from booking due to the aforesaid possibility of a repeat of such a happening I put my own assurance that it will not be so. Anyone requiring booking forms contact Brian or me. Simple fact of the matter is that we have a good deal of a 3-night weekend at £96 pp, which is extremely commensurate in light of some prices being paid for similar weekends.

Next and very important to me is that there are a number of Associations who are seriously considering winding up their organisations this year and promulgating the fact that this year will be their last reunion. Reasons for this are usually that there is now no-one to do the organisation of either a reunion, or the Association. This may be due to varied causes such as age, lack of members, ill health, or just no-one with the knowledge or ability to carry out such tasks. It must be stressed that there is help available in this situation and all that is required is that organisations in said situation contact the FNA and ask. Short word ask, but much can be and is achieved with it. If anyone is a member, or knows someone who is, of such an organisation/association in this situation and would like/prefer it to possibly live on, please get in touch, as it is what the FNA is for.

CONA appears to be doing very well and going ahead with a fairly good head of steam, or should I say, with turbines running smoothly, or whatever it is that turbines do. The website is now well established and on that point I would take the opportunity to raise the awareness of our own FNA website, which is undergoing the process of a revamp and updating. This, I am assured will be quite soon. The web address will NOT change and all will be alerted through the GE, or other medium, when necessary. Back to CONA and the rather important point of funding the organisation has been debated, as without funds in any situation you actually go nowhere. Personally I see no problem with all member associations paying a subscription payment, which is after all the norm in such organisations. Fact is we cannot continually ask for hand-outs from here or there. However, my own opinion and it is for associations themselves to decide the way to proceed.

Most important point of all this is that associations are heading on the right course and at last beginning to make what appears to be an extremely good attempt at working together. Exactly what the FNA has been working at since 1991.

Last, but definitely not least, I would like to again request that those who receive a copy of the Guardian Ensign please pass it on to your Members, as that is what it is for. If a copy is required by email Brian, MemSec and Ed will be most happy to comply with your wishes.

Next Council Meeting - 18th April 2015 at Manvers Arms, Edwinstowe, Notts.

***See our Website at
www.f-n-a.co.uk***

Input is needed from members for items to go into the Newsletter.
Let's have reports from Associations or Ships Company Members.

Project MTGB 718 'Easyfundraising'

My fellow members of the FNA, please find enclosed in this issue of the Guardian Ensign a leaflet regarding 'Easyfundraising', and how you as individual members and Associations can support Project MTGB718 for free!!

All you have to do is follow the instructions on the leaflet and then every time you or your good lady shops online the company that you purchase your goods from will make a donation to the project. So, as you can see, it's easy and it costs you nothing - how good is that!!

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Federation Council and Mr Brian Joy for allowing this leaflet to be included.

Regards,
Malcolm Tattersall
Project MTGB718 Committee Member

CLANDESTINE OPERATIONS MTB718 by permission of the Coastal Forces Heritage Trust

The scene was set in Issue 13 of the Newsletter which described the extensive involvement of Coastal Forces in clandestine operations and the methods and difficulties associated with these important operations. Although many vessels became involved in these very dangerous activities throughout the war, one particular flotilla was dedicated to this task, that being the 15th MGB flotilla. Initially formed at Dartmouth in February 1944 and working within Naval Intelligence under the Deputy Director Operations Division (Irregular), the flotilla also operated from Lerwick for operations to the Norwegian coast.

The flotilla comprised MGBs 502 (Senior Officer), 503, 318 and 718, with MASB36. MGB718's first clandestine venture, "Operation Scarf" took place from Dartmouth and was to establish the pattern for many others. These accounts are taken from the personal memories of the late Charles Milner, her Leading Telegraphist throughout her wartime commission.



The ships company of MTB718, showing L/Tel Charles Milner (front row far left) and the officers, from left to right, Sub Lt. Alan Wale (Nav), Lt. Ronnie Seddon (CO), and Lt. Guy Hamilton (First Lt). Alan Wale had replaced John Townsend late in the commission.

OPERATION SCARF

On 15 April MGB718, in company with and under the command of the Senior Officer, Lt. Cdr. Peter Williams RNVR in MGB502, sailed for Beg-an-Fry, north-east of Morlaix on the French coast. MGB502 carried six SOE agents while 718 carried the baggage. Most importantly, the boats were complemented with a specialist navigator Lt. M P Salmond RNR. A 20:00 departure from Dartmouth at 20 knots put the group at Les Bouf rocks off Beg-an-Fry by 01:53. A reduced speed and reduced noise were obviously essential as they approached an anchor point three-quarters of a mile offshore. Six surf boats left for the "pin-point" ashore with the agents and baggage, which were put safely in the hands of the "Var" resistance organisation. On the return the surf boats had embarked six men, three women and one small boy. Amongst the escapees was Erwin Deman, in charge of the SOE VAR line, responsible for evacuating agents and Allied airmen. Two of the ladies were Suzanne Warengem and Blanche Charlet, both SOE agents who had escaped from the infamous Castres prison where the Germans held hostages from whom they would select a number to be executed as reprisals for attacks on their forces. With a departure at 03:36 enemy LCTs or gun-coasters were unfortunately sighted visually and attempts to confuse them failed

which resulted in a burst of enemy fire. The clandestine force did not respond, continuing to act "friendly" and made a stealthy retreat. Able Seaman William Sandalls was badly hurt by the enemy fire and died almost immediately. The two boats arrived back in Dartmouth at 08:45 thus ending MGB718s first clandestine venture. The crew now had a certain knowledge that their work was a dangerous business which relied on a combination of great professional skill and even greater good luck. Nevertheless, the operation was typical of many more to come, each with its own individual degree of danger and action.

OPERATION CYGNUS

In May 1944 MTB718s first venture to the Norwegian coast occurred shortly after Operation Scarf and, once again, it was typical of several others which were to follow. First MTB718 had to undertake the lengthy journey from Dartmouth to Lerwick in the Shetlands, a journey of 850 miles via Holyhead and Oban, with the officers on board recording only two and a half hours sleep per night during the three day voyage. Their passage through the Caledonian Canal was slightly impeded by the resident Scottish lock keeper who refused to allow a transit during night hours, despite the necessities of war, and who made the boat wait until 05:00 the next day. The journey then continued to Inverness and Lerwick.

Once again MTB718 was to carry the specialist Navigating Officer, Lt. Salmond, who had served them so well on Operation Scarf, and on this occasion they carried a Norwegian party including a Lieutenant (Interpreter), Petty Officer (Pilot), and four ratings from the Norwegian MFV Flotilla at Peterhead to act as surf-boat crews. Due to the long distance to be covered a deck cargo of 1000 gallons of 100 octane petrol would be carried in 4-gallon jerry-cans.

An 18 knot passage in rain and with constant fuel management problems eventually brought MTB718 to its destination off Batalden on the Norwegian coast. In those latitudes in May there is no darkness and it was only fog that gave the boat cover from the sight of the enemy. One can only envisage the navigational difficulties around the rocks, inlets, islands and fjords of the Norwegian coast, as shown in the picture of that section of the Norwegian coast. Their Norwegian Petty Officer pilot, Ole Hovden, a fisherman from a nearby island, proved his worth in keeping the boat both safe and in the right place. Their rendezvous with a small motor boat carrying two agents and a family of nine was successful, the motor-boat was holed and sunk and MTB718 made its departure. The two SIS agents, Dagfinn Ulriksen and Ivar Moller, had operated a radio link from Skorpa, which had become compromised. The family were that of Saron Karstensen, the Postmaster on the island of Fanoy, whose support for Norwegian resistance had put them in a dangerous position.

Operations Scarf and Cygnus were the first for MTB718 and, although typical of this clandestine activity, they were to be followed by several more dangerous and eventful episodes of which we hope to write in future Newsletters.

NORWEGIAN OPERATIONS

The Trust was recently contacted by Johan Aakre, who is the son of a former Norwegian SOE agent, and who knew three of the SIS agents that MGB718 was subsequently to pick up at Egersund in 1945. He is providing valuable historical information. He is also in possession of film and pictures obtained after the war from the office of the German Harbour Captain at Egersund. Some of these are shown in this article. MTB718 had several drop-off and pick-up points in the Egersund area and Johan Aakre has identified one of the caves used for

hiding agents. This is described as a magnificent cathedral type place and it was used by four agents who were picked up by Lt. Guy Hamilton in MTB718. Johan Aakre has proposed that a joint effort should be made to establish a memorial on that site and the Trust is actively liaising on this proposal.

The 'Virtual Branch' weekly telephone conference call scheme, which is sponsored by Seafarers UK (SFUK), has now been extended to cover all CONA members. The scheme which has been running successfully within the RNA for the last two years, enables house-bound shipmates to discuss/spin dits, debate issues with like-minded people.

The RNA Welfare Advisor Rita Lock explains how it works.....

Once a group have been formed then the following takes place and only varies over the Christmas period.

Every two weeks at a set time everyone in the group receives a phone call which links them to the others in their group and they have one hour of conversation among themselves **free of charge**.

This is managed by Chris Rankin as a link for all Seafarers. There must be many interesting 'Dits' from civilian life as well as the Services.

For anyone who wishes to join all that is needed is their name/address/phone number and email if available. It is also a help to know which Branch of the RN they served in to link them with like-minded folk, and if they have a nickname they prefer to be known by. Then they will receive a phone call to discuss which day/time group they want to be in.



Dear Shipmates

I must apologise for the delay in publishing the newsletter. This is due to the fact that I have been in hospital again and I am just getting back on my feet, so please excuse me for the delay

Yours, Ed

Let There Be No Moaning at the Bar

Old sailors sit
And chew the fat
About things that used to be,
Of the things they've seen,
The places they've been,
When they ventured out to sea.

They talked of the scran
The chef would make
And the shrill of the bos'n pipe.
How salt spray would fall
Like sparks from hell
When a storm struck in the night.

They remembered friends
From long ago,
The times they had back then,
The money they spent,
The beer they drank,
In their days as sailing men.

They remember old shipmates
Already gone
Who forever hold a spot in their heart,
When sailors were bold,
And friendships would hold,
Until death ripped them apart.

Their lives are lived
In the days gone by
With the thoughts that forever last.
Of the bell bottom blues,
Round white hats,
And good times in their past.

They speak of nights
Spent in bawdy houses
On many a foreign shore,
Of the beer they'd down
As gathering around,
Telling jokes with a busty whore.

They recall long nights
With the moon so bright
Far out into the lonely sea.
The thoughts they had
As youthful lads,
When their lives were wild and free.

Their sailing days
Are gone away,
Never again will they cross the brow.
They have no regrets,
They know they are blessed,
For honouring the sacred vow.

They know so well
How their hearts would swell
When the flag fluttered proud and free.
The underway pennant
Such a beautiful sight
As they ploughed through an angry sea.

Their numbers grow less
With each passing day
As the final muster begins,
There's nothing to lose,
All have paid their dues
And they'll sail with shipmates again.

I've heard them say
Before getting underway
That there's still some sailing to do,
They'll say with a grin that their ship has come in,
And the Good Lord is commanding the crew.

Issue: Former forces to get help with housing and New veterans' helpline number

Summary: Thousands of veterans are set to benefit from £40 million of funding for nationwide housing projects. Ex-armed forces personnel in need of housing will be able to benefit from funding for life-changing accommodation initiatives across the country, Defence Minister Anna Soubry has announced yesterday, 4 February. The new funding, guaranteed through LI-BOR (London Interbank Offered Rate) fines imposed on banks, has doubled the total amount the government has given to armed forces' and veterans' charities through this scheme, which is part of the nation's commitment to the armed forces covenant.

Veteran's helpline: Yesterday also saw the launch of the new veterans' helpline number to ensure that veterans facing any housing difficulties will be able to seek help at any time. The new number, 0808 1914 2 18, has been improved to become more memorable for veterans, with extended operating hours to provide support for any callers in crisis. At the same time, the Veterans UK helpline has extended its opening hours from 0730 to 18:30 on working days, but to 1700 on Fridays. In addition to the extended working hours the Veterans UK helpline now also has an out-of-hour's option to connect callers in urgent need to either the Combat Stress or Samaritans' 24hr helplines. The new number is free to call from landline phones and MOD is working with industry to make the new number also free to call from mobile phones, it is hoped this agreement will be in place by the summer.

The Veterans' UK helpline has operated very successfully for many years, predominantly supporting queries around pensions and compensation claims, but the helpline also helps signpost people to other parts of government or the charitable sector for help where appropriate.

Hi Shipmates

This is a request to those shipmates and associations who pay by Standing Order. Some of you have not updated your standing orders since the membership fees went up.

The fees are:

Associations £15

Ship's Company members £8

For those that have already updated their records I thank you
For the other members, would you please update your records

Thanks, Treasurer

HMS ARETHUSA ASSOCIATION 27th and Final reunion to be held at The Melbourne Ardenlea Hotel, Shanklin, Isle of Wight, on the weekend of 2nd to 5th October 2015. All former serving members of this ship and Association and families/guests welcome. For further information contact - Tom Sawyer, 6 Sycamore Close, Slingsby, York YO62 4BG. Telephone 01653 628171. Email: rolandsawyer3@sky.com



H.M.S CRANE (1943-62) U23/F123

Reunion/A.G.M. at the

GATEWAY HOTEL NOTTINGHAM

Friday 18th - Sunday 20th September 2015

Contact Tony Nuttall 0115 9526363 or cranebird@btinternet.com for details



HMS Newcastle Association

2015 Reunion & AGM

Aztec Hotel, Bristol

Friday 11th Sept to Monday 14th Sept 2015

FURTHER DETAILS FROM Shirley Winn

IOW Tours Ltd, 3 New Road, Lake, Sandown, IOW, PO36 9JN

Tel: 01983 405116 Email: enquiries@iowtours.com



RNEBA AGM & Reunion Weekend

Friday 27th to Monday 30th Nov 2015

Royal Beach Hotel, Southsea

Contact: Shirley Winn

IOW Tours Ltd, 3 New Road, Lake, Sandown, IOW, PO36 9JN

Tel: 01983 405116 Email: enquiries@iowtours.com



REGULATING & RNPA

Reunion Weekend

Friday 2nd and Saturday 3rd October 2015



HMS St Vincent Association AGM & Reunion Dinner

Saturday 3rd October 2015

The AGM will be held at St Vincent College
and the Reunion Dinner at

The Royal Beach Hotel, Southsea

Reunion Weekend Friday 2nd to Monday 5th October 2015

Email: Suke1202@hotmail.co.uk



HMS Llandaff 15th Reunion 2015

To be held at The Esplanade Hotel, Scarborough
9th - 12th October

Contact: Slinger Wood for details
Tel: 07961 124459 or email: kevin.wood@blueyonder.co.uk



Survey Ships Association

AGM & Reunion Weekend

4* Menzies Mickleover Court Hotel, Derby
Friday 23rd Oct to Monday 26th Oct 2015
Packages include half board ensuite accommodation and
Gala Dinner on Saturday night with Wine Reception and
Live Entertainment. Full use of leisure facilities & indoor pool

3 nights - £189; 2 nights - £139; 1 night - £79
Gala Night Dinner only - £30

Details: Tel: 023 9232 4795 Email: secretary@surveyships.org.uk
Website: <http://www.surveyships.org.uk>



Royal Naval Writers Association (RNWA)

128th Reunion Dinner 9th October 2015

Best Western Royal Beach Hotel
St Helen's Parade, Southsea, PO4 0RN

For information and details see www.rnwa.co.uk
or contact the RNWA Secretary

MINESWEEPER CRESTS

Anyone interested in Minesweeper Crests

Contact: Dave Poyser

76 Mansfield Road, Edwinstowe, NG21 9NH
Tel: 01623 822079 Email: davepoyser@supanet.com

FEDERATION COUNCIL

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