



Amethyst
Association

Newsletter Date
03.10.2014



HMS

Amethyst Association

Welcome

Welcome to the 65th Anniversary Newsletter. Articles, photos and news from any members or non members would be very welcome, please email them to myself at the email address below. I hope you enjoy this newsletter.

Gilly

gillianoreilly@icloud.com

President's Letter

My daughter, Gillian has agreed to take on the Newsletter, and this is her first edition. I am most grateful to her for taking on this task.

The Portsmouth Reunion was a great success thanks to the careful arrangements of Trudy and Eric. It was great that Admiral Sir Michael Moore was able to join us, and his comments were much appreciated by us all. Sadly when I got back to Northwood, Eve had a fall and broke her leg. I am now rapidly learning the skills of a carer!!



Eve and I have had visits from both Sons and two Grand-daughters living in New Zealand; it was lovely to see them all and we were envious of their wonderful New Zealand summer.

Unfortunately one of the NZ visits clashed with TS AMETHYST Annual General Meeting so I was unable to attend, but the minutes show the unit is in fine fettle.

We look forward to seeing some of you at our next reunion. Thanks to Eric and Trudy for keeping things ticking

over.

Good Luck and Best Wishes to you all

Stewart Hett

Lt. Cdr, Stewart Hett MBE RN Retd

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Maritimequest Website

www.maritimequest.com

Database of naval ships and history

The West Orchards shopping Centre in Coventry has a World War 1 display including pictures of The fifth HMS Amethyst. She was operating in WW1. Also a picture of our Amethyst. On display until the 9th November.



Ord Sea David Thomas, killed on 20th April 1949 with Mr McCarthy who attended the NMA service

National Memorial Arboretum

The association made one official visit to the National memorial Arboretum near Lichfield on 27th April 2014 to mark the 65th anniversary of the casualties. We set out fully kitted out in Oilskins, Souwesters and Sea boots expecting a cold, wet and windy Act of remembrance at the Yangtze Grove and the Armed Force Memorial. But we got it wrong and the sun shone for a lovely spring morning at our Grove.

We all met in the Visitors Centre and renewed acquaintances over a cup of coffee. It was great to meet Mr and Mrs McCarthy. Mr McCarthy is the nephew of Ord Sea David Thomas, one of our casualties in 1949. We moved to the Chapel for the Service of Remembrance conducted by the Rev John Oliver. Neil Skinner, the son of our Captain, Lieutenant Commander Bernard Skinner, read the lesson.



Veterans at the national memorial 27th April 2014

There was brilliant sunshine for our walk to the Yangtze Grove. The Grove was in excellent condition; we all collected inside and outside the hedge of 46 shrubs, one for each of the men who lost their lives in April 1949. Ship by ship we read out the Rolls of Honour, followed by the laying of four poppy wreaths around the foot of the Memorial. We had a Royal Marine Bugler in full No1 dress, much to the pleasure of John Parker an ex Marine himself, who played the Last Post followed by 2 minutes silence and then the Reveille.

We then moved to the Armed Forces Memorial where we laid a "Four Ships" Poppy wreath under the names of the Yangtze Incident Casualties. Thus ended a very moving and appropriate event to remember our lost shipmates.



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Schoolgirl's Poem for Simon unveiled at HMS Collingwood

A school girl from Dulwich had a very special day when she visited HMS Collingwood, Fareham, Hampshire to witness the new home of the poem she wrote at school as part of a WWII project about Simon the cat who was awarded the Dickin medal, the animal equivalent of the Victoria Cross.

The school, Dulwich Hamlet, sent the poem on to the PDSA who in turn forwarded it to Lieutenant Commander Stewart Hett (Royal Navy, retired), who served on HMS Amethyst, Simon's ship. As a member of the Amethyst Association Stewart knew that HMS Collingwood has a foyer dedicated to the Yangtze incident, of which Simon was part, within its Navigation Training Unit and sent the poem to the Commanding Officer, Captain Steve Dainton CBE, the rest as they say is history.

Visiting HMS Collingwood with her parents, Ria was very happy to see the poem taking pride of place beside 'Simon', she said "I wrote the poem as part of a school project, I enjoyed researching Simon and writing it. I can't believe it's here on the wall!"

Welcoming Ria and her family to HMS Collingwood Captain Dainton said "I've been coming in to this building for many years and I can tell you that every ship's Captain also comes through this building and will read your poem. Well done you, I think this is a wonderful story." Ria and her family were also given the VIP treatment in the Navigation Training Unit's Bridge Simulator, learning how to navigate warships into harbour in all kinds of weather and sea conditions, as the photographs show.

Lieutenant Commander Hett, who also attended the event, was serving on the Amethyst as a young Lieutenant at the time of the Yangtze Incident, and was subsequently appointed Cat Officer dealing with all the letters Simon received when news broke of his Peoples' Dispensary for Sick Animals (PDSA) Dickin Medal award. "I remember Simon well," he recalled, "he began his time on Amethyst as the Captain's cat but soon became a companion to everyone. Simon was a comforting reminder of home when home seemed so very far away."



Poem for Simon the Cat

A sailor's cat
Sailing across the dark amethyst sea
Injured for one hundred days, that's
me
Hunting rats without a care
Breathing in the mild sea air
My name is Simon the cat you see
Everybody loves...who?...me?

I'm the ship's mascot
We are going to fight
All through the day and all through
the night
The sailors are frightened
They are missing home
I'm here to make them feel less alone
I'm an animal at war
I have no choice
I'm a silent hero
Hear my voice

Amethyst Ship

HMS Amethyst was a Modified Black Swan-class sloop of the Royal Navy. She was laid down by Alexander Stephen and Sons of Linthouse, Govan Scotland on 25 March 1942, launched on 7 May 1943 and commissioned on 2 November 1943, with the pennant number U16. After World War II she was modified and redesignated as a frigate, and renumbered F116.

www.maritimequest.com



HMS COLLINGWOOD Ceremonial Divisions By Stewart Hett

Stewart Hett and Ray Kitto were invited to attend Ceremonial Divisions at HMS COLLINGWOOD in 2013. After coffee, we were bused to the parade ground and seated in the VIP enclosure. The Reviewing Officer was the First Sea Lord, Admiral Sir George Zambellas. The smart parade, with the Guard led in by the Royal Marine Band, was a happy reminder of our days in the Service. After the Inspection the Guard gave a wonderful precision drill display carried out without any orders. Next there was a Prize presentation; as a Navigation Officer I was interested to see that the Navigation Prize went to a young Lady Officer!! Divisions then marched past and we were taken back to the Wardroom for lunch. John Parker, HMS LONDON Association, with his brother, was one of the guests. It was great to chat with him about Yangtze Incident matters.

Shipmates

The Yangtze River dead stay shipmates of our youth,

While others, like us, knew the passing of the years.

Loyal and steadfast, we are one ship's company

In the comradeship of life and faith that conquers death.

Remembrance Day 2013

Remembrance Sunday at the cenotaph was well supported by shipmates of the four ships.

Luckily the sun shone. A wreath was laid on behalf of the four ships.



March past the cenotaph. L - R Ron Hopkins, Mick Goddard, John Dibdin, Ray Kitto, Dennis Knibbs, Pete Barton-Price, Lt Cmd Stewart Hett, John Dunstan, Ian Noakes, Jacqueline Knibbs, Tony James, Tony Coughlan, Kevin Knibbs, Tim Hubbard and Stephen Gilkes

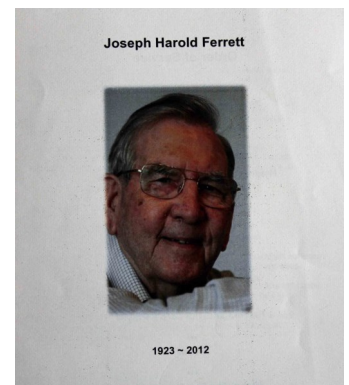
"Have rejoined the fleet south of Woosung ... No damage... No casualties...God save the King!"

Crossed the Bar.....

Sadly we have some shipmates who have crossed the bar.

Recent deaths

Stephanie Kerans	29 Oct 2011
Charles Williams	31 Jan 2012
Joe Ferret	27 Feb 2012
William Garfitt	7 May 2012
John Eilbeck	Nov 2012
Norman Stapleton	28 Dec 2012
Bert Pearce	21 Nov 2013
Bob Stone	26 March 2014
Charlie Chivers	14 April 2014



The Portsmouth Reunion September 2013



Once again Trudy and Eric organised a splendid Reunion at the Royal Maritime Club (the Old Fleet Club) in Portsmouth. Around 60 of us met up on Friday afternoon and settled in to our well furnished rooms. A running supper was served in the restaurant and afterwards we retired to the bar to reminisce about old times and old friends.



On Saturday morning we all gathered together for the Annual General meeting at which we discussed the Association arrangements and future Reunions.

Portsmouth Historic Dockyard was close to the Club, so there was no need to organise a special trip and many of us enjoyed seeing HMS VICTORY and the amazing work that has been done to restore the Mary Rose.



In the evening we had our formal dinner. We were honoured that Admiral sir Michael Moore and his wife were able to join us for the evening. Just before the dinner gong sounded John Edwards arrived with his wonderful array of models. There were models of HM Ships AMETHYST, CONSORT, and BLACK SWAN and his work in progress on a larger model of AMETHYST, which were all put on display in our dining room. John gave us a short talk during the evening on his work on these models. The Maritime Club gave us an excellent dinner and the evening was much appreciated by us all.



On Sunday morning we held our regular Church Service and we were joined by John Parker, the President of the HMS LONDON Association. John brought with him the Yangtze Incident Memorial Book which is kept in St Anne's, the Naval Base Church. During the Service the AMETHYST Roll of Honour was read.

After Church we all dispersed after a thoroughly satisfying weekend.



Plymouth Reunion 2014

Trudy and Eric organised a well supported September Reunion at the Copthorne Hotel in the centre of Plymouth. The weekend followed our normal routine with a supper on Friday, the AGM on Saturday morning and the formal dinner in the evening. On Sunday we had our traditional Church Service at which the Roll of Honour was read. Thus ended a weekend much enjoyed by all.



Yangtze Incident, April 20th 1949

This is a personal account and recollection of Bob Stone during the 'incident', written just before he died.

Whilst serving as a telegraphist on HMS Amethyst in the Yangtze river en route from Shanghai to the British embassy in Nanking some 200 miles. Whilst underway, at 08:30 am the ship came under fire from shore batteries of the communist forces massed on our starboard side.

Full details of the events that followed during that day are detailed in full elsewhere, and as a result of saving any further injuries the order was given to "abandon ship" see comment at the end with the idea to return to the ship when enemy bombardment next ceased. The ship being stuck on a sandbank some distance from the main river bank at a place called 'Rose Island'. I was one of many who obeyed the order and consequently jumped into the river and swam to the mainland a fairly short distance, together with wounded personnel in the launches available. All the time the firing continued but now also as the swimmers making for the main bank who numbered about 70. Having got over the river bank it was a case of keeping your head down whilst crawling further inland. Hostile firing was still on, whether at survivors on the bank or shells that had overshot the ship.



From where I joined others we could see nationalist soldiers on the main bank across an inlet. They were waving at us but out of ear-shot.

A Chinese mess boy, who had joined us offered to swim over to the soldiers which he did. On his return, by boat he informed us that the area we were in was in fact mined and had with him someone who could guide us which he did. It was now getting on in the day so stayed where we were to wait further instructions. After a while the destroyer HMS Consort appeared from the direction of Nanking. This was the ship we were on our way to relieve. As she reached Amethyst the gunfire was directed at her with which Consort replied in kind. This was in full view of us survivors and was in real life (?). After 3 runs/turns? By Consort, still under fire, it was decided for her to proceed to Shanghai and call a halt to the action. Amethyst was now completely at the mercy of the communist force with many of her crew ashore. After consultation with the Nationalist soldiers it was decided not to attempt to return to the ship but make our way, with the wounded, to the nearest railway station hoping to make it to Shanghai. Later in the day we commenced to walk as far as we could to pick up some Query deleted transport of a kind. I remember arriving at a village during the night where we rested and got into some army tractor and went on our way to a nearby railway station. After a discussion it was arranged for coaches to be attached to the last train for Shanghai. By this time an American doctor had arrived with medical material and made the wounded as comfortable as possible both at the station and on the train to Shanghai. That train journey is a distant memory and I can only assume I slept most of the way. On arrival at Shanghai we were taken over by American Navy and were met by the worlds press and newsreels. No great problems apparent on the journey but we looked a sorry sight with some wearing Chinese army coats and trousers. Then it was onto the British Embassy where we were allocated to various families for a break and most of all wash away the Chinese river residue on our clothes. I eventually finished up with a member of Barclays bank, or was it Shell oil. I remember it was a weekend and we went to a burial service the following day at the cathedral for crew members of other naval ships involved. After a weekend off I left my hosts and reported to HMS London for issue of emergency kit etc. and assisted the overworked communications staff whilst repairs were carried out.

When the ship left for Hong Kong I was transferred to HMS Black Swan and a short time later onto HMS Belfast which took me to Hong Kong. I was then drafted to MFV 1156 9naval) to work as anti-pirate patrol around the island. I remained there until the Amethyst made her escape and I re-joined my ship for dockyard repair and the journey back to Plymouth, arriving 1st November 1949, and on to two months leave, with an order we would have to go to London for three days to attend a variety of 'Welcome Home' functions. First of all though was a march through Plymouth. The visit to London was a variety of functions of marching through London, lunch at the Guildhall, march from horse guards parade to be inspected by the king at Buckingham Palace, a gold dinner at Dorchester hotel and free entry to various pleasure shows.

Amethyst Association



Please can you let Ray Kitto have next of kin contact details Tel: 01784259584

Committee and Officers

President	Stewart Hett	019238 27132	stewarthett@gmail.com
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Other members	Andy Maynard		
	John Roberts		



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Membership

The subscription fee for membership is £7.00 (widows £4.00), although many members send more than this as the membership fees are our major source of funds. Subscription for the year are due in January. Any fees or donations should be sent to Trudy, our secretary and treasurer.

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We also welcome new membership and attendance at the reunions. Look forward to seeing you next time!