



Amethyst Association Newsletter

May 2019

President's Letter

Dear Shipmates and Members of the Association

Several of us were able to enjoy a splendid Gala Dinner organised by the LONDON Association as a prelude to a Commemoration of the 70th Anniversary of the Yangtze Incident at the National Memorial Arboretum. This was followed by HMS COLLINGWOOD's tribute to the 70th Anniversary. Both events described in more detail later in this letter.

The Royal Navy Association is planning a small event in Oxted/Tandridge to Celebrate the Escape of AMETHYST, and then we have the September Reunion. I hope we will see as many of you as possible at these events.

Eve joins me in sending you all our Best Wishes.

Stewart Hett (President)

Crossed the Bar

It is with great sadness that we announce the following deaths

Maureen Calcott, wife of Ray Calcott died on the 3rd December 2018. Maureen regularly attended the association reunions.

Douglas Baker, husband of Joyce died on the 10th December 2018. Douglas was a veteran of the Korean War and served on Amethyst between 1951-1953 and regularly attended the association reunions.

Gordon Wright, veteran of the Yangtze Incident died on the 11th March 2019 peacefully at Consort nursing home in Plymouth with all his loved ones around him. Gordon and May regularly attended the Amethyst Association reunions.

Peter Jones of Wallasey died in March 2019. He served on HMS Amethyst during the Yangtze incident.

HMS London Association Reunion April 2019

The Amethyst Association were invited to join the London Association at the Lea Marston Hotel for their Gala dinner on Saturday 27th April. It was a wonderful get together, with a sumptuous cake provided by Ashley Walking, daughter of London Yangtze veteran, Tom Pettman.







70th Anniversary Commemoration at the NMA April 2019

A Memorial Church Service was held on Sunday 28th April 2019 at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire, followed by a ceremony at The Grove. A group lunch for HMS Amethyst friends and association members was enjoyed afterwards at the NMA. Mick Astle brought along his wonderful model of HMS Amethyst to show us.







70th Anniversary Commemoration of the Yangtze Incident, 2nd May at HMS Collingwood, the Navigation Training Unit, 2nd May 2019

HMS COLLINGWOOD invited 25 veteran and their families to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the Yangtze Incident on Thursday 2 May 2019. The programme for the day included a lecture Dr Duncan Redford on the Yangtze Incident (brave man in front of Stewart and Ray, Stewarts only correction was the records and codes were destroyed on the afternoon nt the morning of the 21st); a remembrance Service in the Church of St George with St Gabriel; lunch in the Wardroom and a tour of the bridge simulator. We were honoured by the presence of Vice Admiral Jerry Kyd, Fleet Commander.

Our visit to HMS COLLINGWOOD – By Bill Evershed

Of course the Bridge Simulator with its AMETHYST, CONSORT, LONDON and BLACK SWAN names must be the tour de force of any visit to COLLINGWOOD. Here 70 years can be swept away in a nostalgic instant as ex-RN-ers can so vividly recall countless RASs and VertReps in many oceans and yet again proceed to sea from Portsmouth Harbour as they did so many times in their careers. Last time the ship ‘rolled’ and we were suddenly blanked in fog or operating at night but this time it was a more sedate presentation, as perhaps befits our great age, but with superb explanatory commentaries.

The Museum in the Foyer is no less evocative for us and it still seems curious, considering the really varied history of the RN since 1949 that this one Incident and the lessons learnt (or more re-learnt) from it take such a prominent place in today’s navigational teaching.



The Service in the Chapel was very poignant. The COLLINGWOOD Chapel that I remember was a Nissen hut near the Main Gate! The Padre had obviously taken inspiration from the Service of Thanksgiving held in St Martin-in-the-Fields in November 1949. The Lesson, from Corinthians XII.12, and it is a difficult one to read, must surely offer the best description in the Bible of the constitution of a Ship's Company, which the Padre recognised. How good to hear the pre-1928 version of the Lord's Prayer; and the Naval Prayer. In our days the Naval Prayer was said every day and we all knew it by heart. I remember saying it at the bedside of dear Len Williams (AMETHYST's 'Chief') and to other RN colleagues: I hope some kind person does so for me.

I personally found the lecture rather disappointing. The lecturer seemed pre-occupied with the mid-c19th Opium Wars. Their effect might have held as late as the 1920s but from the 1930s onwards China was focussed upon the brutal atrocities meted out to its citizens following the Japanese invasion in 1933. And this persisted throughout the c20th and, from family experience, persists today. I sensed that the Lecturer belongs to the school of Colonial apologists. The Fleet Commander's perceptive question as to whether the Fleet that the lecturer described for 1949 was recognised by Stewart Hett was rejected: and it would have been rejected by me for the Navy I joined 4 years later. The Yangtze Incident with all its political background and implications thrives on its own merits and, if the young Sub Lieutenants present were to be inspired, these merits could, in my opinion, have been more vibrant, better honed and polished.

I wonder what the Course of young Sub Lieutenants actually made of it all? In a parallel of timescale, it was as if two or three nonagenarians who had survived the collision between the VICTORIA and the CAMPERDOWN in 1893 had visited us at the RNC Greenwich in 1957. What might we have learnt from them? At that age we belonged to tomorrow's Navy not yesterday's. And yet there are so many useful lessons from history.

We were all so warmly and efficiently welcomed: no passport inspections! We must have all looked the part. And what a superb spread COLLINGWOOD provided for us all for lunch in the Wardroom.

A truly memorable Day and a fine tribute to those who participated in the tragic and yet many heroic events that befell them in the Spring and Summer of 1949.

I shall be sending a copy of the article I wrote for the NR about the 'Amethyst Story' to the Captain for him to give, I thought, to the Sub Lieutenant who read the Lesson and she can then read it, pass it on to her colleagues who were present, or ditch it, as she wishes!

And somewhere in the course of all yesterday's excitement I lost my AMETHYST Association Badge, but not my membership of the Association!

Bill Evershed







70th Anniversary of the Escape, Commemoration at St Peter's Church

St Peter's Church, Tandridge have been in touch to say that St Peter's Church will be holding a service in remembrance of Cdr Kerans who is buried in the Churchyard, and other members of the ship's complement who contributed to this historic event. The date of the Service has yet to be confirmed and I will send a 'save the date' when I have more details.

HMS Amethyst Association Reunion 13-15th September 2019

We have a venue and date for the 2019 Amethyst Association Reunion, sadly this will be the last.

WHEN Friday 13th - Sunday 15th September 2019.

WHERE Crowne Plaza Plymouth, Armada Way, Plymouth PL1 2HJ

BOOKING Ring direct to book a reservation 01752639988, mention Amethyst Association

RATE £127 per room per night bed and breakfast (no discount for single occupancy); twin beds £10 extra. £30 per person for the Gala Meal. The Friday night meal will be in the restaurant from the menu. Parking is £7 per day. Looking forward to seeing you there.



Cenotaph Parade November 2019

Ian Noakes, chair of HMS London Association, is again co-ordinating The Four Ships Yangtze Incident contingent's application for tickets to this year's Cenotaph Parade. Security is high and the following information is now required for all applicants. Those wishing to apply for tickets to represent The Four Ships contact Gilly O'Reilly gillianor@icloud.com

Article about Simon

Simon the Cat starred in an article in The Times newspaper on April 19th 2019.



Membership

Membership £7.00; Widows £4.00. Subs due in January.

Committee

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