

CFVA (LONDON) NEWSLETTER - October '07.

With much pleasure we are able to report good progress from our Chairman, Ken Gadsdon, who had his back operation last month and is now taking things easy, having been warned by the surgeon "not to push things and expect to be dancing about too soon". Ken is taking the advice and consequently tendered apologies for absence from the September meeting. Otherwise attendance was up to our usual levels, with no reports of any serious problems (which doesn't mean there aren't any - we have not heard of any!) Keeping in touch is important and our 'Liaison Scheme' is geared to passing information about those who are not so well and a card or phone call can make all the difference if you feel a bit low and all is not well with your world. A mention of the Liaison Scheme in the last sentence was followed by a phone call from Pat MacAngus to say that Bill has had a nasty fall and was in hospital with a fractured thigh. As most members will know, he already has had two hip replacement operations - these have been less than successful, obliging him to use two sticks on a more or less permanent basis. This is yet another blow. He is to have at least a week of traction after which a decision will be made on further treatment. The fall Bill experienced happened on Friday the 5th so by the time you receive the newsletter (subject to current strikes) things would have moved on a bit for him. All our thoughts and good wishes from London Branch are with you, Bill!

Back at the July meeting, we reported that the deposits for the January Warner's Monday to Friday break on the I of W. had to be in to the Treasurer by 1st September. Time flies and now the rest is due. The 16th October was the date for John Williamson to be in possession of all balances to settle with Warner's - insurance was optional at £6.00 - for drivers of cars carrying less than four occupants an additional £35.00 was required for the ferry crossing. The January Warner's breaks represent very good value. They don't cost the earth, food is good, and plenty of it, and offers the chance for shipmates, wives and partners to forget other things and relax in congenial surroundings.

As the time approaches for the Annual Remembrance Day Service held on HMS. Belfast, an additional requirement that we must observe is that members attending must enter their names, and those of their partners or friends, on a list to be held by Bernie Coot prior to the event. Full details were given at the September meeting. If your name is not on the list you may have difficulty in boarding HMS Belfast. Contact Bernie to get on the list.

From Clem Mills a reminder that the Dedication of the CFVA Memorial in the National Memorial Arboretum, in Staffordshire, is to be conducted on Wednesday 14th November 07. The duration of the service is an estimated 25 minutes.

Arrangements have been made for a DVD of the service to be made. The DVD will also include information on various memorials within the Arboretum and the total playing time will be around one hour. A negotiated price of £12.00 has been arrived at with the Company making the video, and this offer will be available to Branches who are willing to distribute the DVD's to Members and Non Branch Members. (note - London Branch did incur additional charges over the distribution of the De-Commissioning DVD's to members who had ordered them, since suitable covers for postal transit had to be purchased and the relevant postage paid by the Branch. Dependant on the numbers involved, an additional charge may therefore be required this time to cover onward transit). More information will be available at the November meeting and in the subsequent newsletter.

For those who will be attending the event, information about facilities at the Arboretum can be obtained - write for a brochure to The National Memorial Arboretum, Croxall Road, Alrewas, Staffs. DE13 7AR.

As a Branch, we are still trying by various means, to contact former CFVA members and Non Branch members with a view, in common with some other Branches, to offer membership irrespective of which part of the country they may be domiciled, in the knowledge that attendance at meetings would not be possible.

Through a contact on the British Military Powerboat Trust website a CFVA member from Lancashire has joined the London Branch.

Likewise, as a result of seeing our Librarian, Wallis Randall, listed on the CF Heritage Trust website, another CFVA member from York contacted Wallis, and we are in the process in gaining another long distance member.

We did a trial shot to a restricted number from the list of CFVA members around the London area and this also has produced results. So there are people, particularly Non Branch members, who miss the contact that was enjoyed via the National Newsletter and are now seemingly more amenable to join a Branch. We would be glad to hear how other Branches are faring in this direction. - ED. Sec.

From Chairman Ken Gadsdon:

Thanks to the effort of shipmate Ralph Kirby, aided by the generous help of Dorothy Berrecloth, a group of Coastal Forces veterans and supporters get together for lunch and chat at the Cooden Beech Hotel, Bexhill.

These informal meetings are held every April and October and attract about 35 souls. Ralph's efforts are much appreciated. He was a 'non branch' member and well appreciates how others must feel following the demise of our National Newsletter. We thank him for providing the opportunity to join with other like minded friends and enjoy an excellent lunch in pleasant surroundings. The next meeting (the eighteenth!) is planned for 17th April 2008. In due course Ralph provides a full report of each meeting and it is hoped that a copy will be posted on our web pages.

At this October meeting the Director of the Coastal Forces Heritage Trust, Captain T. Robotham RN, gave news of the Trust's recent activities.

Of particular interest was that the CFH Trust is planning to write to all CFVA members with a proposal to issue a biannual Newsletter to every member contributing a minimum of £5 pa to cover publishing and postage costs. We welcome this initiative as a practical move to maintain contact with veterans, especially our non Branch Shipmates and see it as complimentary to our internet endeavours.

Readers of our web page will know of our efforts to maintain contact by means of the internet but they will also appreciate the difficulty of 'spreading the word' to those who are both unaware of our existence and of the ease of obtaining information via the internet without owning a computer eg Grandchildren, Libraries?

May I stress that although our web page is currently sailing under the 'London' flag we hope eventually to receive news from other CFVA Branches (and other interested contributors), broaden our horizon and alter our 'flag' to represent all Coastal Force veterans. News from Branches especially, however brief, would be welcome. (Please forward to Secretary Eddie Dibley)

You will recall that a short while ago we were pleased to receive an application... "to become a 'sleeping' member of our Branch"...

.. "Why sleeping" Ken Forrester was asked ... "Because I live in Lancaster and it's too far to walk but I have been shown one of your Branch Newsletters and I just want to keep in touch and to 'belong'..."

So, shipmates, I hope members of Branches will reflect on this. We all have other interests, family ties etc. but nostalgia looms larger as we get older and most of us still recall our deadly but unforgettable days in 'the Andrew' and the comradeship we enjoyed. Post-war friends, even our families, cannot share in those experiences and

most of us, especially those on their own, now find comfort in sharing those memories with other shipmates.

Ken Forrester wrote an account of his wartime service for his family, incorporating it within a privately published record of his life.

But Ted Else, our captive Nerd, has read chapter 3 of Ken's work and, after gaining his permission, has posted some extracts into the BMPT website 'Forum'. This has already caused much interest and several calls for a copy of Ken's 'private book'.

And from one of our members, Peter Bickmore – (former CFVA Chairman)

In May this year a return visit to the island of Vis, and in particular the port of Komiza, was made by CFVA members who had served there during hostilities. On this visit one of the first objectives to be realised was attendance at the dedication of the Memorial Seat to the RAF which overlooks the once used air strip on the island. Negotiations are still ongoing for the approval of a CFVA Memorial Seat on the jetty at Komiza, it has now been decided the seat must be of local quarried stone and with the added delay of the impending re-furbishing of the jetty our Memorial Plaque may have to be re-positioned and the hope that the British Veterans of Vis Fund will, hold out. We look forward to all things being in place for our next proposed visit in May 2008.

(Peter has a few copies on DVD's of his own recording of the de-commissioning of the CFVA at Gosport and the 2007 visit to Vis and Komiza (1 hr.) @ £10.00 inc. post & packing and copies of his own recording of the unveiling and dedication of plaque commemorating HMS Gregale at the end of September in Malta @ £6.00 inc. post & packing.



(Editor's note) - The photo above shows Peter with other CFVA members on the jetty at Komiza, with the plaque mounted on the wall, upper centre above the CFVA logo.

The inscription on the plaque reads:

IN MEMORY OF THE BRITISH SEAMEN WHO SAILED FROM THIS HARBOUR IN SUPPORT OF THE LIBERATING FORCES AND WHOSE RESTING PLACE IS THE SEA

And finally, apologies for the late issue of this newsletter - several parts of it languished in a variety of resting places during the recent postal strike. – ED. KG.