

We send our Newsletter to all Branches with the wish that all shipmates have a Happy New Year

Considering that our bi-monthly Branch meeting, held on 20th January, was our AGM - where the usual request for new blood in the Committee was to be made- and midwinter to boot, the attendance was surprisingly good. We do not take a count at the gangway but I reckon we had thirty trusty souls attending. We've got a hardy lot of shipmates.

First, we recalled our sad losses during the past year: Jimmy Green, Fred Ellis, Peter Rigby Jones, Fred Tipping and Charlie Whitton. We enjoyed their company and friendship. We will remember the good times we shared.

On a happier note, the Chairman then named the new recruits to our Branch this year: Alan Benson, Ken Forrester, Ted Childs, Gerald Fenner, Ted Harper, Colin Dean and Eric Miles. We were very pleased to welcome them 'aboard'

Most were attracted via our Internet Website www.royalnavycoastalforcesveterans.org regrettably; they live too far to attend our meetings, but all wished just "to belong".

The year had seen the beginning of our Website project with its aim of trying to keep contact, of sorts, with our Non Branch shipmates now that the National Newsletter had finished. The sites, one temporary through the good offices of BMPT and our own, (address mentioned above), catching up fast. Both were attracting notice and were proving helpful already in answering enquiries from others interested in Coastal Forces and its members.

Recently we had received sad news by Email from daughter Mrs Ruth Goddard saying that her father, Ron Henderson, had died and asking if his death could be noted in our National Newsletter. Ken had informed her that CFVA had now ceased but it would be reported in our next worldwide Internet Newsletter. Ron was a CFVA non-Branch Member. Wallis had ferreted some detail of his last ML and his service (minesweeping off Malta 1942-45). Ted had arranged to record it on the BMPT site also. We had received a letter of thanks from Ron's family.

There followed Ken's thanks to the Committee for their help and to Ted, our website expert. Thanks were given to the unsung workers who regularly and quietly helped in the chores of successfully running our meetings AND clearing up after most members had made a dash for the drinks bar or the gangway.

Understandably, our social activity was a little less this year.

Early in the year 40 members and supporters spent a week-long happy 'reunion' at Warners Bembridge holiday hotel, courtesy of a Lottery Grant.

We had only one 'Social' but that was a great success with a good attendance of members and friends. As usual our Sea Cadets' Committee did us proud by providing a good selection of food and a bar. One member - must have been a stoker- enjoyed it so much that he had to be persuaded to leave his car in the car park and spend the night on board, trying to sleep it off in a hammock.

The November Remembrance Service on board was well attended.

After the Service the bowler hats and the gold braid retired to the Wardroom and, for we veterans our Sea Cadets repeated their generous yearly gesture of inviting Branch members and friends to 'big eats and drinks' in the GunRoom.

Admiral Lord West and Rear Admiral Sir Morgan Morgan-Giles called in again to chat to us for a while. (Beat that for a bit of name dropping!) And finally the raffle for the benefit of the Sea Cadets raised over £100.

During the year several members joined with members from other Branches to visit Malta for the unveiling of a commemorative plaque, supplied by our Heritage Trust, at our old CF base HMS Gregale.

Also several of our members attended the annual memorial visit, organised by Peter, to the Dalmation Islands.

This year Treasurer John and Heather were the only Branch representatives to attend the Schnellboote Veterans reunion in Celle, Germany, as Ken was unfit.

There followed the Election of Officers for 2008.

Although the Committee were prepared to stand again it was sincerely expressed that they hoped that new blood would 'have a go' for 2008. Fat Chance!

There followed the unsurprising result of "As you were" but with one memorable exception. We were all delighted to greet Bill Fenton's willingness to be our Social Secretary. The Committee will soon find him to be a useful member—as soon as we can catch him.

After that, the 'ordinary' Branch Meeting, with its 'new' Committee had little else to say and we turned to a little lecture with slides given by member Ted on The Basics of Internet Communication and Websites.

It was felt that as London members had willingly provided the costs of launching our CF Veterans Website, they were entitled to know a bit about how it works.

Considering what a bunch of computer illiterates we are, Ted's talk was well received and he was given a warm burst of applause in appreciation.

The Chairman thanked Ted for his considerable effort in preparing the talk on such a difficult subject to such a difficult captive (the bulkhead door had been locked) audience.

That concluded the meeting

We are pleased to report that four Branches: - East Anglia, North Midlands, South London and East Lancs. had sent items of news (Sept-Jan) and they are in process of 'printing' to our website. We hope that their reports will be updated periodically and perhaps other surviving Branches will join in. It may surprise them to know the interest shown by readers. Unfortunately, little comes from our non- Branch shipmates yet, probably because most are not aware of the website and/or have not found how simple it is to get free access to these Newsletters.

We have all received the Heritage Trust Newsletter and we welcome their initiative. It is the only physical communication between shipmates and it should receive a special welcome by non-Branch members now isolated. However it was a disappointment that the Veteran's websites did not get a mention.

Ken Gadsdon

Chairman's Report:

We are pleased to record several items of news sent in from other Branches and hope that their reports will be updated periodically. It is hoped that the other surviving Branches will join in. It may surprise them to know the interest shown by readers. Unfortunately, little comes from our non - Branch shipmates yet, probably because most have not found how simple it is to get access to these Newsletters.

Vice Chairman's Report:

Having to recuperate from an operation to his Shoulder, Wallis has decided to ease back on his commitment to the web-sites for this edition. He will return with interesting news from the Model Engineering Exhibition held at the Alexandra Palace. [Where it may be known, the CFV (London) had its own stand].

EAST ANGLA BRANCH (Including Lowestoft and Great Yarmouth Branch Members HMS Mantis and HMS Midge)

George Leslie, Branch Standard Bearer reports that despite sad losses and sickness they are keeping their flag flying. They attend many local parades and have joined forces with members from other Branches, which have had to close. They muster about 20 stalwarts at their meetings but several others are not able to attend.

They send Greetings to all Coastal Forces Veterans and invite them to visit the Memorial to our fallen shipmates at Averit Park Oulton Broad, near Lowestoft.

NORTH MIDLANDS BRANCH (Meeting on 13th December 2007)

14 members and 8 Associates attended the meeting, with 4 apologies for absence

To smooth proceedings Len Winter had brought a bottle of Pusser's rum, for which the Chairman expressed his thanks.

He then gave a short account of their visit (a whole coach load!) to the unveiling of the Memorial Rock at the National Arboretum on 14th November. The North Midlands and Southern Branch had arranged the Ceremony.

Over a hundred people, including many veterans from other CFVA Branches, were in attendance.

Chairman praised the four ex -WRENS who had unveiled the Memorial and thanked the Revs Margaret Lunt and Graham Berridge for their Tributes at the Ceremony.

Clem Mills presented a bouquet to Margaret for her tireless work for CFVA both regarding the Arboretum and her work in obtaining a £12,000 Lottery Grant for the Association.

Syd Willoughby, Treasurer, reported that the finances were in good shape and he thanked South London Branch for their contribution towards the Ceremony costs.

The Social Secretary reported that their Christmas Party went very successfully and they had welcomed visitors from the South Yorks Boat Club, who had also brought a huge hamper of 'goodies' with them. One lucky member seemed to win most of the prizes at the raffle and Bingo but another tot of rum with a few more carols cheered everybody up again.

(Extracted from report by Secretary C.Severn)

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH (7th January 2008)

Hi Shipmates, South London calling! !

We are very much alive. We currently meet at T,S,Trafalgar in Wimbledon South London. T.S. Benbow in Mitcham has now been demolished and is now being replaced as a state of the art Cadet Ship under the name T.S.Trafalgar. Hopefully this project will be completed by June this year.

Our membership has donated sufficient funds to be able to purchase new colours and, should we avoid Crossing the Bar in the meantime, we hope to present it at a specially arranged ceremony to be organised by the staff.

Sunday December 9th was our last meeting of 2007; 27 members, wives and widows attended.

Following the meeting, we were treated to hot mince pies and mulled wine. The Officers and Cadets mingled with us, we enquired of their progress in the Service, and no doubt the tables were turned with a few "Old Salty" experiences.

The Cadet Band then entertained us with their music. A super buffet followed. We went ashore having enjoyed our day, spirits high, arthritis in our bones forgotten, and our tanks filled to the brim.

We enjoy a great rapport with these cadets which we hope will continue for as long as possible.

On the general front, myself and Mrs Wyn Adams were present at the dedication of the plaque at Malta. Our Chairman Charles and Mrs June Baker attended the dedication of the plaque at Portland and a number of our members and wives visited the Service at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire, conducted by our Padre Rev Graham Berridge

WE WISH OUR SHIPMATES EVERYWHERE A VERY HAPPY CHRISTMAS AND HEALTHY NEW YEAR

Ron Harrison Secretary.

Plaque recently unveiled at Malta.



EAST LANCASHIRE BRANCH (16th September 2007)

6 members turned up for this meeting and 6 members sent their apologies.

The Secretary mentioned the possibility of future Coastal Forces articles on the veterans' website. Further mention was made of the date change for our plaque at the National Arboretum. He had been in contact with Bury Town Hall regarding Remembrance Day arrangements.

Chairman Frank gave details of a meeting with the Sea Cadets Chairman regarding the transfer of Memorial funds to the Sea Cadets. The Sea Cadets had approved the transfer.

Unsurprisingly, the Branch was suffering casualties, mainly age-related and two members were currently in hospital. [EDs note: We wish them well and thank this small Branch for sending us their news].

The meeting was concluded with a mention in the September's "Navy News" reporting that the maximum time to be served on HMS Brave Swordsman had been limited to 12 months "due to stress on the body by constant jarring".

Coastal Forces personnel who managed to survive a year's continuous service on 'our' boats will now know what caused their hip, knee and back problems.

Service of Dedication and Blessing of the Memorial Stone Named "Rock of the Sea" at the National Arboretum, Alrewas, Staffordshire. UK. Wednesday 14th November 2007



(Photo and narrative extracted from article distributed by K.P.Nicholson)

The meeting was jointly arranged by the North Midlands and Southern Branches of the recently decommissioned Coastal Forces Veterans Association. Over 100 people were present at the ceremony. The organisation of the Memorial and its dedication ceremony is due to the efforts of the former Association's National Chairman and Secretary, Shipmates Reg Ellis and Clem Mills.

The memorial stone is a magnificent block of granite weighing three and a half tons. It was donated by William Frazer and Hugh Evans of Dayston Hall Quarry and transported to the site by William Francis and Stephen Bennet. Tributes are also due to Don Redstone of the former Midlands Branch and Paul Kennedy, Curator of the Arboretum.

Mounted on the stone is an engraved plaque carved by Andrew Lockett. The Memorial is surrounded by oak saplings planted by the CFVA which in years to come will form a sheltered grove.

The Service was conducted by the Rev Graham Berridge and Rev Margaret Lunt.

The Arboretum has areas for all service units and is open daily. Admission and Car Parking is free. It is owned and operated by the British Legion who are always grateful for voluntary contributions. Wild life studies and school parties are also catered for.
